

ONUR KARABIÇAK POWER AS VISIBILITY: CONCEPTUALIZING THE CHANGING NATURE OF
INFLUENCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS BILKENT UNIVERSITY 2024

POWER AS VISIBILITY: CONCEPTUALIZING THE CHANGING NATURE OF INFLUENCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A Master's Thesis

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To 'Dayi' People



POWER AS VISIBILITY: CONCEPTUALIZING THE CHANGING NATURE OF
INFLUENCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
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İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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By Onur Karabıçak

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ABSTRACT

POWER AS VISIBILITY: CONCEPTUALIZING THE CHANGING NATURE OF INFLUENCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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This thesis propounds a new definition of power and influence in international relations and a conceptual framework of power's translation into influence. First, this thesis defines power as being or rendering something (in)visible, and influence as changing one's narrative of world politics. Visibility is being socially relevant and mattering to others, and it is operationalized as an actor's frequency of being seen by an audience. Second, this thesis draws a framework for the analysis of the power and influence of international actors on audiences. The methodology is extracted from the operationalization of the components of visibility in the proposed framework of analysis. The power as visibility framework is applied to the case of comparing Erdoğan's power and influence over the mass audience in Türkiye and the Western European elite audience in 2008 and 2020. The material examined by the thesis

consists of official speeches and popular culture media. Finally, the thesis concludes with a discussion of the alternative explanations and power as visibility framework.

Keywords: Power, Influence, Visibility, Türkiye, the Western Europe



ÖZET

GÖRÜNÜRLÜK OLARAK GÜÇ: ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLERDE NÜFUZUN DEĞİŞEN DOĞASINI DÜŞÜNMEK

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Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Ersel Aydın

Haziran 2024

Bu tez, uluslararası ilişkilerde güç ve nüfuzun yeni bir tanımını ve gücün nüfuza dönüştürülmesinin kavramsal çerçevesini ortaya koymaktadır. İlk olarak, bu tez, gücü, birisini ya da bir şeyi görünmez ya da görünür kılmak, nüfuzu ise kişinin dünya siyasetine ilişkin anlatısını değiştirmek olarak tanımlamaktadır. İkinci olarak bu tez, uluslararası aktörlerin izleyiciler üzerindeki gücünün ve etkisinin analizi için bir çerçeve çizmektedir. Bu tanımlar üzerine yöntem, görünürlük bileşenlerinin işlevselleştirilmesinden çıkarılmaktadır. Bu çerçeve, 2014-2023 yılları arasında Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'ın Türkiye'deki yerel kitle üzerindeki gücü ve nüfuzunun Batı Avrupalı elit kitlesi üzerindeki güç ve nüfuzunun karşılaştırılması vakasına uygulanmıştır. Tez CB Erdoğan'ın performansını analiz etmek amacıyla performansın anlaşılabilmesi için siyasi anlatıların, konuşmaların ve ikili politikaların

bütününü incelemektedir. Bu çalışma, alternatif açıklamalara ve önerilen çerçeveye ilişkin bir tartışmayla tamamlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güç, Nüfuz, Görünürlük, Türkiye, Batı Avrupa



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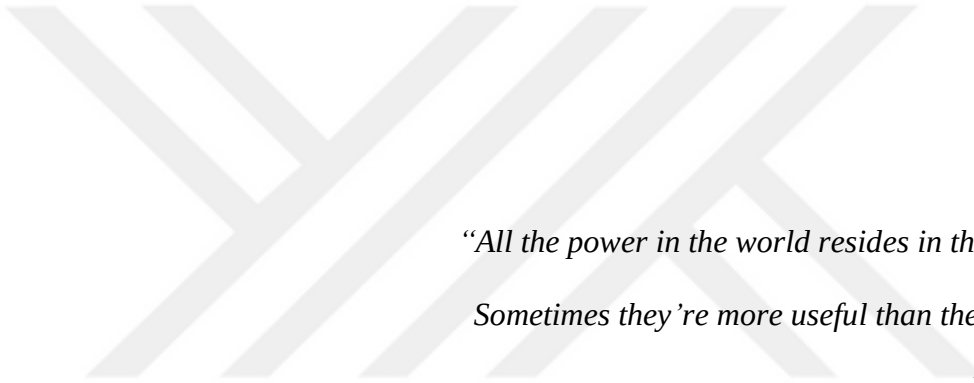
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



*“All the power in the world resides in the eyes, fella.
Sometimes they’re more useful than the people who
bear them.”*

-The Crow (1994), dir. Alex Proyas

Intellectual endeavors problematize and reflect on the concepts that affect the everyday lives of people. Power is one of these fundamental concepts that imposes its consequences on us. This thesis is about the nature of power and influence in the 21st century, starting with a simple observation of the increasing importance of (in)visibility in politics. This observation makes sense, reckoning that globalization, politics, and consumption culture have become entangled, and phenomena like populism, communication technologies, and social media have proliferated. The intersection of these phenomena is linked to the concept of visibility, which is decisive in social construction (Rajchman, 1991). These new realities require a redefinition of power that goes beyond the hard-soft power dyad. The puzzling

question is how can we think of power through visibility and look at how it works in international relations. Thus, this thesis aims to redefine power in international relations through visibility. It mainly claims that power in world politics is exercised through (in)visibility and that this particular aspect of power remains understudied and undefined. Invisibility might be a strategy of the actor's own choice, but it will be powerlessness if some other actors makes him/her invisible. In this study, I focus on visibility rather than invisibility due to the academic restraint in the scope of a master's thesis.

1.2 Research Question

“What is the role of visibility in converting power into influence (both domestically and internationally)?” This question counterposes the explanations regarding hard and soft power dyads. If power is defined only as a material capacity, how can weaker political actors be influential and construct power? For example, revisionist states in international politics are not always ‘strong states’ in terms of capacities, and authoritarian politicians are not always the richest or the cleverest people who assume the whole control of a state. In a visual age where the states dominate rapid capitalization in communication technologies, how can we think of concepts such as power and influence without thinking about the logic of visibility? Revisionist actors, for example, develop communication strategies to become visible, meaning frequently being seen and showing something to others: their leaders seek out being seen in photos with powerful individuals; they sometimes service photos that aim to

exert a grandiose-self (e.g. keeping hands in pockets) after bilateral or multilateral meetings; they aim to be more visible even though sometimes their actions are inconsistent with their agenda. In the changing nature of power, the simulation of different realities in the visible arenas overlaps to offer us new ways of thinking about power, and interestingly, actors without material power may become influential when they start to be visible and when they start to construct an image of power.

1.3 Justification

Theories of power in IR are built to separate the state from the society, and they take communication as being of secondary importance (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001).

This distances the subject matter from the social reality. In this way, the practical relevancy of international relations theory and conceptual attempts in the discipline are questioned by the scholars and practitioners of the discipline (Murdie, 2020; Weiss & Kittikhoun, 2011). The attempts to make IR an independent discipline (Buzan & Little, 2001; Dyer & Mangasarian, 1989; Kaplan, 1961; Kristensen, 2016) also led to a disengaging of IR's subject matter (Rosenberg, 2016) from society, and concepts like power and influence are used perfunctorily (Wright, 1963). In the field of international affairs, power and influence thus remain immature notions (Ersoy, 2016). This thesis tackles this conceptual weakness by attempting to further develop conceptual maturity for power and influence.

Moreover, analyses that stem from the existing power conceptions may draw conclusions that are practically incorrect since they do not include non-military actions or because they have problems incorporating the intentions of the actors. The existing power conceptions or descriptions often stick to the idea of one's preferences imposed on the other, positively or negatively. Yet, the will of the actor is not always implemented with material resources, or known by the actor himself. International agents may impose or construct their will through visibility. Actors can be socially relevant or decrease other's social relevancy and show an image of power through visibility.

Influence is interchangeably used with power or understood along with the concepts of hegemony and persuasion, thus directly related to the settings in which there is a superior power in terms of material capacity. Are the concepts of power and influence therefore irrelevant for militarily weak actors? In an attempt to overcome this analytical flaw, this thesis presents a theoretical case that refutes the idea that states need to invest in the military to be powerful or influential.

Visibility, as a social phenomenon, can arguably be used to define power and influence. The existing power and influence theories lack the contemporary social factor that visibility is key to being understood as "powerful" in the common sense (Baudrillard, 1998). With the purpose of bringing IR closer to social reality, and thus practicality, a redefinition of power and influence with regards to a component of

consumption culture, that is, visibility, is necessary. At the most basic level, visibility refers to an actor's frequency of being seen by other actors. In this thesis, power is defined as the ability to be visible or to make (in)visible. Influence, being separated from power, is defined as an actor's political reality or that actor's narrative regarding world politics. Influencing someone, therefore, means changing an actor's political reality. Actors become or make something (e.g., their material power) visible to an audience and then develop this visibility to become influential.

After the millennium, the social contexts are defined by visibility: populism, representational politics, the War on Terror, televised wars, and the media's role in defining the meanings are the main examples that construct these contexts (Debrix, 2007). This is, in general, the information age: The signs people consume via the media networks are the information that the spectators are filled with. What is understood as information is any performance that is rendered visible. As Jean-François Lyotard indicates, knowledge in postmodernity is produced for the audiences to consume; thus, it is not produced for its use-value (1984, p. 4). This context is related to international relations since the nation-states are in competition for the production of knowledge (Lyotard, 1984, p. 5). The information is produced by making something visible, accompanied by the value of truth, thus becoming knowledge. This simple mechanism justifies why the power and influence are about fabricating information as knowledge: If the element of truth is added to the

information, then the knowledge can come up with micro-narratives about world politics.

Production of knowledge about world politics by an actor directs the focus on what is influenced since the media reality captures domestic and international politics, both as a subject of the process and the object of the process. International actors want to fabricate knowledge and assume control over this fabrication from the others. However, measuring and discussions about power and influence in IR have mainly focused on the matters pertaining to war and coercion among the states, which are the most visible acts and contexts. The threat of war or military capacity is not the only way that the other actors and the masses can accumulate power, although they are powerful narratives that legitimate the actors' existence. The fabrication of knowledge allows the political actors to be attributed power and makes them influential by affecting others to reproduce knowledge in the cognitive structure within the influential actor. While the information is what is visible, the influence is about the truth components of what is rendered visible. Hence, I suggest that power and influence are related to visibility and its components.

Visibility, as a fundamental aspect of contemporary social contexts, goes beyond the analysis of material assets that are knowable to the researchers for waging war and defense. The material assets or ability of coercion is treated to be power and influence in the literature of IR. Yet, this type of conceptualizing lens does not fully

capture the defining nature of these two concepts because their sparkling point is not decisions related to war or coercion. As John Rajchman puts forward, power holders control society through “what was seen, [...] what could be seen, [...] what was seeable” (Rajchman, 1991). Hence, power and influence are exerted and accumulated through everyday politics at both elite and mass social groups within the given social context that is defined by visibility.

W. Callahan calls for a similar approach in IR with his book *Sensible Politics* (Callahan, 2020). Visibility and politics are intersectional, he argues, since there is more than one subject involved in politics; it is *performative* and *ocular*. What is called hyperreality is close to Callahan’s words of “the visual construction of the social” (2020). Visibility of an actor to an audience, thus, is about their own sense of existing in the politics of that certain genre: electoral politics, backdoor politics, intelligence units, revolutionary politics, contentious politics, violence... In this sense, the roots of subjectivity visit the concept of visibility, especially in the digital age, where all information is visibly presented and where the powerful actors render their ‘threatening’ actions invisible, such as storing personal information and sharing it with third parties. In authoritarian countries, for example, most of the time, not having a reactionary movement from the people usually stems from the government’s action on the invisible sides of politics, such as constitutional matters and courts.

Investigating the components of visibility will help in understanding how power is translated into influence. For without influence, power is not a definitive performance; theorizing the process matters. Power and influence are the objects of this study, and visibility is the thesis regarding how the former is redefined. Power's redefinition necessitates a closer look at the process of translating power into influence. Therefore, I will re-visit the concept of power and influence in IR for the purpose of clarifying the concepts' meanings and explaining the mechanism between them, and then propose a new framework of power's translation into influence through visibility's components.

This thesis assumes that communication is the heart of politics. This assumption's first implication is that the actors should be visible to someone to be socially relevant in the political acts. Visibility is the first necessity of being relevant since the masses or groups of people can only create an image of what is visible to them. If politics is primarily imagined by the audiences who make it (Browne & Diehl, 2019), the acts of power and what determines power's translation into influence evolve into the visibility of an act or actor.

Visibility is the primary factor rather than military strength, economic interdependence, or setting the agenda of the other actors; the latter concepts are what actors make of "power" *through* visibility. If an individual or an act must be visible to be influential, then the audience to which it is rendered visible is of utmost

importance. The theory and a step-by-step framework to study power that I suggest in this thesis are implementable both in domestic political matters and in international relations because of their importance to both international and domestic audiences and actors. First, the domestic and the international are intertwined, every actor and audience in international politics has a domestic root. Secondly, audiences and actors precede politics both in the domestic and international realms; every act in domestic politics requires an actor and an audience of any size since it is politics.

1.4 Case Selection

How can one observe and analyze *power as visibility* and interpret, accordingly, whether an actor is influential? Additionally, what are the implications of acquiring power and influence in this framework? For the purpose of answering these questions, I will examine the translation of Türkiye's President R. Tayyip Erdoğan's power into influence, both domestically and internationally on the Western European elite audience, in the issues of 2008 EU accession negotiations and in the 2020 Migration Crisis.

The reason why President Erdoğan is selected as the actor of the case study is his frequent use of the components of visibility. Being visible and controlling others' visibility is extremely important for Erdoğan, as he acquires means of constructing the image of power and altering the reality of the audiences. Although Türkiye has civic initiatives of fact-checking online platforms (Yanardağoglu, 2021), the Erdoğan

government countered the fear of disinformation about the Turkish government against the allegations of authoritarianism and founded the Directorate of Communication in 2018. Fahrettin Altun, a professor in media and communication who studied theories of reality and media from Baudrillard and McLuhan's angles in his dissertation (Karabıçak, 2020), has been the head of the directorate since its foundation. According to him, the necessity of such control in the cultural sphere was evident since the culture industry is run by the order of a conservative, pro-Western, anti-national, and that produces like-minded people who read the reality in a conspiratorial manner (Altun, 2018). A couple of weeks after Altun suggested these, he was appointed as the head of the directorate.

One example of the use of the directorate is during the major earthquake in Türkiye that hit six cities just a couple of months before the 2023 presidential elections. The government was under serious criticism for being incapable of helping the victims. The directorate's budget spending doubled during that time, reaching 188 million Turkish Liras (Bildircin, 2023).¹ The director Altun was visible with Erdoğan during the time in most of the press speeches and controlled the communications, including banning online platforms that the volunteers were communicating with the victims under the wreckage to spot and pull.

¹ The amount is equal to roughly 188 flat prices in Türkiye at the time.

The directorate works internationally, having forty-eight correspondents in forty-three countries that report the news coverage and framing of Türkiye to the headquarters. Altun travels with Erdoğan to diplomatic meetings and summits and is regarded as one of the key officials. A Reuters special report claims that the news editors in Türkiye are directed through the Whatsapp messages of Altun in order to set the agenda and the coverage of the news when there is a possibly troublesome development that might affect Erdoğan's image (Spicer, 2022). The policies of the directorate are legitimized as Türkiye is in a fight against systemic disinformation campaigns. Such a fight conveys the struggle over the created realities of the masses that this thesis touches upon in defining the concept of influence. In the International Strategic Communication Summit held by the Communication Directorate of Türkiye in 2021, with a video message on a spectacular big screen, Erdoğan declared that media disinformation is a national security threat (Özkan, 2021), like the Western effect in the popular culture (AA, 2019). This shows that Erdoğan has a struggle over shaping the reality of the masses, which is related to the definition of influence in this thesis. These examples show that Erdoğan and his cadre see and give importance to the context of the information age. In this context, visibility is the defining factor of power and influence with its components, and Erdoğan takes official actions in this vein.

In this thesis, the case is comparing Türkiye's President R. Tayyip Erdoğan's international and domestic power. The reason why this case is selected is that it

offers a wide range of aspects that challenge the existing conceptions and theories on power. The changes in the investments of President R. Tayyip Erdoğan in the media between 2008 and 2020 are appropriate cases for a power analysis. His changing style of performance and incongruent policies with regard to the EU accession are also interesting cases to examine. In presenting the material in the case analysis section, I will exhibit examples starting from Erdoğan's initial years in power and seek the answer to the question, "Is he influential on these audiences?"

The next section explores the literature on power, influence, and visibility. In the literature review section, I discuss the shortcomings of the existing conceptualizations and the potential contribution of *power as visibility* to the literature. Chapter 3 introduces the theorization and framework, starting with the redefinitions of power and influence. Chapter 4 clarifies the methodology, how the data is collected, and how it is analyzed according to the framework delivered in Chapter 3. In Chapter 5, I analyze the case of Erdoğan's speech at the International Munich Conference and the 2020 Migration crises and compare them. Chapter 6 presents an evaluation of the thesis and final comments.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explains the work written on defining and operationalizing the concept of power and influence. I will introduce the literature on visibility and discuss how it is related to power being used internationally. After that, I will identify the gap in how past theories of power fail to explain contemporary elements like social media/internet/visual revolutions and, therefore, claim that the concept of power requires revision. The table below, accompanied with this thesis' framework, shows the known views, types and conceptions of the power that will be explained in the review.

Approach	Type	Conception
Forms of Power	• Hard	• Coercive capability
	• Soft	• Capability to co-opt in the long run (Nye, 1990)
	• Smart	• The strategic combination of the first two (Nye, 2009)
	• Sharp	• Manipulation in the name of diplomacy by the authoritarians (Walker, 2018)
Power as Influence	• First face	• A makes B do something otherwise B wouldn't do (behavioral change) (Dahl, 1957)
	• Second face	• Agenda-setting power (decision-making) (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962)
	• Third face	• Control through ideology (Lukes, 2021)
Power as capacity	• Means of coercion	• Military, economy and demography (Beckley, 2018)
Power-to	• Structural power	• Qualities of one's social role gives power-to-do, defined by the social structures (interactionist) (Isaac, 1987)
Constructivist	• Influence as persuasion	• Influence is about persuasion and hegemony (Reich & Lebow, 2014)
Power as Visibility	• Power	• The ability to make/be (in)visible
	• Influence	• Changing the audience's interpretation of world politics

Table 1: Power Approaches.

2.2 Power in Political Science Literature

Power is a topic of discussion in political science literature. Allison states that

although there are serious logical inadequacies about power, “we nevertheless want

to talk about it” (1974). It is understudied and can be defined through making sense of the context of the word that is used and differentiation of the concept from the others. It must be intuitively closer to daily use but also differentiate analytically and operationalize the concept if it is operationalizable (Allison, 1974). The theoretical works, including Max Weber’s scholarly contributions, offer a seminal examination of diverse forms of authority and the origins of power in social and political frameworks (Weber, 2009). Robert Dahl delves into the notion of power and its origins, analyzing the significance of coercion, resources, and decision-making procedures (1957). The article by Bachrach and Baratz is a significant contribution to the field as it introduces the notion of the “two faces of power” and underscores the significance of non-decision-making and agenda-setting as potential sources of power (1962). Enhancing the two faces of power, Steven Lukes adds the third face, namely changing the ideology of the other actor (2021).

2.2.1 The Faces of Power

The first face of power stems from the questions in the debate where Dahl made the first definition as a pluralist, and Bachrach and Baratz argued that power is keeping the issues off the decision-makers’ agenda (2017). The first debate was over “Who governs New Haven?” a city in the US. Dahl’s pluralist understanding, which asserts that the most influential people are different in each issue area, is countered by the elitists. The elitist view meant that the power is held by an elite group, such as in Merelman’s conception (1968). Steven Lukes rearranges these dimensions of power and adds the “third face of power” (1974). Approaching the dimensions of power

with an inclusive perspective stemming from power-over, Lukes criticizes the previous conceptions. Accordingly, the first face of power is changing the decision-making of an actor, coercively or non-coercively, simply criticizing Dahl's conception as one-dimensional. The second face of power is setting the agenda and controlling the discussion. This face basically sets what is illegitimate to propose as a policy in a polity; for example, arguing in favor of state control over public goods is illegitimate in most liberal countries. The first two dimensions remain behavioral ones; their results are behavioral changes. The third face of power is thought control, preventing conflicts before they even start, also called ideological power.

Lukes does not propose a definition for the abstract concept of power. He stresses "views of power," which means "identifying cases of power in the real world" (Lukes, 2021). However, Lukes' definition of a change in the ideological level might be called influence because it is still about a change in the behavioral level. Without a new conception of power, Lukes' third view of power remains only as a new case (that is, ideology) for which power as influence can be used to analyze.

Baldwin argues that suggesting that Dahl's theory of power is one-dimensional is distorting because Dahl's conception is actually a contextual "view of power," that is assessed with the influence and has "more than many faces" (2021, p. 11). The ideas of Lukes are actually about the ways the powerful dominate the others (Baldwin, 2021). Thus, presenting the operationalization is not adequate for defining power,

and Lukes's conception does not touch on the temporality of power. Temporality, in this sense, is about how long the effect of power is observed. Lastly, since they are domains in which the power relations are performed, Lukes does not explain whether the faces of power change alongside contemporary social changes, such as technology and international order.

2.2.2 "Power-over" and "Power-to"

Jeffrey C. Isaac brings criticism to the faces of power debate by suggesting that "first, it is limited to situations of 'power over' [domination] and fails to see ... domination is parasitic upon a 'power to.' Second, it fails to distinguish between the possession and the exercise of power" (1987, p. 5). Proposing a "realist (philosophy of science which criticizes the empirical ontology) critique," he argues that the reason for these two points comes from the problem that political scientists tend to describe power as a "causal relation between the two agents" (Isaac, 1987, p. 7). Claiming that the three faces of power are behavioral explanations seeking causal relations, Isaac makes a structural definition in which the behavior is shaped. Yet, his understanding of structure comes from the realist philosophy of science which does not focus on behavioral regularities but enduring natures, thus the structure that the human action occurs. The structure here does not present a dialectic of structure versus the human agency, but a duality that the two are co-constitutive. This is not to suggest a determinism of structure as most Realist or Marxist IR Theories do.

Isaac suggests that the social structures are both the medium and the effect of human actions, like the student-teacher relationship: The students have the power to do homework, answer questions, and attend the exams; the teachers have the power to direct the classroom, give and grade the exams Isaac (1987). This means that the actions are not contingent, yet they are relational.

The purpose of the definition of “power to” is to understand the nature of the relationship’s structure, i.e. the teacher-student relationship. These “powers,” which are actually the features that these actors are able to possess as the nature of the relationship permits, are necessary to these social activities, but their success is contingent. The Dahlian conceptions were “behavioralist-empiricist,” meaning that they study power by searching certain regularities in the patterned behaviors.

Arguing these, Isaac defines social power as “the capacities to act possessed by social agents in virtue of the enduring relations in which they participate” (Isaac, 1987). Social power, thus, is possessed by the individuals but defined by their social inter-dependence. Yet, what makes these powers socially relevant is not answered with Isaac’s conception. Relying on these, Isaac still does not define power but describes social power and fails to deliver his promise while criticizing the previous theoreticians. Thus, the power is distributed in the social relationship according to Isaac, but what makes this social relationship powerful is being able to exist.

The question above still remains unanswered if we don't think about the main attribute of social relations, which is visibility. Any performance of political actors is either visible or invisible, the first defining nature of the relations. They are performative and have a duality in the subordinate-dominant relationship. Actors might simulate the ways and directions of power, but not as a result of stimuli necessarily, to be able to create social relations. Thus, visibility is necessary to create social structures and to show people the ways of articulating identity and its limits. If power is a feature, a type of ability limited by a structure, the "social power," as Isaac defines, is a type of field in which these features are performed. In the end, this does not define power per se because it cannot explain why these are the features or what power creates these social structures. If visibility assures the construction of these structures, then power must be the ability to make/be visible.

The discussion on what constitutes power is also subject to social theory. Although there isn't a single accepted definition of power in social theory, social researchers frequently use a few ideas. The definitions of social power generally include control over others, or pressuring them to comply with one's wishes (Dahl, 1957); social influence or the capacity to bring about change in others (Weber, 1946); and, on the other hand, freedom or the possession of personal agency (Russell, 1938).

Transformative power was highlighted by feminist theory as the capacity to foster the growth of others (Wartenberg, 1990). Power is defined by theorists who focus on collectives, such as governments and groups, as the mechanism through which

intergroup oppression is maintained (e.g., Mills, 1956). The relational and communal perspectives on power highlight how crucial it is to consider the environment in which power is exercised or that upholds power inequality in general.

2.2.3 Power in Institutions

Recently, the discussion on power went in the direction of “power-over” and “power-to” distinctions in international and domestic organizations (Hanson, 2022; Pansardi, 2012). The theory comes from the business theory of M. Follett (1940). Using a power-over model imposes both discursive and structural constraints, limiting the ability of subordinate actors trapped inside these frameworks to change the parameters and configurations of discourse. Diplomatic and negotiating processes, which are primarily organized by powerful governments, provide few options for individuals who are unable to break out from the discursive limitations favored by dominating institutions.

The survival and effectiveness of institutions dominated by ‘power-over’ paradigms are dependent on the preservation of the present order, the deliberate impediment of transformative attempts, and the perpetuation of models and practices that reinforce inherent inequities (Hanson, 2022). Although not always malevolent, power-over is associated with negative-power. In many ways, Follett’s early notion of power-over is consistent with Barnett and Duvall’s (2005) categorization of obligatory and institutional power.

Barnett and Duvall emphasize the need to distinguish between power working inside social interactions and power expressed within social constitutions, which corresponds to the larger distinction between “power-over” and “power-to” (Barnett and Duvall, 2005: 46). Barnett and Duvall draw a taxonomy of power in their study, with suggesting that “[p]ower is the production, in and through social relations, of effects on actors that shape their capacity to control their fate” (2005, p. 45). They gather dominant power conceptions used in political science and social theory under four different categories (in a taxonomy): Compulsory, institutional, structural, productive power (Barnett & Duvall, 2005).

Barnett and Duvall’s scholarly contributions, which elucidate the mechanisms underlying various outcomes as well as the varying degrees of agency or constraint experienced by different players, significantly expand on Follett’s previous power dynamics theorizations. Barnett and Duvall focus on the social structures’ effect and their specificity in producing actors or making actors produce behavior. They offer a comprehensive taxonomy of power to use whatever the specific situation the researchers need to employ. An analysis of power for them necessitates an investigation into not only how effects are generated (including determining who is authorized to engage in dialogue and decision-making) but also how these effects confer advantages or disadvantages on specific actors (2005). Thus, power-over and power-to approaches are discussed in a context-specific approach to power and how actors strategically use power relations in the institutions rather than producing a

contemporary definition of power (Pansardi, 2012). The problem with Barnett and Duvall's conceptualizing is that it still cannot explain how the social structures and specificities of those structures are created. Power, as such as the energy that is required in a chemical interaction, needs to comprehend the interaction between the agents in building social relations. Yet, Barnett and Duvall produces a post-relational conceptualization of power. I argue that power occurs both in the construction of social relations and aftermath of that construction.

Power is studied within the structures. Sidney Tarrow's scholarly contribution offers a thorough analysis of social movements and their capacity to contest established power structures and effectuate political transformation (1998). The literary work authored by Jeffrey Pfeffer offers an in-depth examination of power dynamics that exist in organizational settings (1992). The author underscores the significance of resources, information, and social networks as key sources of power. This produces a similar understanding on power's relational and institutional sources that the scholarly contributions of Michel Foucault delve into. Foucault conceptualizes power as a generative entity, with a particular emphasis on the methods of regulation and authority employed by societal establishments (2012).

2.3 Power in International Relations

Power is arduously defined or used by the scholars of IR. Yet, there are some widespread uses of the word defined within the literature of international relations in three different senses. Power as influence, measured by scope, domain, weight,

expenses, and means (Baldwin, 2016); power as capacity, which focuses on state capability regarding the military (Beckley, 2018); and soft power, which operationalizes values, culture, and diplomatic commitment (Nye, 1990).

2.2.1 Power as Influence

Henry Morgenthau marked power as the main topic of IR, as he wrote, “International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power” (Morgenthau, 1973, p. 27). In his seminal work, political power is defined as “a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised,” which “gives the former control over certain actions of the latter through the impact which the former exerts on the latter’s minds” (28, 1973). Morgenthau states that “...we mean man’s control over the minds and actions of other men” (28, 1973) with the concept of power. This definition of power is closer to a *sense* and *influence* because it is related to the control of the *cognitive structures* of the actors. Dahl (1957), Bachrach and Baratz (1962), Organski (1968), and Holsti (1977), in their separate works, define power in this connotation of control over intentions and influence. In these definitions, the measurement does not rest on military ability or economic growth but on behavioral change as the outcome. If Actor A can create a behavioral change in accordance with its objectives, then it could be counted as powerful, regardless of the calculation of the actor’s material capacities. Yet, it does not mean that it is not a quantifiable or an unmeasurable concept. Dahl suggests that a framework for power comparison should be comprised of a sentence that X is more influential than Y with respect to T, as

measured by M (1963). So, the power's result is the influence, and it is about scope and intentions.

Following Dahlian conceptualization of power as influence, David Baldwin introduces the discussion of positive as well as negative power (1971). Negative power definitions, such as Laswell and Kaplan's *Power and Society*, encapsulate most of the works done in this field. Laswell and Kaplan distinguish influence from power and define it through "the availability of the sanctions when the intended outcomes are not forthcoming" (Laswell & Kaplan, 1950). Baldwin adds positive sanctions of power, being about the positive consequences of compliance, thus being influenced by others (1971, 2016). This distinction of power's influence on its subjects relates to Nye's "soft power" concept, beyond negative and positive sanctions of power.

2.2.2 Soft Power

Joseph Nye brings the "soft power" perspective to the agenda by adding a new dimension of power and dividing power as hard and soft (1990). While hard power is about inducement and security, soft power is about the "ability to shape others' preferences" and "getting others to want the outcomes that you want," stemming from the culture of the international actor (Nye, 1990, pp. 153-171). It is an important contribution that seeks the shortcomings of the previous theories of power

by seeing the long-lasting effects of preference-making through diplomacy and cultural exchange.

Having roots in the liberal theory of international relations, Nye starts with a similar observation to that of this thesis. He points out the rapid globalization and increasing communication technology worldwide; the intense consumption culture and universal knowledge accumulation that is shared across capitalist nations enhances actors' influences over what is to decide. He criticizes the measurement of power in terms of resources: "Power conversion is the capacity to convert potential power, as measured by resources, to realized power, as measured by the changed behavior of other" (Nye, 1990, p. 178). This conceptualization has been operationalized by the Soft Power Index (Portland, 2023).

The Soft Power Index proposes sub-indices of digital diplomacy, culture, enterprise, education, engagement, and government (Portland, 2023). This index relies on surveying and pulling data from social media and reaches a ranking between thirty states. Apart from a quantified power soft-power ranking, analysts have used this index to understand cultural and educational exchange programs (Medalis, 2012), public diplomacy (Nye Jr, 2008; Nye, 2019), Hollywood (Nelson, 2022), cultural hegemony (Said, 2012; Zahran & Ramos, 2010), ideology in US foreign policy (Layne, 2010), and even video-games (Penix-Tadsen, 2016).

Soft power is thus about co-opting the other actors. Christopher Walker explores another dimension of this power based on the observation of authoritarian states, which are trying to create a deception. Rather than attraction and persuasion, authoritarian influence aims to distract and manipulate others. The authoritarian 'sharp' power "pierces, penetrates, or perforates the political and information environments in the targeted countries" (Walker, 2018, p. 12).

Nye sees power as contextual, meaning that the description of power related to the intentions is problematic because of the problem of getting the desired outcomes (2004). In the *Changing Nature of Power*, he criticizes the intentions-based definitions with the example: "A cruel dictator can lock up or execute a dissident, but that may not prove his power if the dissenter was really seeking martyrdom" (2004). The intentions and the outcomes are mostly complex processes and dependent on the context. Thus, he creates a scale by dividing power into two, hard and soft power, with a spectrum of behaviors and "most likely resources." This scale goes from command to co-opt. Commanding, coercion, and inducement are hard-power actions that come from the resources of "force, sanctions, payments, and bribes." Soft power behaviors are "agenda-setting, attraction, and co-optation." They have the resources of institutions, values, culture, and policies (Nye, 2004, p. 8).

Dividing power into soft and hard behaviors, Nye raises the importance of the context to the agenda yet fails to show how power is relational, i.e., how power is

meaningful in the relations. He rightly puts power as something multi-contextual but cannot explain when resources and under what conditions behaviors are meaningful as power. This is one of the problems of power fungibility.

2.2.2 Power as Capacity

The realist school of thought considered power as central to international relations, with a suggestion that coercive power is ultimately what matters for the states. Power was described by Kenneth Waltz as “the distribution of capabilities,” allowing him to theorize the polarity of the international system (Waltz, 1959, p. 101). Waltz sees power as inflicting pain on others with military might, without thinking about power also being about “willingness to absorb it” and fight back with morals, as was witnessed in the Vietnamese fighting back against a much stronger US (Reich & Lebow, 2014, p. 31).

Mearsheimer followed Waltz by asserting the importance of military capacity in measuring power. The power as capacity argument goes on to calculate the articulated power in the international system and focuses on the distribution of capabilities. Relying on the intention of the actor, the amount of power is calculated by several material capacities of the countries for coercing the others or signaling the potential to coerce with the same capacities (Beckley, 2018).

Quantitative researchers studying international warfare have tried to identify reliable power measures relying on the capabilities. For this purpose, the Correlates of War project (Singer, 1988; Singer et al., 1972) created the Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC). Accordingly, a state's CINC score is comprised of six distinct elements in any given year: military manpower, military spending, energy consumption, production of iron and steel, overall population, and urban population. The population, economy, and military of a state are reflected in these constituents. The percentage that a state has for each component in a given year is determined, and the average proportion for all components in a state is then multiplied by the CINC score. Through this, scholars could also quantify the distribution of power in the international system. Crisler criticizes power as military capacity, which is actually orientated on the "military might," but not power (2017, p. 4).

Keohane and Nye criticize power as military capacity because power and coercion are more than that: first, in case of economic sanctions then, the states are not reacting militarily to coerce; second, as the states' perceived margin of safety (everyday situations in which the possibility of having a war is low) widens, they are more inclined to turn to other sources for power (1973, p. 158). The school of Neoliberalism places significant emphasis on the value of collaboration and mutual gains between governments (Powell, 1991). As the connection of the states increases, they create interdependent relations and remain strongly attached to those relations. These interdependencies, however, are not always balanced between partners, which

can lead to circumstances in which imbalances might be used to achieve coercive goals (Baldwin, 1980; Keohane & Nye Jr, 1973, 1998). Material capacity continues to be a prerequisite for interdependencies, even though relational power is the outcome of bilateral interactions. Having resources enables states to develop interdependencies with partner states (Moyer et al., 2021). This strand of literature is concerned with the economic might and tools for developing interdependencies. Nonetheless, they add little to whether power is necessary or not in effectuating these resources. These studies are more relevant to the consequences of having resources rather than power and influence.

Another theoretician who criticizes power as capacity is Thomas Schelling. He expanded the thought of power by emphasizing the significance of commitments and signals, criticizing the model of power as resources. He insisted that having the *will* to wield power was just as crucial as having the ability to do so. Maintaining the actor's credibility requires always maintaining a commitment to the promises (Schelling, 1980). It is possible to lose reputation by not keeping even a small promise. Thus, an international actor's reputation is important as power is a matter of signaling the will. Schelling worked on nuclear deterrence and imported game theory into this decision-making paradigm (Schelling, 1980). He theorized signaling and commitment as a matter of power by focusing on bargaining and decision-making processes without necessarily contributing to the images and the production of

meaning through power. Rather, the attached and proliferated signals are to be used in the evaluation of the values and preferences of the actors.

2.4 Influence in International Relations

The use of influence as a concept usually remains vague (Ersoy, 2018). For example, Moyer et al. developed the Formal Bilateral Influence Capacity (FBIC) index without providing a sophisticated definition of influence. Without any definition, they use concepts such as “influence capacity” interchangeably with the “relational power” (2021). Moyer et. al explained what is constituted as power and operationalized influence without a definition by looking at economic, security, and political dimensions (2021). Instead of solving the problem of scholarly communication, this makes the case more convoluted since influence is understood as capacity and equalized to power relations, which has several different definitions, just as in Isaac, Foucault, and Nye as mentioned above.

If influence is understood as “spheres of influence,” then it can be inferred that it suggests a meaning that influence can be used in control of the others in structures. This inference is closer to the “metric power,” which puts another dimension on Foucault’s conception of relational power by adding the directive motivation of satisfying the workplace metrics in private companies (Beer, 2016). Such a motivation is regulatory, productive and exerted within the social structures and international organizations (Beer, 2016). Yet, somehow, influence is regarded and

thought of with the “spheres” and thus understood more as a geographic field. This is why most of the literature has focused on case studies rather than discussing what influence is, such as in Dahl’s conception that influence is understood to be the outcome of power.

Other scholars coming from great power politics convolute spheres of influence with the definition of hegemony by Gramsci.² Amitai Etzioni defines spheres of influence as “international formations that contain one nation (the influencer) that commands superior power over others” (2015, p. 117). Geography, history, and regional politics gain importance in such a conception. Yet, these only provide components of influence since the author still relies on power’s authorization on the others, and that power is also not clarified. In another exemplary study, Ferguson and Hast use “the spheres of influence” as a political tool, a type of politics that the strong states use to bully the weaker ones through threats such as territorial claims (2018, p. 279). In the deterrence theory, the influence becomes a concept that carries the inherent definition of a change in “...the other’s decisions over war and peace” by another actor (Davis, 2003, p. 26). Yet, if this is influence, it is strongly related to the second and third faces of power debate, as mentioned above. James W. Davis proposes a mechanism of influence through the components of source, signal, and target. He argues that “social influence” is achieved through the tools of threats and promises

² Gramsci defines hegemony as a higher class exercising political leadership over the lower classes to accept the status-quo. For more, see: Bates, T. R. (1975). Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36(2), 351-366. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2708933> .

(Davis, 2003). Accordingly, the signals that are created by a source “influence the target’s behavior” (Davis, 2003: 10). This type of theory, though without a solid definition, employs the communication theory where the signal is produced by a source. Finally, Davis also fails to recognize the relationship between power and influence.

Reich and Lebow argue that power and influence are different concepts that contain a link of transition between themselves (2014). They argue that there are “...different kinds of power and the diverse ways in which power might be translated into influence” (2014, p. 22). They criticize the literature in treating both concepts indifferently, starting with Morgenthau, who distinguishes power and influence by asserting that power does not always translate into influence automatically, yet uses the two concepts interchangeably (Reich & Lebow, 2014, p. 22).

Reich and Lebow also criticize Realist and Liberal scholars as bringing materialism to the core of power and influence concepts by the American way of looking to the world that prioritizes material capabilities over norms and persuasion (Reich & Lebow, 2014). The American way of looking to the world overlooks the moral (normative and persuasive) aspects of international relations which are more than occasional. For example, they give the moral background of the Vietnamese soldiers’ motivation during the war (2014). Lebow and Reich suggest that influence is two-faceted; one is material power capabilities, and the other is social power (2017).

Social power is comprised of argumentation, framing, and persuasion (Barnett & Duvall, 2005). The norms and ideas interplay with capacities since the use of power resources comes from the decision on how and when to use them. Thus, two scholars consider a dynamic relation between material and social forms of power under the banner of influence, that is, the key concept rather than power. Accordingly, influence is changing the other's interests and identity formation (if successful): like persuasion, as it is a form of influence, that is getting others to think that what you want them to do is of *their* interest (Reich & Lebow, 2014). Persuasion, for them, is about shared values and acceptable practices (Reich & Lebow, 2014, p. 12).

Although Reich and Lebow describe their components of influence well, they fail to provide an exact definition of power and distinguish influence from persuasion: “Suffice it to say here that power, by which we mean primarily economic and military capabilities, is a raw material that can be used to gain influence. By *influence* we mean the ability to persuade others to do what one wants or refrain from doing what one does not want” (Reich & Lebow, 2014, p. 12). The quote shows that Reich and Lebow distinguish the different concepts, yet use a Dahlian definition for influence, and a power-as-capacity description of power without providing an abstract definition. In this sense, Reich and Lebow fall short in meeting their claims of saving these concepts from Realist and Liberal lenses, and their contribution to the literature remains limited.

2.5 Visibility

Visibility is associated with the word *visuality*. Although not directly defined in most of the works, *visuality* is used as rendering something visible, being illustrated, or perceived by the eye. Most of the research done on visibility is actually related to visuals, representation in the media, framing, and violence. Global Visual Politics is one research strand of this, presenting a research program starting with the call of Roland Bleiker as “Aesthetic Turn” (2001). This newly emerging body of literature sheds light on the relationship between images, the imaginary, and the political (Bleiker, 2018a) in international relations and political science. The literature so far is focused on the specific cases where the visuals explain imagery by some real-life cases (Wodak, 2009), ideology (Gitlin, 2014), and focusing on the representation of reality by the fiction (Wodak, 2010). This relationship paves the way for thinking about how the political could be represented or defined through the use of images.

Scholars who work on visuals and politics also assert the importance of understanding the political imaginary. According to Browne and Diehl, “The imaginary generates the ‘common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy’” (2019, p. 1). According to the imagologists, the difference between the “us” versus “them” is created through the image (Leerssen, 2007). How the images represent the given reality is organized by the political imaginary of the power holders. The political imaginary and the constructed reality around power politics are well explained by Roland Bleiker:

“Security is about the political imaginary as much as it is about facing threats” (2009, p. 66). According to this strand of thought, the political imaginary informs security practices (Ahall, 2018, p. 87). This is because of the very fact that humans understand their experiences by a relation of representation between the language and the object (Moore & Shepherd, 2010, p. 305).

The poststructuralist points of view regarding popular culture and visual politics have started to come out since the 1990s as images and imaginations informing the ways of waging war. Mark Chou and R. Bleiker argue that war’s dramatization brings identities into the movie sector (2010). Through the image production, identities can be constituted and de-constituted. In an analysis of the “heroes” both in the Middle East and in American popular culture, the identities of the protagonists are co-constituted (Duncombe, 2015). Timothy Luke theorizes Baudrillard and the international system and power that are rooted in suggesting that politics stands for consumption, and politics is basically about producing codes of meaning (1989b; Luke, 1991). In such a conception, security is also constructible through complex meanings, not in a linear way, but in multiple ways in which one can decode from the reproduced images.

Visuals are thought of as the objects of inquiry, but are rarely taken as agents in the literature, as will be explained by W. Callahan’s work (2020) in the next section. In mapping the Global Visual Politics (2018), Bleiker suggests that influence can be

traced via imagery, narratives, or visual narratives. The concept of visibility encapsulates the very foundational idea that the images must be seen by the relevant audience(s). The images that are still, moving, and three-dimensional are all subject to be seen by particular someones, as he notes, “Photographs do not make sense by themselves. They need to be seen and interpreted” (Bleiker, 2018a). Governments are not only sensitive to public reaction due to visible acts of power (Duncombe, 2020), but they can influence the public through visibility.

2.5.1 Visibility and Power

Reich and Lebow contend that “Power has to be masked to be effective” (2014, p. 29). Jean Baudrillard argues that power is visually produced and embedded in consumption habits. Thus, power in the consumption age is transformed into visuals and signs of “power as capabilities.” This makes it a situation where power as capacity is turned into visuals and references that seem to be power (as capacity). Every sign is supposed to be referring to an object, this relation is called a “representation relation.” Yet, this logic has collapsed with the end of modernism. After the proliferation of communication technologies and the end of the Cold War, images are now produced without any references to outside reality (Baudrillard, 1994). Through the images produced without a substantial reality, many absurd³ situations and rapid changes in the meaning of the signs come into play alongside the main concepts, and there is a political economy of signs to produce these as such.

³ A common sensical criticism to an abnormal event from a modernist perspective that inheres the judgement of a behavioral product lacking a rational mind.

Baudrillard suggests that before the rise of a consumerist society, objects were produced for their use-value (Baudrillard, 1998). After the rise of consumerism, social life was arranged in a way that objects were produced for their symbolic values. Power becomes a subject of this process since power is a frequently produced image in politics: “Power itself has, for a long time, produced nothing but the signs of its resemblance. And at the same time, another figure of power comes into play: that of a collective demand for *signs of power*—a holy union that is reconstructed around its disappearance” (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 17). With this quote, Baudrillard suggests that when we use the word “power” today, it actually corresponds to the “signs of power” (Smith, 2010). The references directly go to the images the society accepts as power itself. For example, states use soft and sharp power tools consciously.

With the reading of Jean Baudrillard, one can argue that these are signs of power, e.g. a military parade, a nuclear-warheads simulation, a military technology fair open to the public are signs of power: They are spectacles that make more meaning than brute force. These signs of power are actually only material products or stage parades, yet they suggest soft power that makes a country resembling the US as the hegemon. Thus, signs are to “show” or to be perceived by others. The amount of receivers and the duration of appearance connotes *visibility*.

Having its roots in social theory, visibility comes to be the defining factor of the political phenomena. Rajchman, discussing Foucault and Deleuze in their perspectives on the knowledge and power relationship, states that how things are

rendered visible and what is rendered seeable are defining factors of understanding what is power (1991). The ways of showing and selecting what is to be shown imply that there are means of visibility, such as media, people-to-people interaction, streets, architectural construction, etc. Since power and control produce knowledge -what is right to think about, what is legitimate to ask- in Foucault's theorization, before knowing things, they are shown to become power. In this sense, the discourse, which sets the reality of the subjects, is constructed through visibility. And the control is over the means of visibility. Both Baudrillard's and Rajchman's contributions to the social theory enable us to understand what constitutes power and who constitutes the powerful. For these, they do not present a scheme to distinguish where to put means in producing power and being influential.

With the task of deconstructing the visual images to show the ideologies behind them, William Callahan produced the approach of sensible politics (2020, p. 19). This approach introduces the politics of visibility, and visibility as a concept that "involves the search for the meaning of the visual" (Callahan, 2020). This aspect narrates that visibility has several dimensions, as this thesis also claims. Visibility is more than the sight in the eye; it is everywhere there is a social relationship. Visuals are social constructs, thus, they are objects. They also construct the social, thus, they "do" things (Callahan, 2020; Mitchell, 2005). The claim is that visibility is like a strategic field where the visuals flourish and play the main act. This is not enough to describe visibility, as it involves *ways of seeing*, *seeables*, and the *unseen*. The unseen includes the option of invisibility. It involves the performance of the actors

that are perceived by someone, and every performance is to show for an audience while being rendered invisible to others. The strategy here is the selection and control over who is being seen, what to show, and controlling what is visible.

Visibility itself is not a strategy, unlike Callahan argues (2020). Being visible makes someone relevant to the society and sparks other steps while remaining visible. In international politics, this might mean being visible to a mass audience or elites of another state, organization, or local people. In order to clarify the complexity of the abovementioned works regarding the roles of visuals, visibility, and actions, an analogy is useful. This can be simplified through a car analogy. For Callahan, visibility is the body of the car; it is the field where the visuals take place, while visuals are parts of the engine of that car. In this thesis, an actor is the driver, visibility is the car key, performance is turning the key, producing a symbolic value is the gearbox, the means of visibility is the wheels, image is the fuel, and hyperreality is the engine. Influence is the distance that the actor goes; if the car moves, the technical parts of the car are successfully working.

Callahan explains the struggle for and politics of visibility/invisibility with the component of representation of identities and provocation of the issues (Callahan, 2020). He provides examples from the news and entertainment media to illustrate how identities and issues are rendered visible and framed by the non-state actors. Yet, to decode the ideologies behind the visuals, Callahan suggests that making

something visible requires visualizing it, and the reverse is rendering it invisible (Callahan, 2020). This renders visibility merely to the framing by suggesting that it is primarily for the representation of identities.

Working on “Learning how to see,” Debbie Lisle supports this criticism by citing Steve Graham, that the power of the visual always exceeds the simple matter of representation (2016, p. 299). Before identities, the politics of visibility signifies that actors struggle to draw a picture of reality directly about what is out there rather than representing the in/out groups. Politics of visibility is to be seen and then reconstructed in a narrative broader than the representation of the identities. This brings what Callahan calls the hierarchies of social ordering. Indeed, the hierarchy includes a ranking born of the power of the actors that are attached to them.

In the “age of visibility,” as Callahan suggests, the first aim of the actors is to be visible; among the visible ones, there can be a social hierarchy. Calling it a visual age suggests that visibility is the beginning of a social construction. Any object, before being represented in a pool of visuals, needs to perform its existence in a way that can be seen by others. This is why visibility is the defining nature of power rather than force, influence, or its type. It is the beginning of the social construction of politics.

What is missing in Callahan's work is that visibility goes beyond visualization; it starts with a performance, the sparking moment of circulation of something in front of an audience or sent to it. Yet, visibility has several dimensions, as Lisle suggests, bringing several questions to the front: "Who does the seeing and who does not; who/what is being seen and who/what is rendered invisible; who is the assumed audience; what is privileged in the enframed world and what is not; how does the construction and arrangement of visual content produce a preferred meaning"? (2016).

2.6 Discussion of the Literature

The literature on power and international relations presents various criteria for power, including the context, considering how the power is performed, the subjects and the objects, aim, depth, weight, and dimensions. The previous approaches to power range from *power over*, *power to*, *three faces of power*, *power as capacity*, *power as influence*, *metric power*, *relational/structural power*, *hard power*, *soft power*, and *sharp power*. Except for Dahl's conception, none of these, as discussed above, provide an abstract conceptual definition of "power," instead, they propose how to observe power in particular aspects and contexts. For example, power as capacity stands for calculating the material forces that result in coercing other actors. Resources to coerce are interpreted as force or might. Soft, sharp, and hard power are also describing the dimensions of power, with different tools, aims, and within different relations. The power to/over debate is about the outcome of power, whether

it is a subordination relationship or domination, whether it is structural or about the actor's objective intentions. These, overall, do not define power.

Social structures are made by people, and within these structures, if the actors exist in types of relationships, they must be visible to each other. Isaac's definition of social power stands for the types of relationships and people's "powers" attributed to these relationships without necessarily observing a behavioral outcome. This stands for performances of the actors, such as the power to do something, e.g., a teacher's power to give homework and a student's power to do homework. Yet, these still stay within the paradigm of empirical behavioral outcomes. Without observing any intended behavioral change, can there be any power relation? If it is as such, power should be about 'being,' not doing per se. Before producing behavioral outcomes on each other, the actors have performances on their own, either static or active.

What links these behaviors to society is their visibility. Linking anything to society means becoming a part of the meaning-making process. For example, states may have resources on their own without the observers having any opportunity to see them. If these performances are visible, then there is a chance to create an opportunity to call it force, coercion, or co-optation. Any dimension of power, be it soft, sharp, or hard, is called as such whenever they are visible. Visibility is the core if these actions are to produce meaning. Producing meaning here is close to the idea of identifiability—an action/object that means more than its own limits. For example,

a gun means violence; an act of attacking someone to do something is “force”.

Performances are not behavioral outcomes of a process; if these performances are visible, then they are socially meaningful. If someone can be visible, it means that someone is socially relevant and matters to society, in any social relation and structure.

The types of these social structures are defined by the visible performances, and they are shaped through visible performances or the performances that are held invisible within the structures. An example of how to read visibility’s preceding role could be given from NATO. International organizations are social structures. In this social structure, during the Cold War years, the US was the most visible actor. The US’s visibility also expanded towards the sectors to perform progressive techno-military might, such as Hollywood, industrial production (Wolfe, 2013). The most powerful actor still may have the problem of performing worse, as in the post-Cold War years. The member states had a reality that imagines the world politics through this lens: the Soviets, who threatened the lifestyle of the Western states, versus the US-led free world. Within this influential narrative, the US presidents performed to ensure that the members’ reality remained the same.

After the Cold War, during Trump’s presidency, the US increased its visibility, yet changed the Cold War reality; the US still protects the NATO members that are not committed in a transactional way to the US. Donald Trump downplayed the

importance of the NATO alliance and showed low trust in international organizations. Still being the most visible actor, the influence over the members on their inclinations changed; the US couldn't impose the same commitment from the members since there was no Cold War reality for most member states. The "power to" approach would investigate the features that are defined by the social structure, yet the social structure remains the same, and the "power-over" approach would seek for the US to create a behavioral change over the others. Power as visibility shows how power is exerted differently, and understanding influence as change in reality shows that while the social structure remained the same, the reality had changed.

A Dahlian power analysis would suggest for the same social relationship that the US has potential power over the peripheral members of NATO to change their decisions in different amounts and scopes compared to, for example, France. For the same purposes, the US could use soft or sharp power apparatuses. This meaning-making process is what social structures are mainly about. But none of the domains of power present what power is. Visibility, on the other hand, marks the existence of the actor and the social setting. Thus, power is the ability to be or make (in)visible. If a concept's domains are attributed to its modes of visibility, then visibility is what defines the concept. That is, visibility defines power, and the domains define what aspect of power we *observe* within the given social context.

The soft power theory stands for changing the preferences of the others (Nye, 2004). Nye problematizes power as influence and power as capacity approaches with the complexities of intentions, the fungibility of resources into influence, and the change of the nature of power (2004). Similarly, the change of preferences assumes that preferences are produced in the context of political relationships. Yet, before the preferences, the narrative of the politics is more determinative of the actors' actions. Preferences might be changing of the actors, but a comparison of two actors on the same audience with similar approaches is not elaborated, just like EU candidacies, electoral campaigns, or international political movements. The resources might not produce meaning in society—imagine that one has a TV channel, but no one watches it. Visibility defines power.

What the faces or forms of power can explain is *post-power*, the abilities that are accompanied by power plus other phenomena. All the faces of power accompany power with something else. Dahlian power accompanies power plus force or persuasion and then defines power (1957). Bachrach and Baratz (1962) adds control over media to power and then came up with agenda-setting function of the power holder. Lukes (2021) proposes power plus control over the meaning making, and comes up with the facet that changes ideology. Soft power explains power through co-optation strategies to have an influence over others after being powerful (Nye, 1990). Power as visibility, on the other hand, aims for the birth of power in the social

relations, and then explains the steps between power and influence through the components of visibility adding to power.

2.7 The Introduction of Thesis to the Literature

This thesis proposes the stages of visibility that explain how the performance of an actor becomes meaningful to an audience in the way it becomes influential. The preferences might be produced somehow earlier, and the intentions may not be set if they are not visible. Moreover, visible actors can create changes, but this change must be others' political reality for the visible actor to become influential. If the only thing that changes is the preferences of an actor, that can be interpreted as persuasion.

Power as visibility framework includes symbolic value creation out of military capabilities. By criticizing Schelling and the nuclear weapons scholarship, Timothy Luke criticizes that the study of nuclear weapons should take communicative and semiotic analyses seriously (Luke, 1989c, p. 218). The use values of nuclear weapons after Nagasaki and Hiroshima misled scholars to think about their technical capacity and decisions over these capacities, but with the nuclear peace, the meanings have changed. The symbolic function is actually proved to be more important, because the visibility of the nuclear weapons comes to represent a meaning of national capability, interest, national security, etc. The nuclear weapons'

use value stays as a practical guarantee in terms of war, but it is only a practical guarantee behind the symbolic value (Luke, 1989c). They become symbols of “power” without defining what power is as a self-referential code. This thesis’ proposed framework has explanatory power in explaining the symbolic value making as in Luke’s criticism of Schelling.

The concept of “power” used in this thesis does not denote inducing others to do what they otherwise would not want to do, but to an image of power, with the sense of “this is what strong states do.” It can be easily understood with the known example of wearing Prada meaning a social status, not the function of the specific product, nuclear weapons, and power as capability becomes such (Baudrillard, 1998). Power as visibility, however, corresponds to both aspects: Creating a symbolic value and proliferating it is examined as the way to create influence. In this respect, this thesis also contributes to the intentions problem.

Upon the suggestion of Duvall and Barnett that “scholars of international relations should employ multiple conceptions of power and develop a conceptual framework that encourages rigorous attention to power in its different forms,” (2005, p. 39) this thesis proposes a conceptual framework of power as visibility. Power, in the visual age, is not only about controlling others to behave according to the former’s intentions or preference-making. If the means to this definition can be found in soft and hard power distinctions, the questions of why there is a struggle of being visible

by the actors in current politics and through what steps this visibility ranks the actors differently in positions of authority, remain unanswered. These concepts stem from control, strength, brute force, and influence. This thesis claims that power can be defined as making others/something (in)visible.

None of the definitions of power that are delivered in the previous section seem wrong, but because they are incompatible, we must consider what power is more broadly in order to develop a definition of power that encompasses all Dahlian conceptions: power as capacity, power-over and power-to debate, forms and faces of power conceptions. Even the question of what is power, an object or a condition of relations, is undecided in the literature. For example, a Foucauldian argument would rest on power's structurally embedded nature rather than it being something to be possessed. Overarching this debate, this thesis suggests viewing visibility as "being socially relevant and mattering to a social group," and defines power as the ability to be/make visible. We can speak of power as both a potential and as something that can be assessed that emerges in social contexts.

Power as visibility solves the problems of definition of the incompatible definitions between structuralist and behavioralists.⁴ It introduces visibility as the element that

⁴ Several of the structuralists are Foucault, Isaac, basically "power-to" theorists; and the behavioralists are the ones who follow Dahl's definition, and power as capacity.

defines both capacity and social structures. The problem of knowing the intentions⁵ in Dahlian definition is overcome by making the intentions visible and focusing on the performance rather than mere behavior. The problem of why power is structured in power-to approaches is solved through visibility's very nature: Visibility constructs social structures when more than one person becomes socially relevant to each other through seeing each other. After redefining power and influence, the next section touches upon the operationalization of the term and the conditions of power that are defined in social interaction.

2.8 The Contribution of Thesis

There are two main reasons why power as visibility is a better explanation than that of the previous ones. Firstly, power as visibility is more up-to-date because the context in social life is directed by the principle of being visible. People, politicians, and states need to be shared through social media and traditional media or invade the agenda through several means of being seen. The images are circulated at an enormous pace; the political knowledge becomes dominated by the infotainment media (Debrix, 2007). That has a consequence of how the images of security, insecurity, and power become important to shape and set the imagination of the audiences. This imagination, as it is circulated and related to political practices, becomes the reality of the audiences, since they make an interpretation of the world

⁵ It is simply, how can we know that actor B would not do the act without the compulsion of actor A? What makes these intentions socially relevant?

politics relying on these images. For an image to exist, it must be visible to others. Changing communication technology after the 1960s, the increased globalized networks in the last century, and an increase in the consumption of goods, news, and popular cultural products worldwide are the up-to-date developments that shape the context of politics (Nye, 1990). The social context may not have been overtly defined by visibility seventy years ago; it has increasingly become one.

Secondly, the social structures are better explained through power as visibility. As a social phenomenon, international politics is subject to the changes counted above in the social context. Social contexts are built upon seeing each other and are sustained by being important, just like ranking status in a given social circle. For any status or hierarchy to emerge, there must be power. Power is born out of social contexts; being visible makes someone socially relevant. Thus, it is about power. Being socially relevant in the current society is power. The frequency of being seen increases one's social relevancy. After that, it can make people do something otherwise they would not do, or set the agenda since the one who is seen is him/her, or can introduce his own ideology to the ones who see him/her more than any other actor.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUALIZING POWER AS VISIBILITY

Power as visibility is about defining power and describing the process of its translation into influence through the components of visibility. However, the operationalization of these concepts for a research program is essential. What this thesis coins power as visibility is not solely about a definition of power but also a theory and analytical framework that explain the process of how power translates into influence. Explaining this relationship, this thesis aims to answer two primary questions: What are power and influence? How does visibility play a role in translating power into influence?

The literature on power roughly agrees on the concept's relational and context-dependent nature (Baldwin, 2016). According to Goffman, every social act is performed in front of an audience (Goffman, 2002). Societal contexts are built through visibility; any action or subject related to politics should be perceived by particular audiences. Here, instead of actors and behaviors, the concept of performance is more useful because it encompasses both. Agents perform their

existence and actions within an interaction with the audience. Visibility is the key for this interaction to emerge.

Performativity is a “certain kind of enactment” (Butler, 2009, p. 1). The concept of “performativity” implies that language has an active role in accomplishing something, while “performance” emphasizes the ongoing need to constantly reproduce certain meanings and enact signification within a specific context (Hajer, 2005). Enacting signification might be through speech, showing presence, or behavior. Thus, performing is showing; making a visible action, or presenting one’s existence. Performance encapsulates all in a dramaturgical and interactionist sense; it poses audience classifications of performance, which is explained in detail in explaining the influence.

Visibility is not only about being seen; it has several components that make a visible actor influential. For this reason, power as visibility requires a framework for the analysis of how power turns into influence. There is a sequential order of steps required to be influential. Thus, this framework helps explain what are the main components in converting power into influence, and why materially stronger actors are not necessarily influential. I follow Robert Dahl’s method of explaining the abstract and operational definitions of power and influence from his essay, *The Concept of Power* (1957). To explain the mechanism in a broader sense, I start by providing each concept’s abstract and operational definitions.

There are actors who use invisibility as a strategy, that could be seen as powerlessness in the first place and that requires more attention to analyze. Since power is also the ability to make someone invisible, this involves making an issue or the actor himself/herself invisible, too. A politically authorized actor's choice of invisibility can allow attribution and reproduction of the actor's image from within the audience. The heads of intelligence agencies are usually held invisible after limited visibility for a while. They are mythicized, conspiratorial narratives that underline how powerful these people are, to be reproduced by the audience. Presidents, after heavy losses, choose to be invisible for a while and allow other actors to be visible. Thus, strategies of invisibility in terms of timing, while, and context are important to analyze because they also trigger the same steps of translating power into influence but through public attribution and reproduction.

The control of resources or authority based on legislation or traditions allows the powerful actor to draw the image of the other, the weaker or the threat that will be defeated. This is the ability to draw the image of the other. Drawing the image of the other is a different act from what is called otherization. In otherization, the otherized actors are narrated as less humane, securitized, or distorted. In visibility, the ability to make the self and the others' image offers more material to analyze.

3.2 Definition of Power

Conceptual definitions require abstract and operational definitions (Dahl, 1957). For this purpose, the abstract definition aims at explaining what makes power and what gives it meaning rather than describing what tools are related to power: I define power as the ability to be or make someone or something (in)visible. Briefly, power is the ability to make visible. Thus, when an actor is visible, the resources make meaning: Military weapons of a state can be interpreted as deterrence, superiority, strength. Since power's meaning is made through visibility, the next step is to define and explain visibility as a concept.

Visibility is the frequency of one's being seen by the others. Being visible automatically means being relevant to a social group and mattering to others. Hence, power is about being relevant to a social group and being recognized by them. Having met this first necessity and being relevant to a social group, having a role in that society, namely existing and constructing an identity is allowed to one person, or an actor. An actor who is rendered invisible to any community by another then disappears and has no social relevancy. A political actor should matter to someone; if that person has disappeared, it means that there is no meaning-making opportunity for that actor. Power, in this sense, as visibility, being relevant and mattering to some audience.

The word "ability" in the definition is used as the core of the power since it is the articulated version of the word. Ability provides the definition with being connected

to its dictionary definition: The ability to do something. Although definitions do not need to be the same as the dictionary, a relevance to the dictionary makes them understandable. Since power denotes an ability to make, a potential, it is not only about strength, force, or might to do a performance. Using the word “ability” does not reduce the definition of power to capacity. One can argue that power is an explanatory concept, and strength is a condition that is descriptive. While the first is an attached meaning, a meaning that is produced and constructed after visibility, strength is a description of a situation, e.g., having muscles.

“To be or make something visible” includes presenting and controlling but does not solely reduce the concept’s meaning to these. Being visible is about one’s self. However, making something or somebody visible is about controlling others’ visibility, consequentially reducing their relevancy and significance to the audience. Having “more power” is firstly related to the frequency of who is more visible to an audience or to multiple audiences. The other side of this frequency is about making others less visible. Powerful actors have the ability to control others’ visibility. This explains the “making visible” part. As an example, if a media owner is only visible to the state elite but the channel s/he owns can make other people visible, the media owner is powerful and has control over making a limited number of others powerful without necessarily being legitimate in the eyes of the audience or not. Thus, being “powerful” requires being seen or making another performance seen by an audience.

On the flip side of the coin is invisibility. The emphasis on invisibility is to explain that an actor may want to stay invisible to some certain audience, but if this invisibility means total disappearance, then it means having no significance to the relevant society. Yet, in politics, making or being invisible is usually about being invisible to a certain audience or making someone or some actor to an audience less visible strategically. For example, if a state commits a humanitarian crime but makes it invisible, then that state is powerful. Additionally, while an actor wants to become visible, another powerful actor can render it invisible. Either way, visibility and invisibility are strictly related to audiences.

Dahl operationalized power by introducing the components of building the statement “A has power over B” with respect to the domain, amount, scope, size, and response (1957, p. 203). By the definition of power through visibility, this thesis suggests that power as visibility also has components to call someone more powerful than others through making a comparison: symbolic value-making, means of visibility, image and hyperreality. Returning to Dahl, he builds his argument in domestic politics, and concludes the essay with a calculation of possibilities. However, it is hard to implement this in the context of international relations except for international organizations. Moreover, Dahl used power and influence interchangeably. In his account, this was because power was only visible through its outcome, the response it evokes in actor B. In sum, if you do not see a change of behavior in actor B, then an actor cannot be said to have power. However, since this thesis defines power as

the ability to be visible, and there is still further potential in utilizing one's power, influence must be something else. Namely, power itself, the visibility of actor A, is not necessarily enough for it to have an impact on the narrative and behavior of actor B. Hence, there must be a further step to converting power into influence. The consequence of power, in this sense, is visibility, but it implies the potential influence, rather than direct influence.

3.2.1 Operationalization of Power

The main component in operationalizing power is visibility to an audience. This poses the following questions: Who are in the position of observing the performance of an actor? If there is no audience, there is no politically relevant performance. The audience must comprise any kind of social group to provide the operationalization with wider generalizability. For this purpose, the audiences can be separated into the elite and the masses. Politics is performed as a mixture of these two audiences; elites can be state elites, party echelons, business people, NGO headquarters, etc. The masses can be divided into several smaller pieces: an electorate, a part of the electorate, a group of people that is represented by an identity, etc.

The specification of the audience is important because the audience co-constitutes visibility's "being seen" part. The expectations of the audience are an essential element that allows the actor to create an image of power. Power can be understood as an analogy of a two-sided coin. One side is the analytical use of the concept, that

is, the abstract definition of power⁶. The second side of the coin is the attribution of the power to the actor by the audience, that is the image of power. The image of power emerges when an actor renders something visible with the expectation of being interpreted as powerful by the audience, and the audience attributes power. The image of power, in short, is attributed by the audience to the show of the actor.

Relevant to the image of power is different types of power. In that, they define the requirements for an actor to be powerful. Namely, types of power, such as hard, sharp, and soft, are about the image of power; they do not define what it is analytically but refer to what makes someone “powerful.” The audience constructs any image of power to denote the quality of an actor. It is an illustration that rests on a sense of who is called “powerful.”

How can analysts understand the image of power? It is through asking the following questions:

- 1- What does the actor show to be powerful to the audience?
- 2- Does the actor seem powerful to the audience?

After detecting the first question in the form of an image or performance, the analyst can move on to the second question. If the answer is yes to the second question, the analyst can deduce the expectations of the audience from what is shown by the actor

⁶ The abstract definition is as delivered in the section 3.2 “power is the ability to be/make someone/something (in)visible.”

in an interpretive way. The audience's expectations can be understood through a public opinion survey for future actions. In evaluating past events, these questions and whether the leaders remain in power suffices to understand the audience's expectations since they have accepted them already. Namely, if a selected leader remains in power by the courtesy of the masses, then one can deduce that the audience buys the actor's performance. However, a caveat is in order. What is counted as power is not fixed; it is dynamic according to the changeable expectations of an audience. The power of an image is context-specific because it is dependent on the expectations of the audience and the expectation may fluctuate contingent upon the political circumstances of the relevant time scope of the research.

The possible answers to the first question may include military parades, aggressive utterances, imposing sanctions, winning bargaining negotiations, creating a spectacle of power with public executions, oppression, making foreign aid, the leaders' use of luxury vehicles and offices, etc. The possible answers to the second question may be yes or no because the only result looked for in this question is the power attribution. These two questions eventually lead the analyst to understand whether the actor is attributed power via the image of power.

It is also important to denote the direction of the performance because it is not always the elites conducting the performance toward the mass audiences, nor do elites always perform to other elites. We may also see, for example, a mass-based

protest movement directed at the domestic political or foreign political elite or at the owners of a particular firm—all of which would change the context. Since the image of power is constructed, the audience is ultimately the co-agent of this construction.

Counter-arguing the billiard-balls assumption of Waltzian realism, in international politics, states can be in relations with another state's domestic audience (Bilgin, 2019). The elite can refer to an intergovernmental, non-governmental, or governmental actor, including state officials, international organizations, NGOs, etc. The 'masses' can refer to various domestic groups, e.g., the broad citizenry, asylum seekers, immigrants, genocide victims, partisans, etc. If there are two elite actors, one as the performer and the other as the audience, then this is an elite-elite interaction. If an elite actor performs for their own or another country's domestic citizenry, it is an elite-mass interaction. If a particular group, for example, asylum seekers, makes a protest against a government, it is a mass-elite interaction. Finally, if one mass group performs vis-à-vis another other, it is a mass-mass interaction. An illustration of the possible performance directions of the audiences is shown in Table 2 below:

Audience Performer	Elite Audience	Mass Audience
Elite Performer	International summit (e.g., G20, NATO summit, bilateral negotiations, Government and Lobby group negotiations, Presidential calls)	Soft-power tools, sharp power tools (e.g. Nasser's use of Voice of Arabs, Erdoğan's call for Middle East folks, Political campaigns, PR campaigns)
Mass Performer	Protests (e.g., environmental protests, Black Lives Matter, Greenpeace protests of brands)	Ethnic/Political groups' recognition of each other (e.g. First International, Call for boycott of Israeli products, Civil Rights Movement ⁷)

Table 2: Performance directions between audiences with examples.

The importance of the performance directions changes who the audience is, what the expectation of the audience is, and thus, the attribution of power. In a mass-elite interaction, the performance direction is as follows: The mass is the actor, and the

⁷ Civil rights movement was both a mass-mass and a mass-elite performance because it aimed to create visibility and change the narratives of the masses that live together and the government policy.

elite is the audience. In this interaction, the expectation of the elite from the power of the masses might be their radical disobedience, durability, or their constituency. In an elite-elite interaction, the elite, who is in the role of the audience, might attribute power to a show of nuclear weapons or aggressive explanations from the actor.

3.3 Definition of Influence

The definition of *influence* is one's ongoing understanding of the outside world politics that is formed through the interplay of domestic and international narratives that eventually make *reality*⁸. One's understanding of the outside world politics corresponds to reality. Thus, *achieving* or *being influential* is intervening in, changing, or re-asserting others' reality. Reality is not necessarily a result of power; it may be over-lasting, and it is a cognitive structure. It may change due to a powerful actor's intervention.

The literature, as discussed in the second section of this thesis, considered influence as persuasion or change in behavior, a result of a power act or relation. Lebow's and most constructivists' understanding of influence as the persuasion of one's interest definition stays limited and describes less in this point (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; Reich & Lebow, 2014). Persuasion is an act that is similar to being believable and attractive, not necessarily about a cognitive structure. Persuasion might change the

⁸ Civil rights movement was both a mass-mass and a mass-elite performance because it aimed to create visibility and change the narratives of the masses that live together and the government policy. olitics.

preferences of an actor, but if an actor aims to change the total narrative, what is necessary is to achieve the situation of *immersion*.

Immersion is more than persuasion; it can persuade actors, yet to change the reality of an actor, one needs to perform and be believable in an immersive way. Reality, in this case, is a cognitive structure that the decision-making mechanisms are embedded in (Massari, 2021). An actor might be persuasive without being immersive at the same time, just as in the classical way of coercion. The weak state is persuaded to do the intent of the stronger state without being immersed in the narrative. This often results in counter-movements, just as in the case of the Versailles Treaty's ratification by Germany and the Nazi rising. In this example, the winning states were subordinating Germany, they were influential over pro-Weimer states-people, yet they were not influential vis-à-vis the greater masses of Germany, that the Nazis and their reality were allowed to rise with a totally different narrative of how the world works.

One recent operational definition stands for influence as the ability to change policy, decisions, or make a policy (Aydinli, 2015). However, these are the observational effects of what is derived from power as influence. Changing policy was what Dahl argued in "*Who Governs?*" (2005). This does not comprehend most of the cases in international relations; for example, the rise of populism and populist politicians proves that influence is not solely a policy change or an observational behavior. They

aim to change people's understanding of politics, that it is a game between vicious elites and the people (Aydın-Düzgit et al., 2022; Homolar & Scholz, 2019; Nordensvard & Ketola, 2022). In most cases, populist politicians changed the way people understand politics and developed a strong narrative that is the imagery of their interpretation (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020).

Influence is observable through the narrative changes of the audiences and the performers. Once the expectations and narratives of the audiences are determined and the narrative of the performer is analyzed, the researcher should evaluate whether the image of power could turn into a hyperreality. Then, the narrative changes show the researcher whether the performer is influential on the audience or not.

Audience Performer	Elite Audience	Mass Audience
Elite Performer	Regime change, colonialism, imperialism, policy framework's change, durable alliances	Soft-power, ideology
Mass Performer	Revolution	Consequences of mass migration wave or domino effect, social media, cultural exchange i.e., nationalism

Table 3: Performance directions and influence

The table above shows the phenomena observed with the influence of different performance directions. If an elite changes the reality of another elite group, this might result in a regime change, intervention, colonialism, imperialism, policy framework change, and durable alliances such as NATO. An elite-mass interaction is usually what is called the soft-power effects or spread of an ideology. This can be exemplified by EU's enlargement and spread of liberal democracy. A mass-mass interaction is usually observed in the consequences of mass migration waves.

Deciding on who is more influential is practically dependent on the amount of the masses and the longevity of the changed reality that the performer reached. Cold War leaders Reagan and Gorbachev were influential actors in the worldwide elite and mass audiences; both had long-lasting influences on the masses, yet Reagan and the neoliberal reality were still alive. At this point, deciding on who is more influential could be based on the amount and time.

In discussing power as influence, Dahl problematizes the comparison of influence in different domains and different actors' who perform to different audiences. The definition of influence in this thesis solves this problem. Dahl gives examples of a university professor and a senator. The professor persuades 40 students who otherwise would not do their homework. The senator who persuades 40 other congressional members who otherwise would not have done so to vote in favor of a particular bill. Given the probability of the students and the senators for not doing the objectives were the same, Dahl asks which one is more powerful, the professor or the senator?

Dahl leaves answering the question because it is an incomparable point for him (1957, p. 206).⁹ The problem can be solved by saying that if both actors are seen to the same amount of masses, 40 people of each, their power is the same. Yet, the

⁹ Dahl interchangeably uses influence, thus, it is a question of who is more influential.

influence of the professor and the students changes: The professor changes the reality of the students, and the senator can change the same amount of the senators' reality as well. Since the image of power in the class is imperativeness of the professor, and the power in the senate is convincing more people to vote for, they both seem to fulfill this. Yet, their relevancy to the same audience is the actual power comparison: They do not produce symbolic value of the same topic; rather, they are operations simply two different audiences, and to compare the power of the professor and the senator should be made on the same issue that is politically relevant. A university professor might be more powerful than a senator to the audience of 40 students, if the senator is not performing each of the students. The actual question is, which is more influential? The answer lies in the definition of influence, that is, a change in the political reality. If the definition of influence would be made about any reality, then the professor and politician might have the same amount of influence on different audiences in different issue areas. Yet, for the purposes of this study, the definition of influence is limited to the political reality.

Performance directions contribute to the solution of the arbitrariness problem¹⁰ in the power comparison of Dahl's analysis. If two different actors are both performing to the same mass or elite audience, regardless of the topic, it could be said that both actors are comparable in terms of power and influence, whether or not the domain is

¹⁰ The problem of arbitrariness: A university professor is in the education domain, and a senator is in the political domain. To compare both, they should be acting in the same domain, according to Dahl. For more, see: Dahl, R. A. (1957). The concept of power. *Behavioral science*, 2(3), 201-215. p. 206.

the same. “Obviously,” says Dahl, there is a difference between a politician and a professor, in terms of domains and respondents. Let’s think of the case with a singer and a politician. The singer who performs to a mass audience of the Turkish electorate might be more visible to the Turkish electorate as compared to a politician. A singer might be more powerful than a politician on Turkish electorate, but the problem arises in case of influence. For influence, the actor should change or alter the political reality of the audience. If the singer only changes the audience’s understanding of, for example, love, then s/he is politically not influential. If the singer aims and succeeds in changing the narrative of the audience about how politics goes, then s/he might be more influential than a politician who cannot create such a change in the same amount of Turkish electorate. This case shows that, power can be comparable in different domains, but influence should be about political reality.

Haluk Levent, a Turkish rock singer, has a platform via which he was able to help out victims of the February 2023 earthquake faster than the state officials. Another example is a comedian, who later became a state’s president and led during the war-time, who is no other than Ukrainian President Zelensky. These actors chose to construct a political narrative and create an image of political power. So, these are necessary (but not sufficient) for socially visible actors¹¹ to be politically influential, and that must be something related to the process of that power turning to influence.

¹¹ Any person who is known to be famous or popular is a socially visible actor.

In this case, when the audience is considered the same, the domain matters less to be influential. A comedian, businessperson, or singer can turn into a politician might turn the issue at hand into a campaign and create a rally around the flag effect. Dahl, as a university professor, could try to be a politician or be a public figure who creates *symbolic values*, produces the *image* of being a “powerful” person, and has the *means of visibility* where he has an *immersive performance* such that he can simulate his image and the audiences change their narratives that convey the interpretation¹² of the politics. The italics, thus, are the components of visibility, since they could only be conducted after being and staying visible. The components of visibility turn power into influence.

3.4 Translating Power Into Influence

Actors translate power into influence through several steps. These steps are performance, producing a symbolic value, constructing an image of power, and producing a hyperreality. These steps’ definitions and operationalization are necessary to reach out to a scheme that also produces a step-by-step framework.

These steps are sequential; each step has a feedback mechanism, which means that actors can return to the previous steps. Influence is achieved through completing these steps. Each step is connected to the next with several acts and resources.

Respectively, a performance is connected to symbolic value creation through the act

¹² Narrative that conveys the interpretation of politics is what I call reality.

of producing a rhetoric/utterance¹³. The symbolic value creation is connected to the image of power by making a spectacle. This spectacle includes uttering the narrative and producing symbolic value because the theme of the spectacles consists of these. The image of power is the outcome of that specific spectacle. Should the audience accept the image of power, the image of power translates into hyperreality through means of image production, these are basically the media channels that are controlled by the actor. The following subsections deal with the details of the steps taken by actors to translate power into influence.

3.4.1 Performance

For an actor to stay visible, the performance must be consumable. This consumability is understood as whether the actor is delivering a designed setting, dramaturgical styling, the ability to create understandable spectacles and reproducible rhetoric. Evaluation of these requires a look into the memorable performance of the actor in the time frame that the actor is visible to the audience. In this thesis' case study, the performance of Erdoğan to the domestic and Western European elite audience is evaluated with his ability to create spectacles through scandals, memorable speeches, creating his image, and delivering the performance on TV and in face-to-face interaction with the target audience. The evaluation

¹³ Rhetoric and utterance are used interchangeably to denote any speech delivered by the actor and that speech is brought to the agenda of political debates.

analyzes whether Erdoğan makes a reproducible and symbolically meaningful performance that maintains his visibility.

3.4.2 Producing Symbolic Value

What makes visible resources or a person “powerful” in common sense? The answer lies in the meaning-making process. Since visibility implies the frequency of being seen, the second thing for the audience to do after seeing something is meaning-making about what is being seen. Meaning-making starts with attaching a value to the performance, or if there is a specific object that is shown to the audience to make meaning, then the symbolic value is attached to the object that the performance includes.

The objects have different values, whether they be use-value or symbolic-value (Koch & Elmore, 2006). Use value is attaching the value to an object that is only about its practical results as a craft. The example of a pistol is helpful for clarification. A pistol with fifteen bullets can harm fifteen people. Thus, it is a gun that potentially harms fifteen people in its use value. Symbolic value is at a different stage, where the objects mean more than what they are used for. When a police officer holds a gun, it is security for most citizens. When the phrase “who holds the gun asks the question” is uttered, it is no longer about the potential results of the usage of a gun. When the S400 missile defense system was bought from Russia, President Erdoğan turned it into a symbolic value against his critics. He did not

mention the capability of the air defense system as a use value but mentioned that buying it from a non-NATO member signified the independence of Türkiye's foreign policy (Ceylan, 2020).

Power as capacity, in this sense, misses the point of whether these are made for use value, defending Turkish air space, or symbolic value, Turkish independence in foreign policy decision-making. Türkiye has not yet used the missiles and has little chance to do so, yet they are there for symbolic purposes, regardless of their use-value. Creating a symbolic value is about making more than force or strength. What makes a gun a sign of threat or security is about what symbolic value it is attached by the displayer of the gun. When the actors turn their power into symbolic value, they are closer to being influential compared to others who cannot turn it into symbolic value. Creating a symbolic value of their performance is about what is added to what they show.

How can we examine the creation of the symbolic value of a performance? The question of "What is the function of the performance/object displayed?" could be answered through a close reading of the performance (textual/audio-visual narrative of the performer). The answer lies in comparing the different values of the performance. In the S400 missiles example above, the utterance and the policy behavior of purchasing were examined. Then, whether the use value is translated into symbolic value must be examined. When Türkiye bought S400 missiles from Russia

as a response to the problems in the purchase of the Patriot air defense system from the US, the question is, what is the function of the purchase of S400 missiles displayed? If it is expanding the military inventory and about the weapons' material capacity, then there is no symbolic meaning. Yet, Erdoğan made an utterance that explains the performance of buying S400 missiles as an issue of independent foreign policy and national sovereignty (Ceylan, 2020) rather than suggesting the material capacity of these missiles. Through this explanation, Erdoğan created a symbolic value of the S400 missiles.

3.4.2.1 Wielding a Spectacle

When the symbolic value of the performance is narrated through a spectacle¹⁴, the performance transforms into the image of power. A spectacle is an event that contains a performance that takes the attraction of the audience. These are usually press releases that are delivered after a crisis, a protest march, military parades, Award Ceremonies, Olympics, Leadership summits, etc. In the spectacles, the actor transforms symbolic actions to a larger scale; they assert “power,” and turn the performance to a visual. Thus; it can be assumed that every performance that is delivered through a spectacle turns into an image of power; a spectacle is a huge event that is supported by audio-visual design and unusual delivery. This

¹⁴ In this thesis, the spectacles are held by political actors and these are held relevant to the translation of power into influence. The concept is used in order to describe the effects of the capitalist mode of production's effects on daily life through media and entertainment. m

automatically increases the social relevance of the performance and makes it an image.¹⁵

How can we understand spectacles? As Debord suggests, spectacles are events that demand "...passive acceptance which in fact it already obtained by its manner of appearing without reply, by its monopoly of appearance" (1967). They are produced to be watched, consumed and remembered, visualized public events. Not every spectacle is political.¹⁶ The creators of political spectacles aim to make the performance visible and construct the image of power.

The political actors can create spectacles, turn regular political events into spectacles¹⁷, or tap into the spectacles by being articulated to entertainment spectacles. These can respectively be exemplified with the military parades of the USSR, the Davos Speech of Erdoğan known as "one minute!" performance, Zelensky's appearance in the Grammy's in 2022. The spectacles show that the actors can wield or have access to the means of visibility, which can also be called as any kind of media, from traditional to new media. The important aspect of the means of visibility in the spectacles is that they are monumental and aim to be extraordinary,

¹⁵ Spectacles are reproduced by the media, taken to advertisements, and political campaigns to create a certain image of power. The spectacle is about "...all the methods power employs outside of direct force..." For more, see: Best, S., & Kellner, D. (1999). Debord, Cybersituations, and the Interactive Spectacle. *SubStance*, 28(3), 129-156. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3685437>

¹⁶ Guy Debord suggests that spectacle goes beyond making the commodities visible, but they occupy the minds of people, and make thyself so seductive and consumable that people can't stop including them into their daily life conversations. For more, see: Debord, G. (1967). *The Society of Spectacle* (K. Knabb, Trans.). Rebel Press.

¹⁷ That can be called incorporation.

occupy a larger space in the public memory, more visible and meaningful than a mere appearance.

3.4.3 The Image of Power

What makes the audience attribute power to visible resources or a person? The answer lies in producing an image of power that is accepted by the audience. Images are the representors of real objects or shared meanings (Baudrillard, 2001). If created, an image of a nuclear weapon, for example, that encapsulates the symbolic meaning of its performance (i.e., being a great power) can represent a total destruction capability. Creating an image provokes emotions, challenges the narrations, immediately received by the audience, produce meaning more than the object (Bleiker, 2018b). For example, what makes nuclear weapons so influential is beyond their destruction capability or shape; it is their symbolic value since their use value is between non-use and total destruction that empties the meaning of conquer (Baudrillard, 2023; Luke, 1989a). The national strategies are then based on the symbolic values of the weapons over mass and elite audiences. There is a production since there is a demand-supply of the images of power (Luke, 1989c, p. 222). The images of “power” are expected to be consumed.

How can we study images, and how can we be sure that they are reproduced? This is entangled in the production of the images through spectacles. An image (of a performance) is to be reproduced and proliferated to become influential. For this, the

tool can be called the means of visibility; it includes traditional and new forms of media. If an actor has control over these resources, it can create an image of power in a simulative sense, can be called simulation of power.

3.4.3.2 Means of Visibility

Images are reproduced and circulated through the means of visibility. If the actor has the means of visibility, uses them to create a spectacle of their performance, or proliferates the image by creating a demand and supply for it, then the actor is one step away from creating a hyperreality. These might be TV channels, city squares, show/performance centers, or the ability of a single person to create a stage with a single camera.¹⁸ As an example of the new media, most of the authoritarians own and use social media trolls and bot accounts to penetrate into the others or ban the access to internet through state apparatus. For instance, President Erdoğan has clientelist relationships with various media conglomerates, has control over Taksim Square, and uses state TV to proliferate his image of power through several TV series, and exports it to international audiences (Grigoriadis & Karabıçak, 2022). These exemplify President Erdoğan's control over the means of visibility in Türkiye.

¹⁸ Examples of performance centers might given as stadiums and private conglomerate's exhibition centers such as Madison Square Garden, American Airlines Center, Royal Albert Hall, Taksim Square, Times Square, and Red Square (Moskow). Control of these is not included in controlling the media, yet they are encompassed by the concept of means of visibility. The concept is originally produced for this thesis.

How can we understand whether a reproduced image has the potential to change the reality of the audience? It is through the audience's acceptance of the actor's image of power. If there is a socially accepted image of power that is treated as true power, it should be what is called a simulation of power, according to Baudrillard (1994). Simulation is creating an image that is a copy of reality but treated as truth (Baudrillard, 1994). Hence, an image of power that immerses the audience that is circulated through means of visibility is *a simulation of power*. Yet, this brings a question of how the audience is immersed. It is through the expectations of the audience from "What is power?" as I deliberate in the next section.

3.4.4 The Audience Expectations

The actor-audience relationships are usually dramaturgic and every audience expect a performance from the actors (Goffman, 2002). Ideally, the highest purpose of the performance is to create immersion in the audience. *The audience expectations* are the main narrative elements of an audience. In any narrative there are certain elements that are prioritized by the narrators and the receiving audience. These might be coming from a previous influential politician, or the political culture through the interpretation of norms, facts, collective traumas, causes, societal movements, ideological elements, practical problems, conflict resolution, etc. Finding the expectations rests on the audience that is spotted by the researcher.

The expectations of an elite level audience and a mass level are different. Immersion is an important part of consumer culture, but the consumption of an elite and

audience are different. For example, being an influential negotiator is different than being a good actor who immerses the audience. In general, not every actor is immersive in terms of performing to an audience. Performances are the total appearance of the actors in the stage in front of an audience.

The audience expectation can be listed through widely used common narratives. These might be embedded in visual elements of popular culture and politics that are in common:¹⁹ public opinion surveys, in-depth interviews of representatives, documented speeches, biblical books, cultural values and materials, artifacts, etc. Deciding on focusing which is dependent on the research question and the availability of the ways of inquiry. If the audience's expectations from the image of power are met, then the actor is attributed power. If this image of power is circulated as described in the means of visibility section, then it can be said that this is a simulation of power. The examples of simulation of power are the nuclear deterrence. Not the nuclear weapons themselves, but their images are circulated and shown to multiple target audiences to deter and create a sense of fear and acceptance of superior power. What happens if the power is simulated and is accompanied by a broader narrative? The answer is hyperreality as I describe in the next section.

3.4.5 The Hyperreality

¹⁹ If a political image of power is being incorporated by the popular culture or circulated through it, it is easier to detect it within the expectations of the audience.

The hyperreality is a concept that is uttered and defined by the French scholar Jean Baudrillard as the generation of a model without a real (1994). Hyperreality means a narrative²⁰ that models an assumed reality that does not exist, but in fact, it does not represent any reality but is treated as such (Baudrillard, 1994). After acquiring the means of visibility and creating an image of power that accepted by the audience, the actor has the ability to insert a model of politics, an illustrating narrative that is comprised of but broader than the image of power. For example, bekâ discourse of President Erdoğan creates an illustration of the discourse foreign powers are undermining Türkiye's survival, and the leader of Türkiye should counterpose them at the expense of worsening national economy (Grigoriadis & Karabıçak, 2022, p. 14). The hyperreality creates an immersed audience that refers to the produced images as if they are the context. Hence, the political hyperreality models a political context.

The actor can change the existing narrative of the audience with creating a hyperreality. Reproducing an image of power with a broader narrative that meets the expectation of the audience (simulating power) immerses the audience and puts a narrative about how to understand world politics (hyperreality). As defined above, this process makes the actor influential. In order to study hyperreality, I

²⁰ Hyperreality is an audio-visual or textual narrative.

methodologize the theory of Jean Baudrillard on deconstructing the images, which is a way of interpretive archeo-visual investigation that I explain in the next subsection.

3.4.5.1 Immersion or Suspension of Disbelief

Immersion or suspension of disbelief explains the hyperreality's working mechanism. The mechanism works as such: The audience knows that politics is a dramaturgical exercise rests on performance and the image, yet there are certain expectations of the audience from an actor. If those expectations are met, then the audience continues to the communication in a suspension of disbelief. The immersion and the suspension of disbelief are interchangeable concepts that are different than mere persuasion. Persuasion is done through incentives, attraction or coercion; yet for the suspension of disbelief, the actor must meet the expectation of the audience from an immersive image of power.

Immersion is an aesthetic illusion, that can be a result of both fictional or factual performance (Wolf, 2009, p. 270). In the book "Understanding Virtual Reality," authors William Sherman and Alain Craig propose the term "mental immersion" to describe the state of being fully engaged and suspending disbelief in a virtual reality experience (2018). Immersion refers to the subjective experience of being fully engaged and absorbed in a film (Sherman & Craig, 2018). Immersion in this study also refers to "mental immersion" used by Sherman and Craig that is used interchangeably with the *suspension of disbelief* (2018).

Producing an image of power is similar to the motion picture since both aim²¹ the suspension of disbelief: Making the spectators of a fantastic movie, e.g. Harry Potter movies, believe that the characters in the movie are suffering. Although the fans do not think that Harry Potter really exists, they find such a fantastic reality is believable. Unlike deception, the true character of the narrative is not important, the seductive point is in its consumability (Woodward, 2010). Objective, actual reality is not always consumable. Whether Harry Potter is real is not the case for the audience. These movies' hyperreality is embedded in their narration of universal feelings and relations of friendship, love and heroism. They can change the audience's understanding of and expectations from these social relations. The hyperreality becomes a reference point for the consumers in constructing these social relations (Baudrillard, 1994, 1998; Best & Kellner, 1999; Debord, 1967).

The influential fantastic movies are the ones that have internal coherency. They can evoke emotions in the receivers and make them upset, excited, and curious. In the age of consumption culture, immersion becomes more important and is spread to the other sectors rather than only being about the film. This is mainly because the medium of the movies and the politics are nearly the same. Usually, since the medium is same, the politics embrace the role of the motion picture: The political

²¹ Persuasion, as the constructivists argue, works in the process of persuading the audience that the narrative models a reality. It is persuading the audience that the actor sincerely talks about the true context of the outside world.

hyperreality replaces the existing narratives on understanding world politics. In return, as the reality of the audience changes, the expectation of the audience from the image of power is changed in the vein of the hyperreality's content, too.

Erdoğan's bekâ discourse becomes an example of change in the expectations of the image of power. The Turkish mass audience is immersed in the historical TV series *Payitaht Abdülhamid*,²² that is produced by the President Erdoğan-controlled-TRT, the audience's expectation from an image of power is as the protagonist does:

Counterposing aggressively against the Western diplomats and politicians.

Eventually, this makes the image of power compatible with the altered reality of the audience. During the 2000s, for example, during the EU negotiations, a leader's aggressive utterances to the Western audience were not an expected image of power in Türkiye, but especially after 2013, it became as such.

²² The TV series aired on TRT that portrays Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) in a way that converges with the President Erdoğan's image. For more, see: Grigoriadis, I. N., & Karabıçak, O. T. (2022). Baudrillard in Ankara: mainstream media and the production of simulacra in the Turkish public sphere. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 49(5), 1037-1051. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2021.1900781>

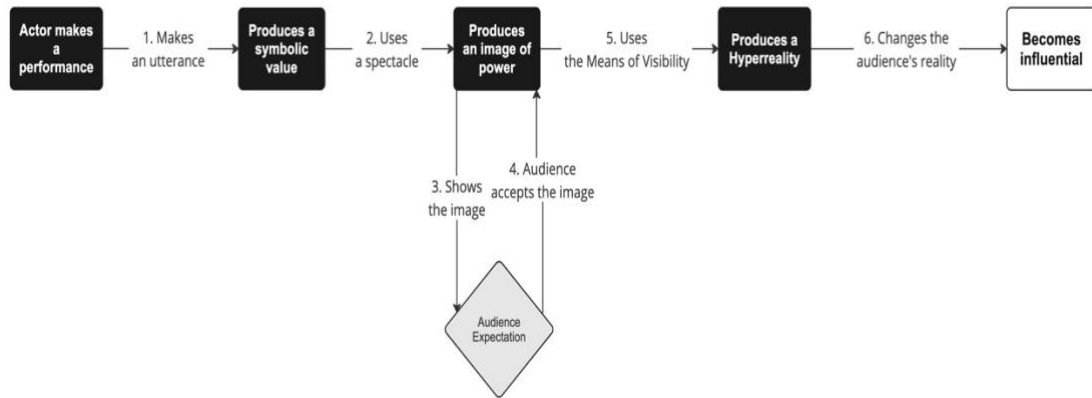


Figure 1: Power as Visibility Framework

The figure 1 models the framework of power as visibility. All of the arrows depict a sequential order and are transformative. Firstly, the visible actors make a performance. The performance couples with an utterance on an issue (the first arrow) and produces a symbolic value. After producing a symbolic value, the actor makes spectacle (second arrow) to produce an image power. In this step, if the audience's expectations are met by this image, then it is accepted by the audience as power (the arrow between audience expectation and image of power). Then, if the actor uses means of visibility to increase circulation of the image, this allows them to create an immersive narrative which becomes hyperreality. If the actor can change the reality, then, as the last arrow suggest, the actor consequentially changes the audience's understanding of power.²³

²³ The audience expectation of the image of power changes consequentially because influence is changing one's reality, this reality includes the audience's expectations by definition.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

STEPS OF ANALYSIS ON POWER'S TRANSLATION INTO INFLUENCE

As described in the previous section, power as visibility is a framework, and this framework proposes a method of inquiry. The method of inquiry in the analysis of power's translation into influence consists of an interpretive step-by-step analysis of the performance. For each step, the questions and the method is extracted from the operationalization of the concepts. All in all, the methodology answers the questions of:

1. Is the actor powerful over the audience?
2. Is the actor potentially influential over the audience?
3. Is the actor influential over the audience?

At the end of the analysis, the actor might be (1) powerful but not potentially influential, (2) powerful and potentially influential but not powerful, and (3) powerful and influential. Potentially influential means that the actor created a symbolic value and an image of power but couldn't change the reality of the

audience. Sometimes, actors may not create a hyperreality to turn their image of power into influence. In these cases, the actors have a potential influence but are not influential.

4.2 Data Collection

The analysis of power as visibility focuses on a single actor's performance for a given time frame. I operationalized performance as a total of visuals, speeches, spectacles, and policy behavior around an issue to an audience. Appropriate to this operationalization, the data of this thesis is selected speeches, visuals, and critical junctures of the case. In order to do these, the logic of data collection is as such: Selection of the actors and the audiences and critical junctures.

Data refers to a compilation of factual information, including opinions or values, that may be analyzed to generate conclusions. Data is the manifestation of social reality that is transformed into a tangible form. It allows us to comprehend and analyze social phenomena by representing the experiences, observations, inquiries, and explanations that we have encountered (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 70). Social research data possesses certain distinct qualities. Language encompasses both spoken and written words, as well as non-verbal forms such as pictures, gestures, and sounds that can be translated into words. It can take various structures and can be created by individuals or groups. Language includes both factual statements and value judgments, and it encompasses both the content of what people say and the specific

language they use to express that content. Additionally, language can incorporate the researcher's thoughts and reflections.

In the field of social research, data sources can be classified into five main categories: (1) personal records, (2) confidential documents, (3) media outlets, (4) tangible nonverbal materials, and (5) social scientific data archives (Singleton Jr & Straits, 1988, p. 345). These five categories are not a mutually exclusive typology. Any data source can be classified into one or more of these categories (Singleton Jr & Straits, 1988). In addition, analysts have the ability to utilize multiple data sources in their studies. The information contained under these categories is referred to as secondary data that is studied by other researchers.

Erdoğan's performance on the Western European elite and Turkish domestic mass audience (the AKP electorate) in the critical junctures of 2008 and 2014 on membership bids and 2015 and 2020 in the migration issue.

The case study of this thesis takes three main sources into consideration. Firstly, the official speeches of Erdoğan in 2008 on Türkiye's EU membership bid that are available on the Türkiye's EU Directorate's website are analyzed. For the migration issue, the performance of Erdoğan in 2020 and 2021 are investigated in his speeches before and following the Sofagate crisis. Thirdly, since performance is comprised of speeches, policy behavior, and the images of the actor vis-à-vis the specific audiences, the material investigated are as follows: the main themes of the visual

narrative that is produced by the state television TRT in the TV series *Payitaht Abdülhamid* and *Resurrection Ertugrul* between 2014-2020, and President Erdoğan's policy behavior that are gathered from using the secondary sources.

4.2.1 Time Frame

The selection of the time frame is about the iteration and puzzle that are included in the sub-questions of the selected case: Why did Erdoğan change his narrative in 2020 with respect to the EU membership bid? Why does Erdoğan accept the immigrants with respect to the power and influence of Türkiye and deal with the EU in 2016 and 2020 to keep them in Türkiye? Lastly, why did Erdoğan make these incongruent turns in 2008 and 2020 with respect to the EU membership bid and immigration crisis? These are the questions that are required in the case analysis of interpretive research (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013). Hence, the important junctures for this study are the years that include the changes in the narrative of Erdoğan on the issue of EU membership and migration crisis, and they are relevant to these interpretive questions.

The reason why 2008 is a critical juncture in the EU-Türkiye relations is that after 2007, Erdoğan does not need EU for political survival at home against the military tutelage. Thus, the accession negotiations come to a stalemate (Saatçioğlu, 2014), but the relations continued to be close since the economic crisis (Saatçioğlu & Elbasani, 2013). 2008 is the year that reflects this change, with the change in the image of

power in Erdoğan's speeches. The 2020 is selected since it is accepted as a crisis in the literature and led to 2021 Sofagate scandal.

4.3 Data Analysis

The step-by-step analysis of the framework is compatible with the interpretive research design. The "interpretive research focuses on context-specific meanings, rather than seeking generalized meaning abstracted from particular contexts," (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013), this research aims to find what is the image of power in the mentioned critical junctures. The steps are the operationalized concepts that are the components of visibility:

- 1- What is the Performance of Erdoğan in the specific issue frames?
 5. What is the utterance?
- 2- How does Erdoğan create symbolic value for the specific issue frames?
 5. What is the spectacle?
- 3- What is the image of power that is produced by Erdoğan?
 - a. What are the means of visibility?
 - b. What is the audience's expectation from power?
- 4- What narrative is embedded in the hyperreality that is (if) produced by Erdoğan?
 5. Is there a narrative change in the audience?

In each step, the transformation is delivered as such: From the performance to symbolic value, Erdoğan's utterance on the specific issue is the necessary

transformative element that is illustrated by his speeches. Analyzing the change from symbolic value creation to the image of power necessitates the creation of a spectacle. From the image of power to hyperreality, the means of visibility and the audience's expectations need to be explained. Finally, the hyperreality's turn into influence necessitates a change in the narrative of the audience. After the investigation of the final steps, the research can conclude whether Erdoğan is powerful or potentially influential or influential. These also answer the sub-questions of the case study: Why did Erdoğan change his narrative in 2020 with respect to the EU membership bid? Why does Erdoğan accept the immigrants with respect to the power and influence of Türkiye and deal with the EU in 2016 and 2020 to keep them in Türkiye? Lastly, why did Erdoğan make these incongruent turns in 2008 and 2020 with respect to the EU membership bid and immigration crisis?

4.4 Self-Assessment of the Criteria

The criteria of this framework are created for this thesis. I developed the questions and the step-by-step analysis aimed to identify the performance of the actors. For example, the second question's answer will include which aspect of the performance becomes a spectacle, how it is produced, and what it means in the given context of the performance. Previously, Baldwin showed an analysis of power relying on the possible outcomes of the action, and the criterion was developed in the form of step-by-step questions (2016). The criterion presented by Baldwin lacked an understanding of what power is for these actors and how they produce power and

influence (if they); instead, it focused on measuring someone's power. Taking what is power, if these actors are powerful and influential at all, are the main elements to answer before measuring the power on a probabilistic scale. One of the side-effects of Baldwin's criteria is also taking power and influence interchangeably. This is why the questions I added as the following guide are fundamental to the power and influence analysis.

The reasons for asking the questions and sub-questions that are integrated into the steps in the analytical framework of the actor President Erdoğan are multiple. Firstly, Erdoğan requires scholarly attention in terms of power; he has ruled for a longer time than the founder of the republic. How he could assume such power for a long time and how he changed some of the definitions and realities in Turkish politics made him an interesting case in terms of power and influence. Secondly, he is a populist leader, and there is a transcendental power that is attributed to him by his supporting audience is an interesting case. Thirdly, Erdoğan's use of narratives and visibility follows a changing path. These changes provide the analysis of a comparison for the same actor in different time frames.

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDY

ERDOĞAN'S POWER AND INFLUENCE: DOMESTIC VS. INTERNATIONAL

If a theory on power does not have explanatory power, it is an ironic shortcoming that makes the redefinition futile. To reiterate, power as visibility denotes a theory about the process of being powerful and translating this power into influence.

Understanding this process requires a solid case study. Although power as visibility can be applied to each case, after the wide use of cable TV and the internet network, the importance of being visible to mass audiences has increased. Especially for being influential, the means of creating hyper-reality developed since these media proliferated and changed the way of engaging with politics (Baudrillard, 1998; Luke, 1989b).

In the age of populism, the importance of being visible and performing to the masses superseded the old-fashioned politics that aim to perform in elite-elite interaction. Now, to be more influential than populists, one needs to be more influential than them. The “powerless” actors in international relations can be more influential on the masses as compared to the elite-elite interaction, and indirectly affect another elite

audience. Turkey's President Erdoğan is a case that allows us to see both aspects of visibility; he performs for consumption at home and abroad by using various means of visibility that are often mistakenly called soft-power tools. President Erdoğan's interactions with the elite audiences of Western Europe and mass audiences of Türkiye, in the critical junctures of 2008 (for the EU membership bid issue) and 2020 (for the migration issue) present unusual aspects to the study of power and influence. In explaining these, I looked at the 2009 Davos speech, the headscarf issue and the Europeanization process between 2002-2008, and the movie the Valley of the Wolves in 2006. Whereas power and influence in international relations are more often coupled with resources, soft power, or persuasion; Erdoğan provides a strong case for showing how visibility and its components are actually at work. At the end of this section, I discuss the power as a visibility framework vis-à-vis the alternative approaches.

5.2 Erdoğan and the EU Membership Bid 2008

5.2.1 Performance

As the Prime Minister of Türkiye, elected in 2002, Erdoğan worked towards complying with the Copenhagen Criteria to become eligible for the EU acquis. Erdoğan's performance of compliance continued until 2014 and took a different road roughly after 2014 with increasing authoritarianization.²⁴ Until 2008, with Erdoğan's

²⁴ The process between 2008 and 2014 is delivered in the next section (5.3) that investigates the 2020 migration crisis.

advocacy, the EU reforms Europeanized Türkiye . The Europeanization brought civilianization and democratization in the domestic politics, with increasing public participation in politics and removing the military tutelage. Thus, the performance of Erdoğan comprised of the speeches and policy choices over these aspects. One of these is the 2008 International Munich Conference performance of Erdoğan.

Erdoğan's opening speech at the 2008 International Munich Conference, he asserted the membership bid through the use value of Türkiye: Türkiye's strategic geopolitical position, Türkiye's role in the energy distribution and security should have been the reasons why Türkiye should be included in the EU. Attending the European meetings regularly back then, Erdoğan shows his commitment to the idea of Europeanization. He uses differences between the two audiences, Turkish domestic mass audience and the Western European elite as an essential element for a communicative bridge.

Until this point, Erdoğan's trials of Europeanization shaped the use value of the state apparatus, that is, a shift from the vertical to a horizontal understanding in the state authority. With these, Erdoğan's government transformed to a balance between the instrumental view of state and horizontal aspects (popular participation) of democracy (Grigoriadis, 2008, pp. 65-66). This means that, leaving the transcendental character of the state behind and using the state as the promoter of the individual private aims. These show that the Europeanization brought use-value of

the state apparatus in Erdoğan's performance in fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria. In his utterance in 2008 in Munich, Erdoğan exemplifies the symbolic that he produces in Türkiye's membership to the EU, that is, "equality."

5.2.2 Symbolic Value

In 2008 Munich speech, PM Erdoğan refers to the discussions in the Western World of "the clash of civilizations," and suggests that "It is a fact that Türkiye as a Muslim-populated democratic, laic country will play a key role in the communication between the civilizations" (Erdoğan, 2008). He urges the EU member states and the EU to take this role of Türkiye seriously. Thus, Erdoğan's symbolic value that Türkiye is a European state with his communicative role between the civilizations is a strategically informed symbolic value.

The EU membership bid allowed Erdoğan to produce symbolic value in defending the equal treatment and amalgamated with Türkiye's Europeanness. In the 2008 Munich speech, Erdoğan made a spectacular assertion by addressing to the Turkish Gastarbeiters who reside in Germany more than sixty years that "Assimilation is a humanitarian crime, be integrated but not assimilated" (Erdoğan, 2008). He called Merkel with rejecting all sorts of alternatives to the full membership of Türkiye into the EU, "...do not delay this with absurd excuses" (Erdoğan, 2008). He refers to the symbolic values of "thinking big requires having a great vision," with a reservation

that “being equal with all the other candidate states,” only then can Türkiye continue to conform to the Copenhagen Criteria (Erdoğan, 2008).

5.2.2.1 The Background of Symbolic Values in Munich Speech

In domestic politics, Erdoğan construed the secular institutional traditions to a tutelage (*vesayet*) in Turkish politics in his initial years of rule as the prime minister, as a part of the Europeanization process. The secular-institutional pressures disallowed him to assume state authority and distribute the posts in public institutions to his societal allies. Secularism here is used as the separation of religious affairs from statecraft. Yet, the use of the word secular had a symbolic value that denoted the lifestyle of the individuals: Both the people who self-identify as secular and the Erdoğan supporters participated in the production of such a symbolic value. This contribution allowed Erdoğan to polarize the society from the secular-conservative fault line. Erdoğan saw that being powerful (visible) was not enough to compete with the military tutelage, as it was the reality of Turkish politics for a long time. The tutelage was the main narrative element in the narrative of the Turkish elite and mass audiences since the first coup in 1960 (Grigoriadis, 2008). Attaching the military tutelage’s negative connotations to secular institutions, Erdoğan created a symbolic value of these for the consumers of his new narrative.

Discussions on whether the AKP should be excluded from politics because of anti-laic policies, such as trying to eliminate the headscarf ban in colleges through

constitutional amendments, have formed Turkey's modern political landscape (Cindoglu & Zencirci, 2008). After the removal of the headscarf ban, the visibility of veiled women in state institutions and public life in Turkey increased. Erdoğan went to the ECHR for the headscarf issue, by calling it the prohibition of freedom of expression (Fokas, 2004, p. 1202; Grigoriadis, 2013). As Belelieu argues, the European court also symbolically stood against the headscarf in order to counterpose the growing radical Islamism in Europe (2005). By standing against it, the European institution sought to decrease the visibility of Islamic images and performance. Making such allegations visible in the conservative masses of Turkish politics, Erdoğan was able to create a symbolic value to build his image on (Bloomberg, 2017).

5.2.3 Image of Power

What is the image of power in Erdoğan's relations with the EU? That is understood as the principle of "equality" in accepting the terms of Europeanization, and bringing a moral dimension that Türkiye deserves the membership. Erdoğan exemplifies these in his 2008 speech as "Türkiye should be included in the decision-making mechanisms of the EU in security issues" and urging the EU to "accept Türkiye to the Union without any reservations" (Erdoğan, 2008). Against Merkel and Sarkozy's suggestions of making Türkiye a privileged partnership, Erdoğan shows an image of power in not taking a step-back.

This image of power becomes clearer in Erdoğan's Davos speech 2009. The Davos speech of Erdoğan was not only targeting the elite-audience in the Davos meeting, but became very famous in Turkish domestic mass audiences: "One minute" and "I will never ever come to Davos again!" Erdoğan made this utterance after the interruptions of the Israeli PM Simon Peres while Erdoğan was speaking. It is understandable that his narrative of "freedom of speech" of democratic-Islamist politicians to be pre-judged by the existing authorities met with several international audiences' expectations: Liberals, middle-eastern Muslims, democrats, Turkish electorate, Balkan Muslims, etc. Erdoğan's performance of becoming an EU member state becomes connected to the firm stance through the use of his image as an Islamist-democrat.

The mass audience in Türkiye, both in 2007 and after his increasing popularity of Davos speech, accepted Erdoğan's image of power. His firm stance against the foreign countries, who regard Türkiye as an inferior country, gained him an image of power. Being powerful, thus, meant standing against the ones who treats Türkiye as inferiors. Erdoğan was not building an image of power as such. In 2003 on the US national independence day, Erdoğan's backed down against the disgrace to the Turkish soldiers in Iraq by the US troops in *Çuval Olayı* (The Hood Event). In this incident, the Turkish soldiers were hooded by the US-troops in Iraqi Kurdistan. Turkish domestic media had severe criticisms against the US troops and the prime

minister upon his answer in the parliament to the questions over declaring a note verbale “What note, a music note?” Erdoğan did not declare any letters of protest.

What was Erdoğan’s image of power at the time was his firm stance against the military and secular tutelage in the domestic politics of Türkiye, referring to the “human rights” and “freedom of expression”(Grigoriadis, 2013). After 2008, and clearly with the 2009 Davos speech, Erdoğan amalgamated this with standing equally with the West. However, this was not enough to produce a hyperreality. The reason of this is that Erdoğan did not have the means of visibility until 2013 in Türkiye. Much of the media atmosphere in Türkiye was controlled by the secularist-affiliated private conglomerates.

How Erdoğan incorporated this stance for the equality in relations with the West rests in the popular culture of Türkiye. Looking at the produced images of the time, in 2006 the Valley of the Wolves: Iraq was a hit on the movie theatres. In this movie, a team of Turkish secret service affiliated mafia leader goes to Iraq and fulfills the honor of the disgraced soldiers. In the Valley of the Wolves, the protagonist represents the resentment of Türkiye against the West (Bleiker, 2018b), a desire to have a self in this bridge-of-civilizations country, that somebody saves the honor of the country through being not subordinated by the Westerners. Erdoğan’s Davos speech marked this as a performance that is turned to a spectacle, and constructed his image of power as standing firm against the West as being equal with them.

5.3 Was Erdoğan Influential in 2008?

Erdoğan's lack of an image of power in 2004 provided him with closer relations with the Western European elites. Then PM Schröder was backing Türkiye's EU bid, and providing positive feedback to Erdoğan and praising his reforms at home. This shows that Erdoğan's image was totally controlled by the Western European elite and that he was a mild Islamist democrat who made secular reforms at home.²⁵ After 2008 with Erdoğan's construction of image of power, Germany PM Merkel and France President Sarkozy made clear that Türkiye's EU membership is problematic, but a privileged partnership is the best opportunity for Türkiye. Not only would this give Erdoğan a potential influence in the narrative of the Western European elite, as Erdoğan started to have a controlled image of his own as a leader who asks for equality, but he would also broaden his image of power at home. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a newspaper who had 355 thousand tirage a day, published a commentary that Erdoğan's speech, "...that turned into a spectacle in International Munich Forum empowers Erdoğan instead of weakening him" (2008). The newspaper called Erdoğan's potential influence in the Turkish mass audience who settles in Germany, that at last there is a leader who listens them and directs them (2008).

²⁵ These secular reforms are a consequence of Europeanization. For more, see: Grigoriadis, I. (2008). *Trials of Europeanization: Turkish political culture and the European Union*. Springer.

As a result of these, the analysis suggests that Erdoğan is potentially influential in Turkish mass audience. Although he changed his image of power at home and abroad, he lost his potential influence after PM Merkel took the place of PM Schröder in Germany. While Schröder was pro-Türkiye membership, Merkel could not be swayed in favor of Türkiye throughout her time in office.

5.4 Migration Crisis in 2020

This section analyzes Erdoğan's performance in the migration crisis in 2020 using the framework of power-as-visibility. In doing so, I revisited Erdoğan's performance between 2008 and 2020 to establish the context. In the image of power and hyperreality sections, I analyze Erdoğan's construction of image and narrative between 2014 and 2020 in order to conduct the analysis. Accordingly, Erdoğan does not construct a new narrative for the domestic audience but continues to refer to the hyperreal context that he produced after 2014. For this reason, I revisited these years in the respective sections.

5.4.1 Performance

In order to conduct an analysis of the 2020 era, briefly presenting Erdoğan's performance after 2008 vis-à-vis the EU is necessary. The imaginary presented by the narrative of the Turkish mass audience towards the EU has changed from approaching "to the level of the civilized nations" to "struggle over the crescent and the cross."²⁶

²⁶ A New York Times article invites attention to the Erdoğan's utterances during the 2017 referendum of 'crescent vs. cross' that is reflected in the series *Diriliş Ertuğrul*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/14/opinion/erdogan-tv-show-turkey.html>

The parties, the EU and Turkey, enjoyed an accession negotiation until 2013, and the membership bid began to be frozen gradually. In 2013, the Gezi protests were suppressed by the Erdoğan government harshly. The oppression of the Erdoğan government gradually increased after this incident, and this has been accepted as a critical juncture in Türkiye's authoritarianism. Turkish authoritarianism is accepted as the opposite direction of Europeanization, resulting from the accession negotiations. Yet, a systemic change in Turkey started in 2014, and Erdoğan became the first elected president of Türkiye.

More than 1.2 million migrants entered EU territory in the summer of 2015, and the large-scale refugee movement was characterized as a “refugee crisis” requiring prompt action. The immigrants used Türkiye as a passage en route to Europe. Erdoğan welcomed the immigrants and made several speeches about them, creating the image of “Ansar” and “Muhadjir” (TRTHaber, 2015). Erdoğan pursued an open-door policy and presented this as Türkiye's aid to the people who are suffering, an aspect of a “moral” stance. Türkiye and the EU signed a convention on this immigrant wave in March 2016. The agreement oversaw the rights of immigrants and made them stay in Türkiye, and the EU promised to send aid to Türkiye for Turkish outlay on the refugees/illegal immigrants. The EU-Turkey Statement was drafted as an immediate reaction to halt uncontrolled refugee movement to Europe. This statement was not unique to Turkey but rather part of the EU's broader migration and border framework, which has existed since the early 2000s. The transnational infrastructure of migration and border management through bilateral and multilateral agreements—described by

many as “externalization” or outsourcing of the EU’s migration policies to its neighboring countries—has occasionally involved the countries of origin, transit, and destination (Karadağ & Bahar, 2022). In 2018, the EU Council stated that accession talks had reached a due to persistent regression in the main expansion strategy reform areas, such as the independence of the judiciary, respect for basic rights, and the operation of the democratic system.

In March 2020, during the Turkish Military Forces’ operation in Northern Syria, Türkiye lost thirty-four soldiers as a result of an air attack from either Russia or Syria. Erdoğan accused the West and the EU of not standing up for Türkiye. After the incident, Erdoğan wielded the “immigrant card.” Immigrants who resided in Türkiye were more than 4 million people, and the 2015 convention was to keep the immigrants in Türkiye. In 2020, Erdoğan threatened the EU by “opening up the gates,” referring to Türkiye’s border with Greece (Tosun, 2020). For several months, the immigrants were directed to get to the border, the interior minister Süleyman Soylu shared the numbers of people crossing the border through his Twitter account. Namely, Erdoğan supported that performance with practice on the field, pushing the EU’s hands to comply with his demands as part of creating the symbolic value and the image of power.

5.4.2 Symbolic Value

Erdoğan produced a symbolic value firstly by calling the immigrants “Ansar” and the Turkish citizens “Muhadjir.” In its use value, migration is an issue of integration and demographics. Calling immigrants with an Islamic reference to the Prophet Mohammad’s immigration from Mekka to Medina produces a symbolic value in the sense that Turkey was in the role of benevolent and powerful caretakers of the oppressed. Erdoğan used this utterance firstly in 2013 (AA, 2013).

Secondly, over this symbolic value of the immigrants, Erdoğan used the immigrants as a card to use in negotiations in 2020. However, opening the gates in March 2020 did not result in a huge migration wave as it was presented as such. The immigration card produces another symbolic value regarding the immigrants, that they are the assets through which Erdoğan attempts to persuade or coerce the Europeans who do not share the burden of the immigrants (Tosun, 2020). This symbolic value was displayed in the 2020 migration crisis, which showed that Türkiye can use non-military assets to be coercive. At the end of the process, there were no huge migration waves, but only thirteen thousands of immigrants camped by the border expecting to cross it.

5.4.3 Spectacles

Erdoğan’s utterance of opening the gates took place in the media as the breaking news. After that, Erdoğan used the April 2021 Türkiye-EU Summit in the

Presidential Palace, Ankara, as a spectacle. Commissioner Von Der Leyen and Council President Charles Michelle visited Ankara after the 2020 migration crisis. In this meeting, the diplomatic protocol was used as a visual that represents Erdoğan's domination over the EU Commission President. The reception room for Michel and von der Leyen's meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu had only two chairs and two sofas. Michel sat beside Erdoğan, while von der Leyen was assigned a seat on a sofa on the opposite side of Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. Despite the fact that both Michel and von der Leyen held the title of President, Michel took on a more significant role. Many people condemned the encounter as misogynistic, including von der Leyen herself. Von Der Leyen was invited to sit on the sofa that was distant from Erdoğan, while Michelle was treated as the equal of Erdoğan and sat beside him in the next chair. In the room, there was also Foreign Minister M. Çavuşoğlu, who also sat on a chair like Von Der Leyen.

The photograph echoed a sexist setting for a diplomatic meeting,¹⁰⁴ including Von Der Leyen. Erdoğan's use of treating the Commission and the Council Presidents differently and unequally created a debate that took over the use value of the meeting, that is, the outcome. The Sofagate incident also created a discussion within the EU; the civil society in Western Europe condemned President Michel for not interrupting the event. This was evaluated to be a counter-move since, in the previous EU summit a few weeks before the Sofagate incident, the outcome was declared as

the “Carrots and Sticks” policy (Inat, 2021). In the meeting, Erdoğan suggested that Türkiye’s ultimate goal is full membership to the EU (Tosun, 2021). Yet, the incident took place as “Sofagate” and was used as a small spectacle during the Covid-19 Pandemic, in the fifth year of 2016 Türkiye-EU Statement.

5.4.4 Image of Power

Erdoğan used the Sofagate scandal as his image of power that was constructed after 2014 as the leader who designs plots against the Westerners and a leader who can help the victims. The Sofagate crisis resulted in discussions among the EU elite, and this became news in Erdoğan-controlled media. Erdoğan helps the immigrants as victims since it is what the powerful ones do: Help the weaker and host them.

Erdoğan’s statements regarding joining the EU were not in a subordination relation but based on reciprocity and equality in 2008 and before. However, the planned narrative and the image of power in Erdoğan’s mind’s eye have changed since then. In the Migration Crisis in 2020, Erdoğan made his performance in a way that he coerced the EU. The coercion came after Türkiye’s military losses in Northern Syria when Türkiye seemed to be weak. What Erdoğan shows, in this case, is his power to fulfill his will and play a card in a manner that he pursues his nation’s interests without complying with any higher body. The Sofagate incident showed that Erdoğan could subordinate the EU leaders, pit the Commission and Council leaders against each other, and change the agenda of the EU under certain conditions.

In the statements in the following years regarding EU membership, Erdoğan uses EU membership in a manner that the EU needs Türkiye, and Türkiye has a role of constructing European security: “If the European people live in peace, that is thanks to Türkiye” ("Erdoğan: ‘Avrupa halkları huzur içinde yaşıyorsa Türkiye sayesinde',” 2019). The images of power that Erdoğan used are as follows: i) Making subordinating statements to the EU beyond equal treatment, ii) playing the immigrant card, iii) playing off the other actors in the West, and iv) hosting the victims.

5.4.5 Means of Visibility

Erdoğan’s image of power is accepted by the Turkish mass audience.²⁷ Yet, this was not only a consequence of Erdoğan’s speeches but came with his grip on the means of visibility. As Erdoğan’s grip on the means of visibility increased, the media patrons of the 1990s and 2000s²⁸ were disappearing gradually. Until 2013, Erdoğan was not powerful enough to control the other political actors’ visibility in the media and in politics. Only the Albayrak Group, who previously supported Refah Partisi (Welfare Party), was close to the Erdoğan family and Erdoğan’s control. Albayrak Family’s son, Berat Albayrak, became the son-in-law of Erdoğan in 2004 and served as the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources (2015-2018) and Minister of Treasury and Finance (2018-2020). Thanks to the alliance with Gülenists, their

²⁷ The Turkish electorate continued to elect Erdoğan with a majority. This shows the acceptance.

²⁸ For more, see Yanardağolu, E. (2021). *Transformation of the Media System in Turkey*. Springer.

media, *Zaman* and *Taraf* newspapers, alongside the *Samanyolu TV* channel, were supporting him, yet he was not fully controlling the other actors' visibility through these media channels. After the clash with the Gülenists in 2013, Erdoğan lost the support of that media group. Later on, in 2013, the ATV channel was bought by the Kalyon Construction conglomerate, which was close to Erdoğan and the AKP.

In 2018, Doğan Media was sold to Demirören Media, whose owner was close to Erdoğan and the AKP. Lastly, Ciner Media, which was not affiliated with the government before, started to be under the regulations of the government and close to Erdoğan after the 2016 failed coup attempt. Thus, Erdoğan assumed nearly total control over the Turkish media, and then transformed the state channel TRT into his own means of image-productions (Yeşil, 2018).

Despite controlling the politics of visibility at home, Erdoğan was able to hardly control the visibility in Western Europe. TRT World was established in 2015 and started to broadcast in English and French languages, today the TRT World channel has coffee-shops in international airports to increase its own visibility and attract receivers to broadcast the narratives of Erdoğan. Other than TRT World, TRT's TV series that display the image of Erdoğan are being successfully sold to online platforms such as Netflix and to the Middle Eastern countries and Pakistan (Yilmaz & Shakil, 2021). According to these TV series, Erdoğan is a leader like Ertuğrul Ghazi and Abdülhamid II who plays off the Westerners against each other, sets

political traps and helps the victims (Grigoriadis & Karabıçak, 2022). After the United States and Britain, Türkiye has become the third larger exporter of the TV series in the world (Economist, 2024).

5.4.6 Hyperreality

Although Türkiye and the EU are entangled, the conflict will remain since “Erdoğan calls the shots“ in constructing an image of power vis-a-vis the EU (Bechev, 2022). As opposed to the expectation that a leader with different frequent turns in a policy issue, namely the EU membership bid and the Europeanization, would lose the support of the audience due to inconsistency, Erdoğan overcomes such an obstacle. Because, in the hyperreal context, both the conspiratorial and diplomatic relations with the Westerners that Erdoğan’s narrative produced via the TV series are in line with the West’s dislike of Türkiye. According to the image of power of Erdoğan, the EU and Erdoğan may remain in contact, but in Erdoğan’s terms. He urges the EU to accept Türkiye under Türkiye’s conditions, that is, despite Erdoğan’s undemocratic rule. This is connected to the hyperreal context, if the EU does not accept Türkiye, it is congruent with the Westerners’ plots against Türkiye.

5.4.7 The TV Series’ Hyperreality

The TRT Series Resurrection Ertuğrul and Payıthat Abdülhamid produced after 2014 took critical acclaims and considerable attention of the Turkish domestic mass

audience. Erdoğan called the audiences several times to watch TRT's historical TV series *Payitaht Abdülhamid* (TRT, 2017) and *Resurrection Ertugrul* (Haberler, 2019) to learn true history, and he even went on stage while the soundtrack of *Resurrection Ertugrul* is played. These TV series produced Erdoğan's image legitimating with historical references (Carney, 2018, p. 100; Grigoriadis & Karabıçak, 2022; Özçetin, 2019).

5.4.7.1 Bekâ Discourse

In 2016, after the coup attempt, Erdoğan asserted the Bekâ discourse, which meant the survival of the state. The Bekâ discourse is a narrative that brings Erdoğan legitimacy: There are inside enemies to the state, work continuously in all sectors and they are backed by the foreign powers. Hence, the state and the society should stand against them as a united body, with patience. Erdoğan is the leader of this survival, and his government is comprised of the statesmen who are in sere of this cause.

Bekâ discourse, used as “*Devletin bekâsı* (State's survival)” or “*Bekâ meselesi* (a matter of survival)” denotes that the actions taken by the actor are for the sake of survival of the state, used after the 15th July 2016 failed coup attempt. In 2016, Gülenist-attached commanders organized a coup attempt but failed. After July 2016, Erdogan declared a state of emergency and moved on to survival discourse, detecting “inner state enemies.” Initially, it eliminated other ways of expressing and reacting to the coup. Second, by excluding the political aspect of the coup, it deliberately

avoided public contestation (Adisonmez & Onursal, 2020). The bekâ discourse is not new to the Turkish political discourse. It resided in the Sevres syndrome as the obstacle to wholeness, continuation of the independent nature of the state. According to Tanıl Bora, Turkish nationalists in the 1990s used survival discourse in a dramatic way; simply because of the perception of threats such as economic crises that engulfed Türkiye, and the geopolitical discourse that denotes Türkiye as a lonely country surrounded by conflicting regions (2003). The survival discourse in the 1990s aimed to secure the “survival of the nation;” thus, its referent object was the nation (Bora, 2003).

On the other hand, bekâ discourse of AKP after 2016’s referent object was Erdoğan’s political survival. Two reasons make it explicit: (i) the employment of the bekâ in the national and local elections of 2018, 2019, and 2023, and (ii) the inclusion of cultural topics as well as politics in the bekâ discourse. In the 2018 national elections, Erdoğan declared that the opposition party leaders were getting orders from the PKK’s headquarters, and his election for the presidency was a matter of survival of the Turkish state (Grigoriadis & Karabıçak, 2022). During the discussions of whether AKP has failed to ensure cultural hegemony or is it still in the secular elite, Erdoğan also declared that culture and art issues are among the bekâ of the Turkish state because they are under the influence of the West, and the West uses them as a tool to divide Türkiye (AA, 2019). This shift in the referent object of the bekâ discourse is produced with the narrative of Erdoğan, especially after the coup attempt.

Bekâ discourse draws a narrative that the Western and Western-backed terrorist groups are in alliance with some of the insiders of Turkish state. These are sometimes old secular elites, sometimes old allies of AKP such as Gülenists (and named as Fetthullahist Terrorist Organization, *FETÖ*), or the opposition parties that run in the elections for coming to rule. It is reproduced in the media, as one of the columnists writes that the state is under constant attack, and one should always be alert about the Gülenists since “they are always sneaky” (Hakan, 2019). Hence, in this narrative, there is a constant struggle between the good (The state) and evil (the ones who oppose it). Allying with the *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (Nationalist Movement Party, *MHP*), Erdoğan found an appropriate audience acceptance, that is, the Turkish nationalists, to amalgamate bekâ discourse coming from the 1990s with his own discourse after 2016. In this narrative, Erdoğan’s objectives are purely congruent with the good, and opposing him means opposing the good. Although not fully accepted, the mechanism of this narrative is reproduced, especially after the enhancements in the military defense industry. Through the TV series as a means of visibility, Erdoğan illustrates bekâ discourse to be influential in Turkish domestic mass audience.

5.4.7.2 The TV Series

The protagonists in the TV series *Payitaht Abdülhamid* and *Resurrection Ertuğrul* illustrate this narrative. They spoil the Westerners’ conspiracies against Muslim-Turks. They do not fear the Westerners, but they are the ones who are afraid of Muslim-Turks’ power. The protagonists are clever enough to set political traps against the Westerners, and they do it better than the plots designed by the Westerners.

Sometimes, these accept immigrants and show their mercy and greatness. They sometimes seem to establish peaceful relations with the Westerners and comply with them, but do it in a cynical manner because the protagonists have a greater plan to tackle the Westerners down.

This illustration takes place in a very heroic manner, the losses and love stories of the protagonists, alongside with the action scenes make these TV series consumable. Many of the issues covered in the series are compatible with Erdoğan's narratives. In the TV series, the Westerners try to automatize the Muslim-Turks through several aspects of life other than politics. This is just as Erdoğan suggested in 2020, the Europeans use "human rights" issues to slow down Turkey's progress and security, although they are, in fact, using it as a mask (AA, 2020).

The Resurrection and Payitaht series become the context, and the political arena reflects the space of this context taking place. The bekâ discourse builds upon "The fight of the Crescent and the Cross," which counters the West and the values attached to it. The West (and the EU) is not accepting the Muslims, as Erdoğan states (Euronews, 2017), and the political Islamists in the 70s criticize the European Community for being a "Christian Club" (Eralp, 2009). These two TV series function as the hyperreal images that counter the West and present the complex game of politics, thus allowing for understanding both departures and rapprochements in EU policy.

The change of the imagery from Valley of the Wolves as presented in the previous section, and the TRT series summarizes the change in Erdoğan's influence at home. In the Valley, there was a resentment. In the TRT TV series, Muslim-Turks are designing plots against the West, not just counter-act against the Westerners' designs. The protagonists are powerful enough to make their own political design, and make others accepts it.

This hyperreal context is consumed by millions of people. According to IMDB's all-time TV series top 30 list in ratings, Resurrection Ertugrul is in 3rd place, and Payitaht Abdülhamid is 24th. According to the genre, Resurrection is the top-watched TV series of all. Resurrection's spin-off The Ottoman (*Kuruluş Osman*) aired on ATV (a channel known for being close to the government and owned by Erdoğan's son-in-law) and Payitaht take the 6th and 7th places, respectively (IMDB, 2023). Criticizing the EU as being dubious, Erdoğan builds pragmatic relations with the EU, and talks to the Western Europeans, despite they are the ones who help the enemies of the Turkish state, according to the bekâ narrative

5.5 Was Erdoğan Influential in 2020?

Erdoğan is not influential over the Western European elite audience, since Erdoğan is part of the "other" in their narrative since it is a "bad example" as the leader of an authoritarian country (Aydın-Düzgit et al., 2022). However, Erdoğan is influential

over the domestic mass audience of Türkiye, since he managed to change the reality of the Turkish audience through bekâ discourse and his use of means of visibility.

Erdoğan produced an image of power, that image illustrates that he aids the subordinated people, sets political plots and pits the European leaders against each other. Turkish domestic mass audience's acceptance of the image can be seen through no public opinion backlash and Erdoğan's successive election wins. Through the use of means of visibility, Erdoğan managed amalgamate this image with a hyperreal context, that is bekâ discourse, suggesting that Türkiye is under constant threat by the foreigners to its survival. He was able to replace this after the coup attempt of 2016, and he tapped into this in his performance in the migration crisis.

Erdoğan could not be influential over the Western European mass audience with the same performance, but he was able to construct his image of power. He constructed this image of power in 2020 crisis, when he threatened the EU for opening the gates, and the EU leaders came to visit Erdoğan in the Presidential Palace. However, since the lack of means of visibility, Erdoğan could not change the narrative of the Western European elites. Yet, he managed to take part in their narrative through his image, which is evident in the discourse of "shield of Europe." The shield discourse takes Erdoğan's performance as threat, and warns the Eastern borders of the EU accordingly (Jamieson, 2020). This makes Erdoğan potentially influential in the Western European elite audience.

5.6 Discussion of Alternative Theories of Power

Power as capacity approaches would draw on the military and economic development and size of Türkiye when making interpretations on the Türkiye-EU relations. Examining Erdoğan's power over the Western European elites, the power as capability approaches would suggest that Erdoğan is not an influential actor since the differences in the GDP explain much of the picture. Türkiye sought to be in the G20 somehow, while the Western European states sought the top. In terms of military capacity, Türkiye shares the tenth place in terms of military capacity, reaching beyond France but remaining short of Britain. Angela Merkel was against the membership of Türkiye throughout her sixteen years at the office. Türkiye could not make any of these actors do something that they otherwise would not choose to do.

Türkiye explains its end goal from the EU as the membership bid (Erdoğan, 2021). The power as capacity explanations, at their core, focus on the end-goals (Dean, 2012). The actors want to achieve a goal by exerting their will with their capacity. In the rhetoric, Erdoğan delivered his goal of membership, despite all of the incongruent actions: "The EU Membership is the ultimate goal of Türkiye" (Erdoğan, 2021). If the ultimate goal is acquiring this specific end, Erdoğan is not powerful over the Western European elite audience. Since power-as-capacity focuses on the outcomes as an influence, nor is he influential.

Erdoğan aims to simulate that he has “power-as-capacity” over the EU by suggesting that Türkiye is a contributor to the core of the EU. What Erdoğan shows in this case is congruent with his produced image in domestic politics. Erdoğan capitalizes on his rhetoric by suggesting that Türkiye has “power as capacity” as much as Western European countries do. This is congruent with the image he created without a necessary increase in actual capacity, but whenever he reaches an agreement with the EU, this image becomes accepted as true. In this case, Erdoğan simulates “power-as-capacity” without actually achieving the ends but showing that his political narrative is the truth. Thus, this shows an influence at home and a potential but limited influence among the Western European elites.

This is what Erdoğan shows through the explanations of the membership, which are articulated by suggesting that Türkiye is not ready to accept the conditions of the EU; rather, the EU should accept the character and conditions of Türkiye: “The EU is behaving towards us in a way that we do not deserve” (Erdoğan, 2017). Moreover, he suggests that Türkiye’s interest is in the interest of the EU, despite dissenting views of some member states. This articulation is parallel with the narrative that is unpacked as the hyperreality of Erdoğan. Erdoğan simulates the “power as capacity” approach in narrating that Türkiye can establish relations with the Western European audience in a way that it is an equal, even superior counterpart. Yet, the power as

capacity approach cannot deliver this part of the analysis, as simply focusing on the achievement of the end-goal.

The Soft Power parameters put Türkiye between 28-30th in the soft-power scale between 2015-2019, although Turkish officials give importance to the soft power (Portland, 2023). Ibrahim Kalın, once Erdoğan's foreign policy advisor and currently the Director of the National Intelligence Service of Türkiye wrote on and translated Joseph Nye's *Soft Power* into Turkish (Kalın, 2011). Meliha B. Altunışık, looking from the perspective of attractiveness, evaluates Türkiye's soft power as having increased in the first years of the AKP government in the 2000s, and decreased afterward with the reasons of authoritarianism and backsliding economy (Altunisik, 2022). However, the intention of a government in any act for soft power should be invisible. If the government shows the intention of soft power in an attractive move, it can lose its attraction. According to Senem Çevik, Türkiye has employed soft power in its foreign policy discourse since the mid-2000s. Türkiye increased its soft-power tools in the non-Western audiences yet failed to do so in the West.

A problem with soft-power explanations is that they are discourses rather than analytic explanations. Soft-power as a type of exerting power must be held invisible to influence the target audience in the first sight. This is because there was not any intention of using soft power by naming it during Cold-War as such before it was conceptualized by Joseph Nye (1990). Yet, there was soft power, for example, during

the Cold War in an abstract sense, according to Nye (2004). Soft power aims at attraction, but not without visibly imitating the actions that are known to co-opt the states. Scholars often oversee the authenticity or imitation in analyzing the behavior of the political agents. When soft power tools become visible, the soft power tools transposes to be hard or sharp power tools. Thus, the tools that are used in the discourse of soft power become imitations of it, rather than being authentic actions.

In Erdoğan's immigrant case, aiding to immigrants is not a soft-power. Accepting immigrants and producing a symbolic value of Ensar and Muhadjir are actions related Erdoğan's image as Abdülhamid II at home as delivered in the analysis section. When an act is announced as soft-power, it makes the model precede the action, because analytical concepts were designed as models and abstractions of reality. Their use as foreign policy pretexts made them lose their explanatory power since they were used after they were conceptualized in academia. No state official will use power as visibility, it is an explanation of relations that are abstract. This is why soft and smart power tools become the part of the analysis of power-as-visibility, since they become "what is shown" by the actors.

Accordingly, Türkiye has a potential, yet, Erdoğan constructed an image of power in the Western European elite audience. Erdoğan's soft-power discourse may not work well, but his narrative succeeds to get into the imagery in the narrative of the Western European elites, not in an attractive manner. Then, one can think of sharp

power. In that regard, sharp power is to manipulate the other states intentionally. Manipulation is related to false information. Yet, what Erdoğan does is not manipulation, and he does not try to persuade the Western European elite audience to believe in something else. When Erdoğan reminds the Human Rights European states against the shield narrative (AA, 2020), it aimed to challenge the influence of the EU at home. EU is clinged to Human Rights; this is a narrative that is an important element of the expectations the elite audiences in Europe.

According to a potential Dahlian explanation, Türkiye is not powerful, and influential at all. Being a zero or one solution, Dahl's probabilistic measurement needs amount, scope, domain, and base. In the evaluation of Erdoğan's case, I suggested a fixed amount and domain but different scopes and bases. Erdoğan is visible to those audiences; thus, he is more powerful than most of the international actors who are not visible. The imagery of Erdoğan ultimately takes place in the narrative of the audience, as the "necessary evil" in shielding Europe. The immigration waves led the Western European mass audience's reality change. The change in the mass audience narrative changed that of the elite audience; and this consequentially led negotiating with Erdoğan to be a "necessary" act in shielding Europe. Thus, Erdoğan is potentially an influential actor, yet he cannot alter reality of the Western European elites entirely by his own narrative. In this regard, he is not influential on, for example Germany, even though Türkiye can deter Germany since the difference in the military resources is by far in favor of Türkiye.

All in all, the alternative explanations of power theories fall prey in explaining Erdoğan's power and influence in the EU case over the domestic mass and Western European elite audiences. Power as visibility explains this because visibility is about social relevance, and Erdoğan is socially relevant and he matters to these audiences. Although he is not influential over the Western European Elite, his relevance, through producing an image of power, marks his place in the narrative. This is an explanatory power that the alternative theories do not have.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis addresses the research question: What is the role of visibility in the converting of power into influence (both domestically and internationally)?”

Through visibility, international actors become powerful, and through components of visibility, international actors translate their power into influence. Visibility is the defining element of power that makes actors socially relevant. By the components of visibility, visible actors change the target audience’s reality, become influential.

The components of visibility are, respectively, making a performance with utterance, creating a symbolic value, using spectacles, producing an image of power, turning the image into hyperreality via means of visibility and audience acceptance, and changing the narrative of the audience. Related to the research question, the thesis counterargues the existing paradigms of power that define it as a material capacity by asking how weaker political actors can be influential and construct power.

The analysis of the literature review revealed that the abstract definitions of power and influence are inadequate, diverging, and underdeveloped. Thus, power is defined as being/making someone or something visible. Influence is defined as altering or changing the reality of the audience. With these definitions, the framework of power as visibility is created to understand elite and mass-level interactions.

Analysis of the case study of Erdoğan's performance to the international and domestic audience depicted that power and influence are not about material capacity but explain why the actor relies on the narrative and to what extent the actors can take a part in the target audiences' narratives. The same actors' performance on different audiences results in different understandings of the "end goals." This led me to counter-argue with the Power capacity, soft power, and influence as persuasion explanations. Evaluating an actor's influence or power without considering his visible performance and the factor of immersion, many of the images, rhetorical actions, and political performances that the actor displays become incomprehensible. In the end of the case study, Erdoğan is found to be influential among the mass audience in Türkiye, but only potentially influential among the Western European elite audience. The domestic hyperreality of Erdoğan allows him to make incongruent turns and simulate a subordination of the Western European elite.

Another finding of the case analysis is an intervening variable of international visibility and influence. An actor's control over the domestic image of power makes it more fungible in the eyes of the international actors. Deciding on "who is the boss

in this country” by international actors and audiences is dependent on who controls the image of power. The ability of President Erdoğan to be seen as²⁹ controlling domestic politics and stabilizing the country. Otherwise, the international visibility of the actors declines, and they become internationally irrelevant. Therefore, controlling the image of power domestically is of crucial importance for international visibility and fungibility of domestic influence into an international one. The fundamental image of power in this sense is controlling the authorities in the country that makes the actor accepted as the representer of the state. This is why that control of the image of power is an intervening variable.

This intervening variable also brings an implication of whom to call great powers when power is defined through visibility. The actors usually cannot turn their hyper/reality produced for the domestic audiences into an international influence. The actors who can change the reality of regional audiences with their own narrative can be called great powers. The actors that are very strong and effective in terms of capacities and activities beyond their borders but cannot change the reality of others with their own should be called *excessively strong states*. The effectiveness is based on the idea of exerting efficient capacity and force on others, such as China in the 21st century. Excessively strong states usually can construct an image of power but cannot change regional audiences’ reality with their own narrative. Great powers, in this sense, can translate their domestic reality into an international one, such as the

²⁹ To be seen as means having the image of.

Cold War and the 21st century US, Cold War USSR, and British Empire during the 18th and 19th centuries. The attributed image of “grateness” comes with those states that can form the audience’s expectations.

6.2 The Implications of the Findings

This thesis’ findings have several implications for the bodies of literature surrounding power and influence. Firstly, the definition of power as visibility encompasses the domain problem of power. Power’s domains were attributed to its modes of visibility in the previous definition of Dahl. To power-to definitions, power as visibility provides how the social contexts are produced, that is through visibility. Looking at the faces of power or the types of power debates; this thesis’ definition of power as visibility shows how these types are used as “what is shown” by the actor, not as the domains of power. The domains define what aspect of power we *observe* within the given social context; yet, with the framework of this thesis, we can include them in the analysis of power.

Secondly, influence is an under-defined concept in the IR literature. This thesis defines influence as a change in the cognitive structure and the narrative of the actors about world politics. Based upon the definitions of power and influences, the framework of analysis provides a guideline for how to interpret the power relations between actors and audiences. The creation of a framework with definitions is usually missing the literature.

Thirdly, the methodology proposed by this thesis brings a systemic step-by-step analysis of the potential influence and power of the actors. This step-by-step analysis introduces a new concept, that is, “simulating power” to the literature: Actors may simulate their subordination in terms of capacity without actually having the material capacity. Power simulation provides the analysis with a grasp on how actors construct their narrative that informs their practices.

6.2.1 The Speculations

There are several subjective observations from the power as visibility framework. Firstly, the power attribution in the image of power shows that actors perform constructivist acts (attribution) for realist purposes (to coerce). Attribution of power to an actor leads to subordination because the moment that the actors are attributed the image of power, their words become binding. The interpretive method that this thesis follows is ample to grasp this aspect. Secondly, since power is a sensible human aspect, it might be about the ability to exist in a social setting. Visibility’s importance in denoting the relevancy in a society encompasses this aspect. Thirdly, this framework leads me to an important question why the audiences are attracted to the image of power? Fourth, with the case study, we can concur that Erdoğan puts his image with the missing powerful figures in the domestic mass audience, that is the military.

Power as visibility touches upon the general debate about the agent (actor)-structure (context) problem.³⁰ The framework assumes that the structure is defined by visibility: The political actors who are not visible and who do not construct an image (of power) will not be influential.. The actors who understand this prerequisite of the contemporary (post-2000) context (Debrix, 2007, p. 12) are the most potentially influential ones who can create their hyperreality. Erdoğan created his hyperreality, and the dissident politicians following him aimed to have the means of visibility, since he shaped the context. Thus, the actors who understand the defining element of the contemporary context, that is, visibility, can be influential enough to shape the context.

The analysis of and the observation about the actor in the case study support this assumption. This is why charismatic photo shoots and social media video clips such as TikTok, Instagram, or X (Twitter) are produced by politicians. Being visible in photo shoots is a behavioral reflection of this phenomenon, posing while walking, taking techno-erotic photography, and allowing them to be reproduced in social media through several accounts. Although Erdoğan is often evaluated as a retrogressive politician; he is one of the actors that has understood the best of this social context. He posed in the presidential elections of 2023 with aviator sunglasses and a fighter-pilot-style bomber jacket branded with the presidential emblem of

³⁰ That means whether the agent is more influential on the results, or the structure, or they influence each other.

Türkiye.³¹ This is an unusual style in Turkish political traditions since the presidents used to wear suits and frock coats to show that they represent the state as a legal-rational official, yet Erdoğan represents the images he created in this way. In the presidential palace of Türkiye, soldiers who meet the foreign state officials are dressed in historical soldier uniforms, representing the historical depth of the state, as narrated in the aforementioned TV series of TRT. These show that Erdoğan does not produce his power and influence from the office or material interest networks but from his production of an image of power, a component of visibility.

6.2.2 The Implications for IR Theory

Defining two of the fundamental concepts of the discipline, power and influence, requires an overview of the theories written using vague or previous conceptualizations. Firstly, the previous definition of the balance of power might be thought of as a balance between the material capacities and social networks of the states. Balance of power theory focuses on the distribution of strength that can be used in inflicting pain or putting reservations about others' preferences regarding war and peace, which can be extracted among the concepts from at least nine different definitions (Sheehan, 2004). Analogically, the material distribution is related to the muscles of the states; the results emanating from the muscles and the interpretation of these muscles by the other actors constitute the system.

³¹ Erdoğan uses this also as is X profile photo, see RTErdogan. (2023). *Profile PhotoX* (Twitter). Retrieved 31/05/2024 from <https://twitter.com/rterdogan?s=21&t=NNWHh84scrDtQX2hL8x24g>

The states operate in this structure with similar goals in a balance of power system (Waltz, 2010). In this case, power as visibility would suggest that the actual power is the ability to be socially relevant to the other international actors that can produce the balance of power system. The international actors try to be visible and create an image of power. What is ranked between the states is the image of power, and the great powers are the ones who determine the reality in the system of world politics.³²

If the actors interpret the world through a balancing system, then the balance of power theory becomes a historical narrative rather than a pure analytical theory. In the classical realist sense, what power as visibility would imply would be the focus on “How a state attributed power?” During the Cold War, for example, the technological race constituted much of it, and producing models such as “umbrella” was a result of a symbolic meaning production process. The spaceflight operations to the moon are one aspect that the great “powers” were using spectacles, producing symbolic values of the exploration of space. These spectacles convey the notion of being the great power and being more powerful than their ideological enemies, as the transcendental power that reaches beyond the world. The symbolic value that is produced in the NASA operations allowed mass and elite audiences across the globe to attribute great power to the US in a transcendental manner. This image, rather than its military or national interest-wise consequences forces the Soviets to do the same.

³² This also solves the question of to whom we shall call a great power? The answer is that, to the ones who construct the image of it. Baldwin argues that power is also used to describe states in a ranking system, yet it was problematic to call whom a great power according to what criteria, see: Baldwin, D. A. (2016). *Power and international relations: A conceptual approach*. Princeton University Press.

This image of power made the debate over whether the US truly sent astronauts to the moon or not redundant. Thus, power as visibility goes beyond the classical sense in the balance of power's descriptive capability. Because if it were a material balance to be searched to enhance national interests, the response of the other countries as well as the Soviets might be very different.

According to Morgenthau and many, a grip on power is accepted as the main motivator of politics as a goal (Baldwin, 2016, p. 104). However, with vaguely defined or defined only as a means, resources, or a capability; one cannot understand power as a goal. Baldwin comes up with a differentiation of the power as goals, means, resources, competition, and capabilities (2016). As these analytical views of power are not very much distinguished from each other, they have a problem in defining the source of power. The emanating need for power can be explained through power as visibility without visiting normative approaches, such as moral judgments on human nature. The fundamental sense of human agents being socially relevant and being visible is a direct consequence of this requirement.

When we provide the Realist theory with the emanating point of power, that is, what power as visibility framework does, it challenges the assumption that the states are agents that seek absolute or relative gains of national interest (Sheehan, 2004). The assumption is challenged; although any social actor might pursue being powerful, this is not to subordinate others in the first place. It is now not clear that the states are national interest seekers. There are international actors that want or do not want to be

socially relevant to a target audience, start being visible, produce value over their means, try to understand whom is accepted as powerful, and construct an image power that is in relation with the audience's conceptions. This audience, as asserted in the theory section, might be other international actors, too. Power, the ability to make someone (in)visible, might be a motivation for an ethnic cleansing, or a total war, but one cannot assume for certainty. This uncertainty over the assumption of what international actors do all the time makes Morgenthau's theory of Realism applicable to more situations and brings it closer to everyday politics.

Defining power as visibility requires distinguishing actors from their images.

Assuming that international politics are formed by states as the primary agent is an incoherent assumption in this case. State-centrism is a centrism of an image. States are represented by their elite and mass audiences all at once in the state-centric mainstream theories of IR (Buzan, 2016). Since the elites and the masses represent the states, the state is an abstract image of at least the minimum of these two components. Instead of taking an image as an actor who sees and wants to be visible, evaluating the elites or masses that are identified by this abstract image (the state) is more useful. Thus, power as visibility contributes a logic to the of the non-state centrism in recent IR debates.

Power as visibility framework is also useful for interpreting major world events and phenomena such as US-China relations, Russia's relations with the West, mass migration waves' influence in the Western European mass audience, woke culture,

populism and post-populist politics. In a recent piece, Joseph Nye wrote about the end of soft power, suggesting that China is not building an empire by invitation, it has no value to produce and for people to be attracted to (2024). When evaluated through Nye's perspective, this becomes unnecessarily a Eurocentric explanation since it regards Western values as by nature attractive. What China cannot produce is the influence that can change the Western European reality, but only plays a part in the narrative as the "villain." China continues to undermine the visibility of the US, and Trump's change in the manner of power, which is the change in the way of symbolic value production— was somehow a reaction to this. Trump was more visible, although he undermined the post-Cold War US hyperreality and proved that it is subject to change. China also aims to increase its soft power overtly, which makes China's actions unauthentic. At the end of the day, the Western audience's expectations of power are not met, that is, the corrected version of Nye's claim through my framework. Henceforth, China is powerful enough to be visible as much as the US and yet has lesser means of visibility, and it is unable to produce a hyperreality like the US.

The mass migration waves into Europe changed the reality of the Western European masses and inflicted pressure on the European Union and the member states' governments. This mass-mass interaction is unique in the sense that it creates a demand for a change in the image of power from the leaders. The alpha-type leadership becomes the image of power in the wake of the mass and unregulated immigration waves. If the solution could be brought without authoritarianism or

xenophobia, the leaders can change the reality of the masses. Low levels of pluralistic narrative production from the EU side, as it relies more on use-value production, undermines the EU's influence as opposed to its influence during the early years of the Schengen visa's initiation. Although the EU might have means of visibility, it does not produce a hyperreality and an image of power that is coherent with its previous normative narratives of inclusion. The member state leaders who embrace the alpha-type leadership and isolate the borders to meet that demand survive in the short-run.

6.3 Limitations

The limitations of this thesis stem from the scope and material resources. This thesis does not develop a measurement of the visibility of the actors and the expectations of the audience through public opinion research. To understand the narratives of the audiences, in-depth interviews that ask the narratives of the world politics of the members of selected audiences could bring the thesis question to a better-formed answer. I also acknowledge that broader research on the consumability of the actors might be conducted to understand whether Erdoğan is performative enough to keep being visible over the other actors. With these, the methodology of the research and the findings could be more systematic and generalizable.

6.4 Future Research Directions

Future research might focus on the measurement of the actors' performances and the inclusion of multiple actors in the same audience. Focusing on a single actor's performance to different audiences made this research limited in terms of power comparison. By analyzing multiple actors, future research could show how power comparison, in terms of steps that the actors might take to succeed in potential influence and visibility to the audience could contribute to the literature with a solid power and influence comparison example. Future research could benefit from visualization methods to make the power and influence comparison and visibility more understandable.

I focused on visibility in this thesis when investigating how actors become powerful and translate it into influence. However, future research avenues are rich in terms of focusing on strategies of invisibility and its relation to ways of producing an image of power and influence. Political actors become or make others or issues invisible for a certain time, and this helps public attribution of power and ensures ways of reproduction. This can pave the way for discussing power as visibility with consent manufacturing and legitimization concepts. I believe that these are fruitful new research and debate avenues.

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