

## Chapter 42

# Aestheticization of Fear and Violence via Public Relations: A Study Case on 12th of September Military Coup in Turkey

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Fear is a human emotion that allows a person to survive. It has a function to ensure the continuity of life. The definition of fear has changed over time. Along with human development, transition to sedentary life, the industrial revolution, and modern life, fear and the things feared have changed. Fear has started to be marketed, especially in post-industrial societies. The governments have seen that fear and violence work to regulate, control, and passivate people. Political governments have had the unique opportunity to use fear as a mechanism for control and surveillance. The governments have aestheticized the fear and presented it indirectly with the support of media. The masses have been shaped as weak, scared, anxious, and helpless in the shadow of fear and violence. This study tries to shed light on the attempt to persuade the society about the legitimacy of the military government by presenting fear and violence to people in aestheticized forms in the 1980s in Turkey.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Considering the existence of political powers from past to present, fear and violence are seen as important tools of power. While these two factors cause anxiety, fear, and panic in the societies, they also cause societies to embrace governments and authorities for a safer life. In this way, the powers both ensure their legitimacy and make it easier for the societies to obey themselves. When the definitions of the concepts of state, power and authority are evaluated it is seen how much they are intertwined with fear and violence. Political governments employ various mechanisms of fear to ensure their legitimacy. The state has the power and monopoly to use violence. Fear is such a strong feeling that it has the func-

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tion for individuals to survive. Therefore, it is not possible for individuals to refrain from an element and maintain their lives unless they fear such element and perceive it as a threat. Politics is an area that provides legitimacy for the government by easily manipulate the individual's desire to survive and feel safe, driven by his instincts. It is easier to obey, influence and direct societies that are afraid, worried or helpless. Thus, the rulers can also implement the policies they wish. For this reason, fear and violence are brought into the daily life of individuals in estheticized ways through the media. News, movies, various events are produced to emphasize a world full of fear and violence to individuals. Art is added to this and the images of fear and violence are exposed in estheticized ways.

In this study, a case study (Özdemirci & Saruhan, 2013: pp. 333,334) was conducted in this context on how fear and violence are aestheticized through public relations in politics. This case study is limited to the military coup staged in Turkey on September 12, 1980. Therefore, it aims to draw attention to the political, social, and cultural developments and experiences in Turkey during the period of September 12, 1980. It tries to demonstrate the aspects of this period that are specific to Turkey under the title of this study. Therefore, the political, social, and cultural developments that occurred in other countries during coups may be different from those examined here. Archival research (Özdemirci & Saruhan, 2013: pp. 333,334) was conducted as part of this case study, and the statements of the witnesses of the period and main news stories were examined. September 12 is a process where an atmosphere of fear and violence was created, supported by aesthetic elements. Before the coup, public opinion was created that the army, one of the oppression elements of the state, should take over the administration and a leader should rule. For this purpose, the media and opinion leaders were used skillfully. In this process, street clashes and the number of people who died in these has increased rapidly in Turkey. Violence has become or has been made an important part of daily life. Tired of violence and with the increased fears in their daily lives, people started to want the military to take over and a militarist administration to rule. Thus, the society has psychologically been made ready for the coup through fear and violence. The media played an important role in this preparation process and acted almost as the spokesperson of the September 12. It formed the public relations leg of September 12. Making music which was defined with September 12 after the coup took place, forcing the song (Müşerref Akay-Türkiye'm) ordered by the coup administration to be listened in prisons, and the erection of Kenan Evren's sculptures show how art was used as a tool of violence and fear in this period. Thus, the fear and violence of September 12 were reached in public spaces and prisons in estheticized ways. At the same time, this aesthetic horror and violence cycle has made the communication of September 12 in the social field. By giving the names of the coup generals to schools and streets, the violence and fear of the period were kept alive in public spaces. This study aims to examine the public relations process of the period by considering September 12 with these elements. In the first and second chapters, fear, violence, power, state, politics, elements of fear used by politics are discussed. In the third chapter, media, public relations and estheticized fear and violence are explained. In the fourth chapter, it is examined how the public relations of September 12 were carried out, what methods and techniques were used with art, fear and violence.

## **THE USE OF FEAR AND VIOLENCE BY POWER AND POLITICS**

Although fear is seen as a negative emotion, it is a feeling with functionality. The function of fear is that it helps an individual to survive; because in general, fear begins with the presence of a dangerous and threatening element. This threatening element enables a person to develop a reaction (fight or flight) to

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