

From Top to Down or Central to Local: Transformation of the Neighborhood Units as a Policy Tool of Presidential System in Turkey

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Abstract In this study, neighborhood administration and mukhtarship which have grown in importance in recent years in Turkey are analyzed in light of the discussions on presidential system. President of the Republic paid great importance to the mukhtars during legislative efforts for presidential system and often hold meetings with the mukhtars. Discourses coming to forefront during these meetings imply the levels that mukhtarship and neighborhood administration will evolve. In this study, speeches of the President during meetings with mukhtars were subject to discourse analysis to draw conclusions. In addition, interviews were made with mukhtars from different provinces and the results of the research were supported by these findings. Mukhtarship can be regarded to have evolved as an important policy tool from top to down or central to local in Turkey which is on the edge of a new centralization process in particular.

Keywords: • Mukhtars • metropolitan municipality • neighborhood administration • presidential system • Turkey

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1 Introduction

There have been significant changes in Turkey's local government system with the Law no. 6360 that entered into force in November of 2012 and was amended in 2013. There is no doubt that villages and neighborhoods are located at the core of these changes. Thus, the number of metropolitan municipalities increased from 16 to 30 as the legislation came into force. With this new regulation, the provincial special administration and town municipalities were removed and the villages were transformed into neighborhoods in metropolitan municipalities. In other words, the villages, the local government units, have been transformed into neighborhoods that are the traditional complementary institution of central government. With this regulation, the ratio of the villages whose legal entities have been removed is about 47% of the total number of villages in the country. With this change, 16.544 village mukhtar have become neighborhood mukhtar. This change was not limited to changes only in the names but it also covered autonomy, duties, powers and responsibilities. Although the village has public legal personality, the fact that the neighborhood does not have public legal personality gives clues about the difficulties that villages have to face. The village mukhtar who is the head of local administration and also in charge representing general administration (Kavruk, 2004: 72) lost power in administrative sense (Akdeniz, 2018).

Before this regulation with the new Law on Municipalities no. 5393 of 2005, it is seen that the neighborhood administration is gradually associated with municipalities in addition the task of being the auxiliary body of central government. The new municipal law regulates such matters as: participation of the neighborhood mukhtar in the municipal decision-making process, allocating resources of the municipality to the needs of the neighborhood mukhtars, joining the neighborhood mukhtars to the city council, the neighborhood becomes an important service area. Moreover, these developments with the advent of the neighborhood administration in Turkey is also seen as appropriate to the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) based on norms/values (democracy; human rights; rule of law) and objectives (stability; security; sustainable development) (Oikonomou, 2018). Although significant developments have been made in this regard, it has also been found that there are serious problems of neighborhood administrations in practice (Bilgin et al., 2018a; 2018b). Therefore, a different centralization process has emerged in a period in which the scale of the municipalities in Turkey is developing and the expectation of the municipality to participate in the decision-making processes of the local community in the face of the municipalities, local community needs are identified on the spot, the local community is strengthened and the mukhtarship is transformed into neighborhood administration (Ömürgönülşen and Sadioğlu, 2016).

This new centralization process is directly shaped by from The Presidency which is the highest authority of the State to neighborhood. Even though the direct authority,

duty and responsibility relation between the Presidency and the Neighborhood Mukhtars was not recognized institutionally, emerging developments indicated that this new relationship began to be defined. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was elected President of Turkey by the public on 10th August 2014 for the first time, redefined the concept of mukhtars with the Mukhtars Meeting, first of which was held on 27th January 2015 and the last meeting (for the time being) on 21th November 2018. The president who came together with a significant number of mukhtars has produced important discourses that set the political agenda, and has made important policy directions for the mukhtars. It has been seen that the mukhtars were given *de facto* political duties as in the 29th Mukhtars Meeting held on October 26th, 2016. As the responsibilities of the mukhtars were only insignificant formalities such as putting out fires within the boundaries of the village or to report the road problems to the municipalities; under the light of the speeches made in the presidential house, they were imposed with a political duty and turned into officials with primary missions; in fact they assumed the role of ‘*political wardens*’ of the villages/neighborhoods/districts. Even though there are discussions about whether the mukhtars’ meeting with the president are politically correct, it is obvious that the mukhtars have gained a political power in this process. In Turkey, where institutional studies about presidential system regulation is approaching to the end, there is a transformation that extends from the President to the Mukhtar, and the mukhtar becomes an important policy tool.

In this study, first the neighborhood governance, which is expected to turn into an important degree of political participation for decentralization, and then how the president turns into an important political mean with centralization are analyzed around the existing decentralization-centralization debates. This research shows that it is difficult to make local government reform in a country having centralized state tradition. Turkish case shows that local government reform is largely shaped from top to down. The relationship between the President and the mukhtars was analyzed in this context. Firstly, the speeches made by the President at the mukhtars’ meetings were examined with the discourse analysis. Secondly, interviews with mukhtars were evaluated. In the first part of the study, duties, power and responsibilities of the mukhtars before 2012 in the institutional sense as well as what the mukhtars mean in popular culture and everyday life are discussed. In the next section, it is analyzed what political powers the mukhtars who lost their administrative powers as *de jure* with the law no. 6360 are equipped with in the talks with the President. In the last part, reasons for the politically strengthening of the mukhtars, whose administrative powers have been reduced in the last 4-5 years, are analyzed around the presidential system discussions. Thus, these units, which are closest to the citizen in the new centralization process in Turkey, is evaluated.

2 Conceptual and Theoretical Frame of the Neighborhood Unit

Neighborhood (Quarter, Ward) means each of the smallest fragments into which a city, a town or a large village is administratively divided and which consist of structural domains and local communities (Keleş, 1998: 96). Neighborhood unit means smaller settlement units located in a narrow area where mostly face to face and personal relations prevail and their members are able to take advantage of common facilities such as primary school, playgrounds, sightseeing, markets and grocery within walking distance and without facing difficulty (Keleş, 1998: 87).

Cities consist of neighborhoods. Medieval urban units which had a certain public square, shopping and worship areas in particular were designed based on neighborhood principle. Worship area (church or mosque) as the “community center” and bazaar as the “shopping center” in the neighborhood unit were within walking distance for the residents of the neighborhoods. On the other hand, quarters were medieval cities until 16th century; such cities were divided into quarters and each quarter were surrounded with walls containing church, workplaces and a small bazaar inside. Quarters also have a political aspect. Each six quarter in Florence selected two consuls and neighborhoods had political aspects within democratic regimes (Mumford, 1954: 257).

Whether they are given certain functions or not, neighborhoods simply do exist by their nature. Neighbors by definition refer to the people living close to each other. Neighborhood units consist of people who come together by birth or moving (Musso vd., 2006: 82). Neighbors are not the people who come together from a common origin or common purpose but consist of the people whose residential areas are close to each other. Proximity of the residential areas help people know each other, have direct contact and develop institutional relations (Farrelly and Sullivan, 2010: 236). With these features, the neighborhood is the place where a modern and secular social life is built.

Neighbors are able to spontaneously cooperate in case of emergency or celebrations. Some kind of co-living and dependency strengthens neighborhood relations (Mumford, 1954: 258). Neighbors have become a significant segment of the cities within the changing urban environment and settlement. It is seen that in the 20th century western world neighborhood turned into neighborhood units and modern urban societies evolved as a new institution within their environs. Role of these units can be said to be more evident particularly in city planning, urban services and urban policies (Mumford, 1954: 260).

Neighborhoods are not completely or ideally self-sufficient units within political and administrative environments of modern cities (Fu, 2018: 2). A similar transformation has taken place in political-administrative system, especially when local community

evolved into local government, local government became as a part of social welfare state, and then the development of local governance seen in social, economic and political life (Wollmann, 2006). In fact, none of the social-institutional organizations from family to state is completely self-sufficient or isolated units. For instance, metropolitan areas of today cannot be regarded to be more self-sufficient in terms of neighborhood. In the smaller settlement areas, metropolitan municipalities may not provide the functions developed for these areas. Neighborhood units were designed around the houses to benefit from cooperation of the families or individuals of the families. Due to these characteristics, needs of the family life can be met at all developmental phases providing freedom, satisfaction and efficiency at highest level. In brief, thesis claiming that “neighborhood units are the barriers preventing better administration of the cities” is not true. On the contrary, transfer of duties and services to local units as much as possible with decentralization may prevent blockage or inefficiency of central public services. Decentralization should emerge as an eligible organ of co-living in the local area in the formal and institutional context (Mumford, 1954: 265). The European Union’s approach to principle of subsidiarity may be evaluated in terms of a balance between administrative efficiency and local autonomy in sharing of duties and resources between levels of government (Neuman, 2013). According to this general framework, the neighborhood as a spatial and administrative unit is in a key position for local governance.

According to Park and Burgess (1967), a local settlement unit consists of ecologic, cultural and political communities. While studying a neighborhood and a local community, ecological forces, cultural forces and political forces should also be analyzed. Political forces are associated with official administration of the public and implementation of the laws. A professional politician in the neighborhood is familiar with at least social, cultural, political as well as non-governmental groups, professionals, clergymen, political leaders of the neighborhood and other representatives. Furthermore, he/she should also know the basic interests, guiding desires and vital problems of the women, men, youngsters and children in the local community. This information indicates applicability of the projects and programs in the neighborhood. Of course, this information is useful as long as it covers the areas within the neighborhood or relates to the neighborhood. Can neighborhoods preserve their existence in the metropolitan areas? Do neighborhoods sustain their central functions concerning cultural, economic and political forces? These questions can yield the political initiatives concerning neighborhood and its institutional structure.

Neighborhoods in the modern cities and metropolitan areas have not lost their significance, and they have become important “new governance” units in Europe especially during post-modern period (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008: 54-56). In this regard, it does not matter in which form, in which community and within which political traditions they emerge. Taking into account that locality gets strengthened or politics start from local communities, all policy actors are already or will be interested

in the neighborhood. This statement can be said to be true especially for this period in which re-centralization is being discussed or in-deed have already started. In this regard, emergence and transformation of neighborhood concept are important. Meaning acquisition of this transformation and changes are closely related with democratic values and living. While contribution of political-administrative institutional structure of neighborhood to democratization is presented as an acceptance in decentralization, how can a relationship between neighborhood and democracy be established in re-centralization. Although at minimal level, such a relation or efforts to establish relationship can be seen in Turkey example. However, its impacts on democracy seems to depend on implementation, institutionalization and future legislation.

3 Institutional Development and Current Overview of the Neighborhood Unit in Turkey

Neighborhood mukhtarship institution in Turkey was annexed to administrative system during last era of Ottoman Empire and later transferred to the new Republic. Neighborhood mukhtarship is the smallest public unit in which neighborhood relationships can be established largely in urban areas and administrative services, some official procedures and registrations can be fulfilled (Eryılmaz, 1988). Although neighborhood mukhtarship fulfills public duties as well as other works concerning local governments within municipality service areas, they have not been regulated as local government units. This administrative unit designed particularly for modernization of Ottoman State also realized useful services during Republican Period; however, its transformation into an institutional neighborhood administration failed. In fact, it has been a critical political choice whether to let neighborhood mukhtarship turn into neighborhood administration or not. In order to better understand it, the following questions should clearly be explained; “Why neighborhood mukhtarship was established? What are their duties? What kind of transformation were their duties and authorities subject to throughout the history? Will they continue to exist in gradually metropolitanized Turkey? Why and in what sense do political actors, in particularly the President, attach importance to neighborhood mukhtars? After the local government reform, will neighborhood mukhtarship unit be transformed into local government unit or will it remain as an extension of central government?”.

In Turkish-Islam tradition, neighborhoods developed as urban areas where communities sharing common religious-cultural characteristics lived together with their families irrespective of class or status differences and historically these neighborhoods acted as auxiliary institution to the administrative authorities at central and local level (Ergenç, 1981; Ortaylı, 1979; cited from Yalçındağ, 1988, Bulut, 2001: 32-33). In broadest term, for Turkish administration system, neighborhoods articulated in citizens in urban areas at the closest level thanks to

their historical and intellectual accumulation. Neighborhoods have been one of the fundamental administrative units which provide public services both for the central government and local communities in the modern Turkish governmental system (Alada, 2008: 69).

First neighborhood mukhtarship was established in Istanbul in 1829 for the purposes to “prevent immigration, remove totalitarian management of traditional imams (Islamic cleric), register the population in the neighborhood, collect taxes from households, solve the disputes, enroll soldiers, ensure domestic security, keep the local area clean etc.”. Other mukhtarships were established in the other villages and neighborhoods all over the Turkey from 1833 to 1836 (Çadırcı, 2011: 51-53). Since Decree Law of 1913 on provincial administrations did not cover neighborhood mukhtarships, they de facto existed without legal basis. Circular of 1918 issued Ministry of Interior requested the Governors to ensure that neighborhood mukhtarships continue their services. Municipality Law of 1930 regulated the neighborhood mukhtarships for the first time during the Republic Period so that neighborhood mukhtarships were legally re-included in the administrative system (Güler, 2010: 297). However, another Law enacted in 1933 removed neighborhood mukhtarship and annexed their organization to the municipalities. Duties of neighborhood mukhtars were mostly transferred to the municipalities and remaining to the gendarme and police organizations. Ten years after this Law, mukhtarships found themselves in the administrative system again with “Law no 4541 on Formation of Mukhtars and Council of Elderly in the Neighborhoods in Cities and Towns” dated 1944 as well as other related regulations. This law is still in force in general terms (Güler, 2010: 297-298; Keleş, 2016: 297).

The most significant condition for neighborhood mukhtarship is establishment of a neighborhood within the borders of the municipality to which it is affiliated. Establishment, removal or merging of the neighborhoods or changing their names or borders are carried out by “Decision of Municipality Council, Opinion of the District Governor and Approval of the Provincial Governor”. District and provincial administrations which were included in this process before the Municipality Law no 5393 of 2005 are not excluded in this process (Güler, 2010: 298; Keleş, 2016: 297). In this sense, municipality councils now have more authority in establishment or removal of the neighborhoods.

Neighborhood mukhtars started to get certain salaries from central government with Law no 2108 of 1977, which led to increase in the number of neighborhood mukhtarships (Keleş, 2016: 298). Since these salaries had been very limited until recently, neighborhood mukhtarship was not regarded as an attractive job. In 2014, salaries of the mukhtars increased by 100 % by a new regulation and then increased to minimum wage level in 2016. Such increase pleased current mukhtars whose number is around 50.000 as well as other potential candidates. Mukhtarship is now

attractive even for the people with higher education who have been candidates in 2019 local elections.

Neighborhood administration consist of a mukhtar and council of elderly. Mukhtar and members of council of elderly are directly elected by people living in the neighborhood. One person is elected as mukhtar and up to four persons are elected for council of elderly (Keleş, 2016: 298). This administrative organization which consist of elected representatives and is closest to the local communities in the Turkish administrative system is expected to be impartial to the politics due to nature of its public services. Amendment to the Constitution, which was accepted in 2017 referendum (Act No. 6771), changes the impartial status of the President since it proposes the President “to be a member of a political party” implying that “impartial” status of mukhtarship may also change.

Neighborhood mukhtarship is not a local government unit with public entity, its own budget and staff. Although neighborhood mukhtars and council of elderly living within the borders of a municipality come to their posts after elections, they do not work as local government units (Arıkboğa, 1999: 120). Neighborhood mukhtarships can be regarded as smallest local units within all public entities (Güler, 2010: 298). From another perspective, neighborhood mukhtarships are extension of local government within municipality borders (Keleş, 2016: 297).

Duties carried out by neighborhood mukhtars clearly indicate their relations with the government. They are auxiliary services such as civil registry, soldier enrollment, civil defense, security, election formalities, national education, title deed and cadastre and general health issue (Güler, 2010: 298). Considering that these services are within service areas of general administration (central government), it is seen that neighborhood mukhtars are indeed the most reliable public administrative units elected at local level. In the process of transition to presidential system in Turkey, according to the amendment made in Law on Neighborhood Mukhtarship (No. 4541, Art. 3/17), President may give directives to the mukhtars in order to facilitate the delivery of public services and to meet the public wishes.

Duties of neighborhood mukhtars as auxiliary units to the local governments or as units that jointly meet needs of the neighborhood residents are not clear and effective. A new practice that used to be fulfilled in practice and later assigned to the neighborhood mukhtars with new municipality law is that they can ask for services from the related municipality (Law No. 5393, Art. 9). Furthermore, city councils deemed to be established by Municipality Law also include neighborhood mukhtars; however, this regulation is not regarded to be sufficient for mukhtars to be involved in decision making process of the municipalities. In practice, neighborhood mukhtars mostly carry out the duties such as issuing “poverty

document, settlement document, address declaration form, copy of identification cards”, which indicate that duties clearly concerning central government are among the works that mukhtars do most. Nevertheless, mukhtars usually deal with the works that concern the municipalities. They spend most of their times following infrastructure works and municipality services related with their neighborhoods. In addition, neighborhood mukhtars are inclined to “have a say in municipality council” and “wish to be consulted while city plans are drafted”, which means that they prefer to be a part of local government (Güler, 2010: 298-299). Re-organization of neighborhood mukhtarship, an institution with traditions of approximately 200 years, will provide major contribution to encourage public participation to local governments (Keleş, 2016a: 298; Keleş, 2016b). It will be possible for the local communities to have easy and direct contact with public authorities.

4 The Changing Role of Neighborhood Unit in Relation to Municipal Administration

Neighborhood is a quite important social and administrative unit in terms of Turkish administrative tradition and social life. Defining the relations particularly in the urban area, playing a determinant role in development of social identity and representing an important share of the description of the urban social fabric; the neighborhood also continues to exist as an indispensable institution in the service provision of both the central government and the local governments. Throughout the whole Republican history, neighborhood administration has been defined in the framework of “the office of neighborhood mukhtar” and has been deemed mostly an auxiliary unit of the central government, which facilitates rendering of central services to the citizens at the closest level. For this reason, neighborhood administration -which exists in the Turkish public administration system for quite a long time- has not been organized as a local government unit and no effort has been made to enable directly rendering of the urban services by the neighborhood administration. Rather, some attempts have been made in the long administrative history of Turkey to terminate and completely remove the neighborhood administration from the administration system. The decentralization process Turkey has undergone recently and the related local government reforms show that a new perspective has been adopted towards this issue.

Firstly, Municipality Law No 5393 dated 2005 -one of the important innovations in the field of local governments- brought important regulations on the definition, establishment/abolishment, administration, function, municipal relations and resources of the neighborhood as well as the role of mukhtar, the responsible administrator of the neighborhood administration. Accordingly; the neighborhood refers to “the administrative unit included in the municipal boundaries, which have similar needs and priorities and residents of which have neighborhood relations” (art. 3/d). Traditional structure of the neighborhood administration, consisted of

“Mukhtar” (Muhtar) and “Neighborhood Council/Council of Elders” (İhtiyar Heyeti), has been preserved. Municipal Council has been authorized for establishment, abolishment, unification, division, and detection of the boundaries and official name of any neighborhood. Mukhtar has been equipped with important duties of a local administrator such as detection -together with the neighborhood residents- of common needs; working to further develop the neighborhood; establishing relations with the municipality and other public institutions and organizations to convey the needs and problems of the neighborhood; and finding solutions for the neighborhood problems by cooperating with the related organizations. Municipality administration has been held responsible for meeting the needs and offering solutions for the problems of the neighborhood and the office of neighborhood Mukhtar. In addition, arrangements have been made to ensure that any municipality not only takes into consideration the common demands of the neighborhood in decision-making process but also renders its services in accordance with the needs of the neighborhood (see, art. 9). Any neighborhood mukhtar has been entitled to attend (as a non-voter participant) and present her/his opinion during the specialized commission of municipal council meetings held to discuss the issues falling in her/his field of duty and activity (art. 24); a right which complements the previous responsibilities regarding participation in the municipal decision-making processes. To strengthen participatory democracy, representatives of the neighborhood mukhtars have been allowed to attend the City Council meetings, an organ established in relation to decision-making processes of the municipalities (art. 76). This is also another important development changing the traditional role played by the neighborhood administration. Briefly, these reformist regulations, in nature, have the power to change the functions of the neighborhood administration, the space it occupies in the whole administration system, the role it plays in the political and administrative system as well as its relations with the local community. Neighborhood administration has been an important component in the provision of governance environment between local community, local government and central government.

Secondly, the legal entity of the first-level/town municipalities and villages was dissolved in order to establish new districts or to expand the boundaries of the existing ones within the boundaries of metropolitan municipalities as per the Law dated 2008 and No. 5747 on the Establishment of Districts within Metropolitan Municipal Boundaries and Making of Amendments in Some Laws. With this Law, neighborhoods and neighborhood sections within the boundaries of the first-level municipalities were included into the district municipalities. This Law also regulated that the municipalities once to have been turned into villages were entitled with the right to demand inclusion as a neighborhood into the provincial or district municipalities they were connected into (Provisional art. 1). In summary, this Law made an important spatial re-arrangement (*amalgamation*) related to metropolitan municipalities; established an administrative system within the metropolitan

municipal boundaries, consisted only of metropolitan municipality, district municipalities and neighborhood administrations; brought to the fore the option of neighborhood administration for the local governments having lost their legal entity.

Finally, the Law dated 2012 and No. 6360 on the Establishment of Metropolitan Municipalities in Fourteen Provinces and Twenty-Seven Districts and Making of Amendments in Some Laws and Decree Laws brought, in general, detailed and radical changes in the Turkish local government system. The “New Metropolitan Municipality Model” (NMMM) introduced by the Law has ended not only the existence of traditional Turkish local government units such as village (köy), small town/first level municipality (belde/ilk kademe belediyesi) and provincial local government (il özel idaresi) but also township/sub-district (bucak) organizations in the metropolitan areas (Art. 1/3, 1/4, 1/5 and 1/6). Law No. 6360 has established 13 metropolitan municipalities (büyükşehir belediyesi) within provincial administration boundaries (this number increased to 14 after the establishment of metropolitan municipality in Ordu Province as per the Law dated 2013 and No 6447) and expanded the previously-established metropolitan municipal boundaries to the provincial administration boundaries (Art. 1/1 and 1/2). Legal entities of the villages and small town municipalities, falling within the administrative boundaries of the districts connected to the provinces where metropolitan municipalities exist, have been dissolved; the dissolved villages have been included as “neighborhoods” and the dissolved municipalities as “one single neighborhood named after the town” into the district municipality (ilçe belediyesi) they are connected into (Art. 1/3).

Article 15 of the Law No. 6360 has introduced an important change in the scale of the neighborhood administration in the scope of the new municipality administration. According to this change, no neighborhood unit with a population of less than 500 residents can be established within the administrative boundaries of any municipality. Article 11 of the Municipality Law stipulates dissolution of the legal entity of the municipalities and villages at a distance of maximum 5.000 meter to the provincial or district municipalities or municipalities with a minimum population of 50.000 residents and turning of such municipalities and villages into neighborhoods and connecting them into related municipalities. This regulation is of great importance for the preference of neighborhood administration. Article 16 of the Law No. 6360 provides for inclusion of an additional paragraph to Article 12 of the Municipality Law, to guarantee preservation of the rights, responsibilities and privileges (given by the previous legislation to the forest villages and villagers) of the new neighborhoods which have transformed from forest villages. The same guarantee is also given by Article 28 of the Law dated 2014 and No. 6525 to the small towns which were turned into neighborhoods and the residents of which had been previously entitled to benefit from the rights, responsibilities and privileges given to the forest villagers. These provisional regulations clearly show the

emergence of two types of neighborhood administrations in metropolitan municipalities, “urban” and “rural” neighborhood administrations with significantly different administrative characteristics.

By amending the related article of the Law dated 1984 and No. 2972 on the Election of Local Governments and Neighborhood Mukhtars and Neighborhood Councils, Article 30 of the Law No. 6360 has regulated the use of a voting paper which lists together a specific number of names equal to the number of mukhtar, members of the Village or Neighborhood Councils in the elections. This regulation can be interpreted to envisage formation of a council/board in harmony with the mukhtar in these elections where candidacy procedure is not applied.

No significant development had been witnessed about neighborhood mukhtarship during the Republican Period until the recent years. Establishment of new metropolitan municipalities in Turkey, new metropolitan municipality model brought some regulation about neighborhood mukhtarships. However, current legislation is still far from transforming neighborhood mukhtarships into local administrations or including them in local government processes. In this regard, assessment of Çadırcı (2011:54) continues to be valid: “mukhtarships preserved their existence; however, regulations on transport, communication, security and similar areas valued the city as a whole. Municipalities come to forefront for urban life causing the neighborhood mukhtarships to lose their significance over time. On the other hand, neighborhood awareness gradually decreases as the neighborhoods gets more crowded.” Metropolitanization is the determinant factor in losing neighborhood awareness and traditional neighborhood concept has disappeared not only in social-cultural life but also in official administrative terminology. It is possible that neighborhoods and mukhtarships as administrative units be abolished in the further stages (Behar, 2014: 13-14). Following the 2019 local elections in Turkey, Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) has proposed changes to metropolitan municipality model after the majority of metropolitan municipality council members and the mayors politically differed in Ankara and İstanbul. Accordingly, the appointment of district municipalities' mayors by lord mayor, removal of neighborhood administrations and transfer of their duties to district municipalities are recommended. It is stated that Justice and Development Party (AKP), which is in the government, will consider this proposal (Sputnik Turkey, 07.04.2019).

Recent developments imply that neighborhood mukhtarships can neither be transformed into separate local administration units nor can they be abolished; therefore, it seems their auxiliary role for central and local governments will continue. It will not be unfair to express that neighborhood mukhtars have been an instrument for local and national politics. It is possible to suggest a similar thesis taking into account the analysis of this study which focused on the relationship between the President and Neighborhood Mukhtarships. However, it is alone not

sufficient to explain since political impacts of the neighborhood mukhtars within metropolitan municipalities of today's Turkey have gradually decreased sociologically and politically.

5 Methodology

In this part of the study, a research was carried out to explain policy-making or policy transfer process of President of the Republic-Neighborhood Mukhtar relation. The purpose of this research is to understand what neighborhood administration and its administrative form "neighborhood mukhtarship", which has come to fore again in recent years, mean for the presidential system recently established in Turkey. Although currently there are no clear regulations that directly refer to the relationship between neighborhood mukhtarship and President of the Republic, deep interest of the President to the neighborhood mukhtars led to such expectations. Furthermore, the relationship between mukhtars- President of Republic is legally-administratively established indirectly by the new constitutional amendments.

Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan initiated these meetings after he was elected as the President of the Republic for the first time in 2014. Purpose of these meetings were announced to the public as bringing together the President of the Republic, who is at the top of the state administration in Turkey, with the mukhtars who are the elected representatives of the local communities and chair the smallest administration units in the society. First meeting of the President with the neighborhood mukhtars took place on 27th January 2015 and the last meeting (for the time being) on 21th November 2018. As of 6th April 2019, 48 meetings were held in total. Approximately 400 village and neighborhood mukhtars were invited to each meeting. As President Erdoğan stated in his speech at the 48th meeting, 30.000 of 50.411 mukhtars in total (Presidency of The Republic of Turkey, 2019) representing 18.306 villages and 32.105 neighborhood mukhtarship from 81 provinces (Turkish Ministry of Interior, 2018) all over Turkey attended these meetings. In the preparation process of the meetings, invitation letters are sent to the mukhtars. The mukhtars to be called to the meeting are determined on provincial basis. In each meeting, approximately mukhtars from 10 provinces are invited. Mukhtars from 28 different provinces were invited to the 48th and last meeting. However, all mukhtars in those provinces were not invited. It is not clear that provinces or mukhtarships are chosen according to which criteria. Moreover, there is no regular order: For instance, although mukhtars who were called to the meetings so far were elected from Trabzon province nine times, there are also provinces where none of mukhtars is still invited. Likewise, there were mukhtars who attend the meetings more than once. The meetings are held at the Presidential Complex. The organization period of the meetings is changing, sometimes there are 2-3 meetings per month, sometimes there is 1 meeting in 3-4 months.

For this study, documents of the meetings that President hold with neighborhood mukhtars were analyzed through discourse analysis technique. Documents in discourse analysis consist of the speeches that President delivered during “Meetings with Mukhtars”. These speeches are shared in pdf format in official webpage of the Presidency.

Texts of these speeches cited from webpage of the presidency were subject to preliminary examination by the authors before discourse analysis. Main and sub-codes generated based on this examination were used during discourse analysis. All texts of the speeches were studied by the authors through discourse analysis technique in MAXQDA 11 program. Data obtained through the research was interpreted by the authors in line with the purpose of the study.

An interview based research was conducted to get opinions of the mukhtars attended in these meetings. The interviews were made by the authors on the phone with 10 mukhtars from different provinces. The findings of this research were used to support the results of the discourse analysis.

6 Findings

Findings of this research were developed through main codes of “centralization, decentralization, democracy, neighborhood administration, foreign policy, economic issues, security, urbanization and environmental issues” and their sub-codes. These findings are given and analyzed below in an order in general and in detail.

6.1 Message From the President to the Mukhtars in General

President Erdoğan usually talks about political issues of the country during these meetings which often take place as monolog. Speeches of the President to the mukhtars was always about the political agenda, these discourses influenced the policy makers at national and local level and had impact on the whole society. Mukhtars in particular who were addressee of these speeches inferred vital messages from these speeches. Furthermore, in these meetings, mukhtars were always asked to convey these discourses to their communities, in other words, to the residents of their neighborhood. When the speeches are viewed in general, their distribution seems to appear as given in Table 1. It is clearly seen that terror which is the most significant problem of the country in recent years has strong influence during the meetings of the President with mukhtars.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution by Sub-Codes within all Codes in the Speeches

Main Codes	Frequency	% percentage
Centralization	114	15,25
Decentralization	12	1,61
Democracy	123	16,45
Neighborhood Administration	42	5,61
Foreign Policy	57	7,62
Economic Issues	59	7,87
Security	338	45,18
Urbanization and Environmental Issues	3	0,41
Total	748	100

“Security” has the highest rate by 45% among 748 titles which coded under 8 main codes. “Democracy” follows it by 16% and “Centralization” by %15. Lowest rates belong to “Decentralization” by 1,5% & and “Urbanization and Environmental Issues” by 0.4 %. “Problems of the Neighborhood Mukhtars” who are the major actors of the meetings or “Neighborhood Administration” were included in the speeches by lower rates of 5,6 %, which indicates that neighborhood mukhtarship shifted to “centralization” again rather than neighborhood administration, as will be explained in detail in the next parts.

The reason lying behind high rate of “Security” code in the speeches of President is the successive terror attacks which were carried out in Turkey as from second half of 2015. It is seen in the statements concerning security and terror that not only “grieves caused by loses are shared” but also mukhtars responsible from neighborhood administration are given de facto duties and responsibilities on this issue. In these speeches, mukhtars were asked to help public authorities by identifying terror organizations in their neighborhoods and inform the related authorities. This direct relationship established between the President and mukhtars arises from emergency and significance of the issue; besides, it also means structurally increasing centralization tendencies around security policies due to terror attacks in Turkey.

Two other main codes in Table 1 are “democracy” and “centralization”. Like other main codes, “Democracy” and “Centralization” titles are the findings of the authors referred with sub-codes. Interpretation of the titles and main codes based on sub-codes will strengthen the explanations. However, before a detailed explanation, it should be noted that strong centralization in institutional-administrative-political fields is witnessed despite strong emphasis to democracy in the political discourse which is specific to Turkey.

It can be said that historically strong centralization in Turkey or as defined by Heper (1994) “transcendental state” was adopted again through democracy discourses. When viewed from the perspective of neighborhood, it is seen that finding that Heper (1987) explained for metropolitan municipalities many years ago emerged again in the relationship between central government-neighborhood today. In other words, municipalities were affected from this centralist characteristics and a similar approach is true at the lower management levels for the metropolitan municipalities.

As explained in detail in the following tables, high rates of “democracy” and “centralization” codes originate from Presidential system and New Constitution sub-codes. Results of cross analysis show that Presidential System-New Constitution sub-codes and National Will-Referendum sub-codes are often used together. In the speeches in which centralization and democracy concepts are used together, a view which is definitely opposite to the principle that “democracy gets strengthened through centralization” emerges.

“Taking into account that tendencies for centralization is inversely proportional to the tendencies for democratization”, it is difficult to estimate how can unitary based Presidential system, which is aimed to be realized in Turkey, be associated with decentralized democracy in practice and on institutional-legal background.

In addition to all these, reference to decentralization in the speeches is around 1,6%, which can be interpreted as a significant indicator that decentralization and the related concepts of decentralization will continue to remain in background “New and Strong Turkey” policy.

The thoughts of the mukhtars attending to meetings were not directly taken by President. However, it was asked from mukhtars to write down their problems to the note papers left on the tables in lunch given after the meeting. According to Mukhtars, the issue of neighborhood administration as an local government unit or decentralization subject did not come into question, only the problems of mukhtars were reported and Presidency Office was interested in them.

6.2 Componenets of Re-Centralization

Institutional developments were witnessed in recent years in Turkey; establishment and organization of new ministries, new management model of the metropolitan municipalities, changes in central government organization and finally the new Presidential system have initiated the discussions on re-centralization (Sadiođlu, 2018:77-80). New Presidential system, which is the most recent and significant component of recentralization, has been studied based on the sub-topics that can be compiled under centralization and taking into account the meetings of the President with neighborhood mukhtars. Accordingly, Presidential system itself and its contents are regarded to strengthen central government. In addition, mukhtarships turned into an intermediary institution for the President to transfer policies from central government to local communities, President has direct political and administrative relationship with the mukhtars, neighborhood administration is seen as a complementary component of central government, public duties of the mukhtars come to the forefront etc., all of which can be considered as components of centralization.

Table 2: Distribution of the Sub-Codes in the “Centralization” Code

Codes	Frequency	% percentage	% percentage (valid)
Presidential System	50	43,86	43,86
Policy Transfer from President to Mukhtars	28	24,56	24,56
The Direct Administrative and Political Relation	22	19,30	19,30
Neighborhoods as Complementary Institution	7	6,14	6,14
Governmental Duties of Mukhtar	3	2,63	2,63
Agenda Setting	2	1,75	1,75
New Metropolitan Municipality Model (6360)	2	1,75	1,75
Total	114	100,00	100,00
Missing	0	0,00	-
Total	114	100,00	-

In Table 2, in which sub-codes of centralization are displayed by their percentage in detail, approximately half of the statements concern Presidential system. Presidential system is followed by “Policy Transfer from President to Mukhtars” and “The Direct Administrative and Political Relation between the Presidency and the Neighborhood Mukhtars” with percentages of 24,5 % and 19,3 % respectively.

Based on this data, it is possible to express that speeches addressed to the mukhtars by the President mainly covers presidential system. Following code “Policy Transfer from President to Mukhtars” also seems to support this claim. As often referred in the speeches, mukhtars are given the duty to inform their neighborhoods about “Turkish Type Presidential System”, which is related to the 3rd highest code “The Direct Administrative and Political Relation between the Presidency and the Neighborhood Mukhtars”. The President attaches a political mission to the mukhtars and try to associate them with a kind of “delegates in the neighborhoods”.

New metropolitan municipality model which emerged with the Law no 6360 of 2012 abolished village administrations and district municipalities within the borders of metropolitan municipalities. Villages and districts turned into neighborhoods. Since neighborhood administrations do not have the authority to take decisions and provide services as a local government unit, it can be said that authorities, duties and responsibilities of the village mukhtars in general were largely abolished. On the other hand, neighborhoods became more significant since management of the municipality is now related with neighborhood administrations. However, this issue almost never came to the agenda of the meetings between the President and mukhtars. It is interesting and inexplicable that during the meetings with mukhtars who are the direct addressee regarding this issue, only one statement¹ in 46 texts deals with Law no 6360.

According to the mukhtars, district municipalities that are close to them do not count mukhtars in decision making process. Centralization of the system is generally accepted by mukhtars. Although the meetings of president increased care of mukhtars, the authority and influence of mukhtars has not been increased during this process.

6.3 Considering Neighborhood Administration as a part of Local Government

Since 2004, almost all laws regarding local governments have been amended in Turkey, thus they have been strengthened both administratively and financially. As a result, strengthening of local governments proved to be in favor of metropolitan municipalities. It might be said that neighborhood administrations have come to the forefront in scaling up metropolitan municipalities’ finding solutions to local democracy problems and efficiently meeting the needs of citizens. The Municipal Law no. 5393 of 2005 provided a connection in this frame between municipal councils and mukhtars, thus transforming neighborhood administrations into subsidiary institutions of local governments. For this reason, during the meetings of the President and mukhtars issues regarding whether the decentralization trend will continue, if neighborhood administration will transform into a local government unit and what will be the new agenda of the local government reform were

discussed. This analysis is in a sense based upon the fact that if it is possible to balance strengthening centralization by presidential system through reinforcement of neighborhood administration.

Table 3: Distribution of sub-codes under the Code “Decentralization”

Codes	Frequency	% percentage	% percentage (valid)
Neighborhoods as Complementary Institution of Municipalities	5	41,7	41,7
Local Government Reform	3	25,0	25,0
Local Duties and Authorities of Neighborhood Unit	2	16,7	16,7
Reorganization of the Neighborhood Administration	2	16,7	16,7
Joining of the Neighborhood Mukhtars to the City Council	0	0,00	0,00
Participation of the Neighborhood Mukhtar	0	0,00	0,00
Subsidiarity	0	0,00	0,00
Participatory Administration	0	0,00	0,00
Total	12	100,00	100,00
Missing	0	0,00	-
Total	12	100,00	-

Table 3 shows in detail the rates of the sub-codes under the main code “decentralization”. Of the total 748 codes, 12 are related to title of decentralization. The low rate of decentralization code can be construed as an indicator of the centralization trends mentioned above have gained strength or are desired to be strengthened. Besides, considering that the collocutors of these meetings are directly the mukhtars who are responsible for neighborhood or village administration, the low rate of this title sets one of the most striking result of this study.

With 41,7% rate, the sub-code “Neighborhoods as Complementary Institution of Municipalities” has been the most-cited one under decentralization title. Additionally, the fact that city councils or participatory administration which are among the main elements of decentralization were not included in 46 speeches

depicts that a new decentralization process through neighborhood administration and local government reform have not been put in the agenda yet. Also, the expectation for reinforcement of neighborhood administration in the context of strengthening the local government in a system of central government growing stronger or municipality is falsified. According to the mukhtars, it might be said that the institutional existence of neighborhood administration in Turkey will continue, the central government will keep its traditional interpretation mainly on mukhtar, the »neighborhood administration« will not be institutionalized and that the relation between neighborhood and central government will deepen again. Some mukhtars mentioned that »because municipalities still do not take mukhtars seriously, they can be more useful if they are directly connected to Ministry of Interior in presidential system«. On the other hand, others believe that after the presidential system has settled, the mukhtarship will be abolished.

6.4 Strengthening Democracy in Re-centralization Period

Turkey has brushed up against severe security threats in the recent years. The problems encountered as such terrorist attacks, threats in neighboring countries violating border security and the coup attempt paved the way for revision of security policy and declaration of state of emergency in Turkey. Despite all these extraordinary situations, Turkey has been striving for maintaining democracy. The most important agenda items in Turkey have been the referendum for amending several articles of the Constitution in 2017, general election for presidency and parliament in 2018 and local elections in 2019. Institutionalization of democracy for its substance, deepening, values and sustainability is closely related with the governing of state and local governments. For this reason, the discourse of the meeting of the President of Republic and mukhtars is analyzed under democracy title.

Table 4: Distribution of sub-codes under the Code “Democracy”

Codes	Frequency	% percentage	% percentage (valid)
New Constitution	42	34,1	34,1
National Will	32	26,0	26,0
Superiority of Elected Politicians of Officials	28	22,8	22,8
Stand Against the Bureaucratic Tutelage	17	13,8	13,8
Referendum	4	3,3	3,3
Total	123	100,00	100,00
Missing	0	0,00	-

Total	123	100,00	-
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“Democracy” code is another field that is mostly found under main codes created. The stress put on democracy and the neighborhood mukhtars which are the grassroots administrative level elected by the public are relevant. The role that mukhtars play in local and general political process is deemed significant. It is seen that concepts of New Constitution, National Will and Superiority of Elected Ones which have been recently taking part frequently in the agenda of Turkey are also used in speeches very often.

The concept of New Constitution is mostly used together with the concept of National Will. The reason for this is to contend that the new constitution is based upon the will of nation. Furthermore, devotion to democracy, the importance of representative democracy institutions and the confidence in elections become prominent. Following expressions mostly found in the speeches of the President of the Republic display the kind of relation between the codes of New Constitution, Presidential System and National Will;

“The new constitution is the will of nation.

No one could stand in the way of the will of nation, the national will demands for a new constitution.

We will introduce the New Constitution in line with the will of nation.”

Similarly, the concepts of “Superiority of Elected Politicians of Officials” and “Stand Against the Bureaucratic Tutelage” are usually used together. In sentences constantly emphasizing that mukhtars and the President of the Republic are the elected persons, it is underlined that it is necessary to free the government from hegemony of assigned officials. It is stressed in a sense that superiority of civil-military-judicial bureaucracy that exists in Turkey despite the changing trend starting from mid-1980s will now disappear. It is also highlighted that the actual decision makers and implementers should be the elected ones and the nation being the direct controller. In other words, the control/balancing of the political decision makers in the system via elections by the public rather than by the institutions is put forward. The Bureaucracy is severely defined as unfavorable and it is argued that it should never interfere with the policy and be a technical organization only implementing the decisions made.

When the sentences in which all these codes are used together are analyzed, it is seen that assigned bureaucrats are reflected as if they were elitist administrators “imported from another country”, unpatriotic, away from public and acting only in line with their own material and moral interests. It is for sure that the term bureaucracy here actually refers to judicial, military and high level bureaucratic institutions that might hamper political processes by acting as tutelage authority in

political decision making processes. On the other hand, elected politicians are regarded as if they were each “public heroes”. Assigned officials, to whom an invisible war should be waged by the elected ones, are reflected as a great obstacle to democratic development of Turkey. The following sentences again refer to Presidential System and promise that Turkish Type Presidential System will save Turkey from the oligarchy of bureaucrats. Here, separation of politics that is much stricter than Wilson’s “politics-administration dichotomy” from bureaucracy and making the politics absolute superiority is emphasized.

Despite all these arguments, it has been disappointing to reopen the debate on the removal of mukhtarships after the 2019 local elections. The Mukhtars stated that this proposal would lead to a democratic deficit.

6.5 Problems and New Missions of Neighborhood Mukhtarship

There has never been a demand from local community to the central government to “transform neighborhood mukhtarships into neighborhood administrations” in the name of democracy and to strengthen local administrations. Mukhtarship, which is traditionally the most immediate complementary institution of the government for the citizens, sustained its development via “mukhtar”, gained its place in the minds of both society and the government and also the mukhtarship has become an elected government official in fact. When the problems, demands and thoughts of mukhtars are listened, one may see that their most important problems are related to their offices or their own facilities. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that they are in a position of expecting from the government in relation with the steps to be taken for them. Content of the President-Mukhtars meetings also imply this interpretation from other perspectives in the hands of the central government.

Table 5: Distribution of Sub-codes under the Code of “Neighborhood Administration”

Codes	Frequency	% percentage	% percentage (valid)
NU as a Public Relation Unit	16	38,1	38,1
Political Issues Related with the NU	8	19,0	19,0
The Administrative Importance of Mukhtar	7	16,7	16,7
Administrative Issues related with the NU	6	14,3	14,3
Fiscal Issues related with the NU	4	9,5	9,5

Codes	Frequency	% percentage	% percentage (valid)
Local Arbitrator Role of the Mukhtar	1	2,4	2,4
Total	42	100,00	100,00
Missing	0	0,00	-
Total	42	100,00	-

It is possible to read from the Table 5, which shows numerical values and percentages of sub-codes under neighborhood administration, the roles of neighborhood mukhtars in the eyes of the President of the Republic. The high percentage of the sub-code “*NU as a Public Relation Unit*” reveals that neighborhood mukhtars in Turkey are built as a public relations unit. The last sentence in the speeches of the President saying “*I would like you to send my cordial love and greetings to my brothers in your neighborhood’s and villages*” shows that the neighborhood mukhtars are considered in a sense as an envoy between the President and the neighborhood folk. Again, the following sentences were repeated almost in all speeches for the mukhtars:

*“As our mukhtars, I specially ask you to convey this message to our nation and encourage everyone in this direction.
 As the representatives of democracy at the grassroots level, significant roles fall to our mukhtars in this struggle. It is quite important that you inform, persuade and mobilize our citizens in your neighborhood and villages.”*

Based on these sentences, it is understood that mukhtars are desired to be used not only as a public relations unit, but also as an actor in steering the public. As the leaders of local community, it can be said that mukhtars are redefined as a sort of “policy facilitators”.

Other than these sub-codes, administrative duties and importance of mukhtars, their role as local arbitrators and their problems related with financial issues that are found under the title of “Neighborhood Administration” are hardly ever touched upon. In other terms, it is seen that during the President-mukhtars meetings that have been held in the last three years, institutional problems of neighborhood mukhtarship have not come to the fore.

6.6 Adverse Reflections of Security Problems upon Democracy and Decentralization

The scope of this study is not security or terror. However, we can say that security issues and policy excessively come to the forefront in the policy documents forming the research element of this study in which we try to discuss transformation of neighborhood administration together with presidential system. Among duties and responsibilities of Mukhtars towards the government, important responsibilities regarding public order and security are regulated in laws. Yet, they do not have the jurisdiction, organization or staff to directly fulfil such duties. Rather, they have the duty of assisting for notification and measures. Growing terrorist incidents which occupied the agenda of Turkey inevitably reminded the importance or existing roles of mukhtars. On the other part, security policies brought about divergence from decentralization policy. In other words, the duties of neighborhood mukhtarship that are related to state rather than those associated with local governments, participatory democracy or local communities have become prominent.

Table 6: Distribution of sub-codes under the Code “Security”

Codes	Frequency	% percentage	% percentage (valid)
Terrorism	155	45,9	45,9
DAEŞ	60	17,8	17,8
PKK/PYD	57	16,9	16,9
FETO	42	12,4	12,4
Defense	24	7,1	7,1
Total	338	100,00	100,00
Missing	0	0,00	-
Total	338	100,00	-

As mentioned above, terrorist attacks since 2015 in Turkey and disorder along south-east border due to Syrian Civil War led to such a high rate of this title in these speeches. In speeches to Mukhtars of the President, the issues of ISIS (DAEŞ), PKK /PYD and FETO (Fethullah Terrorist Organization) were often discussed. Although this title is not directly related with the subject of the study, Turkey’s side and its reason in Syrian Civil War were clarified particularly in sentences regarded with “*Defense*” code. Although it appears irrelevant to talk about this subject with mukhtars, it is seen that they are used as an important tool in setting the agenda considering that these speeches appear on media. Also, the President, in the capacity of the head of the state, conveys his messages and expectations to the local community. It is possible to say that mukhtars are encouraged to assist to the

government in security measures, intensify solidarity of the nation and ensure neighbor surveillance.

These findings indicate that traditional entities of states and their functions may transform during transitions in their domestic and foreign policies. Neighborhood mukhtarship shows that it has the capacity to take on critical tasks during state of emergency under Turkish governing structure and tradition.

Just like security, it is observed that current problems such as in foreign policy and economic issues were also discussed to a large extent at the meetings of President and Mukhtars. However, they are not evaluated in this study considering that those subjects do not relate to the neighborhood mukhtarship when compared to security issue.

6.7 Politically Important Dates in Recent Period and Change in Discourses

This subtitle shows the focus of the speeches of the President of the Republic in different periods. The reason for such an analysis is the critical political transformations that Turkey has gone through in the last three years. In the surveys made it is observed that weight of subjects in speeches of the President of the Republic had changed in line with facts and incidents happened in these periods. For this reason, it is concluded that analyzing speeches on a periodical basis would yield more reliable and substantive results.

Table 7: Distribution of all Codes in accordance with Periodical Speeches

Kod Sistemi	After April 16...	July 15th- April 16th	November 1st- July 15th	June 7th- November 1...	Before June 7...
Centralization					
New Metropolitan Municipality Model (6360)	1				1
Presidency System	1	10	9	1	20
Governmental Duties of Mukhtar	1	1		1	1
Neighborhoods as Complementary Institution	3	1	3		
The Direct Administrative and Political Relation	1	7	7	4	3
Policy Transfer from President to Mukhtars	6	5	9	3	5
Agenda Setting					2
Decentralization					
Neighborhoods as Complementary Institution of Municipalities			2		3
Local Government Reform	1				2
Local Duties and Authorities of Neighborhood Unit					2
Participation of the Neighborhood Mukhtar					
Joining of the Neighborhood Mukhtars to the City Council					
Reorganization of the Neighborhood Administration					2
Subsidiarity					
Participatory Administration					
Democracy					
New Constitution		18	15	1	8
Referendum		4			
National Will	1	5	7	12	7
Superiority of Elected Politicians of Officials	4	6	10	6	2
Stand Against the Bureaucratic Tutelage	5	1	5	4	2
Neighborhood Administration					
Administrative Issues related with the NU	3	1			2
Fiscal Issues related with the NU	2				2
Political Issues Related with the NU	2	1		1	4
The Administrative Importance of Mukhtar	4		1		2
Local Arbitrator Role of the Mukhtar			1		
NU as a Public Relation Unit	4	2	4	3	3
Foreign Policy	18	15	18	3	3
Economic Issues	13	21	13	6	6
Security					
FETO	21	13	1	4	3
DAEŞ	14	14		5	
Terrorism	17	35	49	39	15
Defense	2	12	8		2
PKK/PYD	16	14	18	9	
Urbanization and Environmental Issues		3			

With this aim, speeches are grouped into five periods. The first period is restricted with the dates when the meeting with mukhtars started and 7th June 2015, the first time when the Justice and Development Party (JDP) could not win the elections as the only party to form the government alone among the general elections held in the last 13 years. The second period is limited to dates 7th June 2015 and 1st November 2015 when the general election was held again and the JDP formed the government alone. The third period is confined to the dates 1st November 2015 and the coup attempt of 15th July 2016. The fourth period covers the dates 15th July 2016 and 16th April 2017 when the referendum was held for the adoption of new constitution which introduced the Presidential System. And the last period covers the process of transformation to the presidential system and implementation of it after 16th April 2017.

When the all codes are considered for the first period, it is seen that the speeches included mostly the Presidential System for 20 times, security 20 times and the new constitution 8 times. This is the first period when the issues of presidential system and constitutional amendment newly brought to the agenda in Turkey. Therefore, the fact that most of the speeches made in this period were dedicated to presidential system and the new constitution although the mukhtars were the direct collocutors of these meetings, it gives the impression that these meetings were also held to create an agenda in political arena. Again when we consider the speeches made in the first period, it is seen that the issues directly related to mukhtars were also mentioned but in the following periods the content of speeches digressed totally from neighborhood administration.

From 7th June to 1st November period, it is observed that the new constitution and presidential system were mentioned only once. On the contrary, security subject was touched upon 57 times. Another prominent subject in this period was the subject of national will which was used 12 times. The election took place on 7 June 2015 resulted in JDP's loss of its chance to form the government alone because of People's Democratic Party's (HDP) getting in the parliament with 13% of votes. In the speeches after election results, it is observed that the issues of new constitution and presidential system were put aside for a while. In this period, the term "*national will*" was used quite often and the trust in the will of nation in repeated election was expressed. Another important change in this period was the leap in the use of terrorism subject. One reason was the terror incidents happened in that period, while the other was to put HDP that appeared to have close ties with PKK in the target and try to mitigate its vote rate in 1st November election.

In the third period between 1st November 2015 and 15th July 2016, the security was stressed 103 times, main heading of democracy 37 times and presidential system 9 times. During the repeated election held on 1st November 2015, JDP increased its vote rate by 9% and formed the government alone with 49,53% of votes. After winning the general election, it is seen that emphasis on democracy and the subjects of new constitution and presidential system were come to the fore again in the speeches. The subject of the superiority of elected politicians became one of the codes mostly mentioned in this period. Foreign policy issues were also referred frequently in this period during which reproaches to European Union and crisis with other countries broke out.

As for the fourth period, the new constitution was stressed 18 times in speeches while the presidential system 19 times and economic issues 21 times. Depreciation of Turkish Lira against US Dollar, high rates of inflation, unemployment and interest as well as declination in macroeconomic data paved the way for increase in the frequency of use of particularly the economic issues in this period.

It is seen that last period speeches are mostly about security. It is noteworthy that 70 of the 139 codes of recent speeches are related to security, which is around 50%. In the speeches made during this period, it is seen that 18 times international policies and 13 economic issues were mentioned. Two important political events occurred during this period: After the general elections were held on 24th of June 2018, the presidential system was put into force with all administrative aspects. Secondly, the members of municipal councils and mayors have been elected on 31st of March 2019. Considering that no mukhtarship meeting was held for the last four months, local governments and neighborhood administration have been on the agenda in this period. It is clear that significant progress has been made in areas such as salary, social security payment and consideration of neighborhood problems. In addition to these, Department of Mukhtars and Mukhtarship Information System has been

established within the Ministry of Interior to monitor the problems of neighborhoods (Kavruk, 2018: 159-162). However, the future of neighborhood administration has become uncertain again by political discourse made after the local election.

7 Conclusions

It should be noted that neighborhood concept is closely related with three phenomena; community, government and municipality. Neighborhood concept has been affected and is still affected from the changes in these three phenomena. Transition into a system where communities move to larger cities weakened the primary relationships and consequently more formal relations emerged. It is usual for neighborhood concept to be affected from this social transformation. Another phenomenon is the government. It is the government that define significance of neighborhood and neighborhood administration. In traditional government structure, components such as population of the neighborhood, its economic power, population at the age of enrollment closely relates the government. A modern state is also able to obtain this data from other means. Recent e-government applications in particular show that relationship between the government, neighborhood and neighborhood administration has been reshaped. As a result, unfavorable developments were witnessed in civil registry and settlement procedures which used to be among the most significant functions of the neighborhood mukhtars. Another phenomenon that concerns neighborhood concept is the municipalities. Neighborhood-municipality relations define effectiveness level of neighborhood and neighborhood administration. Perspectives about municipality works and developments in the municipalities undoubtedly have effective results on the neighborhood and neighborhood administration.

Neighborhood mukhtarship has been popular in recent years after its transformation and some regulation has been in force to improve its status. President Erdoğan has shown that he attaches great importance to this institution by holding 48 outstanding meetings with mukhtars while discussions about constitutional amendments are in progress in Turkey. Analysis conducted in this study aimed to show underlying reasons and purposes behind the interest of the President in neighborhood mukhtarship. Accordingly, President as the head of the state considers neighborhood mukhtars as representatives of the government at local level. Role of mukhtars particularly in security issues were underlined taking into account the terror problems of Turkey faced. Turning neighborhood mukhtarships into local administrations has not a preferred policy yet. However, as elected representatives, their role in conveying problems of the local communities to the local governments and to the public authorities should be further emphasized. Another important aspect is that elected President expects the elected mukhtars to inform the society of the agenda of the government's policies and mobilize their communities. In fact,

this process has already started although there was no direct relationship administratively and politically between the President and neighborhood mukhtars within old constitutional system, and with adoption of new presidential system, this is more directly and intensively seen. This political-administrative relationship is legitimately democratic from the perspective that they are elected representatives. However, there are some gaps since political-administrative system and the overall society establish a relationship and the society is open to democratic inspection. Finally, how the relationship between the President who is to have political ties with new presidential system and neighborhood mukhtars whose politically impartial status has been meticulously preserved during Ottoman and Republican Period will be shaped in future needs to be discussed.

Notes:

¹ After the meeting, dinners are given for all visitors. Although there are direct conversations between the President and the mukhtars during these dinners; however, content of these conversations is not announced to the public.

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