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DERAILMENT OF STRATEGIC MANEUVERING IN A MULTI-PARTICIPANT TV DEBATE: THE FALLACY OF *IGNORATIO ELENCHI*

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Abstract: In pragma-dialectical terms, the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* results from derailment of an arguer's strategic maneuvering by violating the relevance rule of a critical discussion (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, & Henkemans, 2002). This study aims to introduce the institutional constraints of a multi-participant TV debate (MPTD) which provide evidence for regarding irrelevant argumentation fallacious (i.e., an unreasonable argumentative move) in this communicative activity type and illustrate how strategic maneuvering derails and leads to this fallacy. The paper draws its data from two episodes of *Siyaset Meydanı*. The analysis of extracts from the data revealed that both the moderator and the participants of the debate show sensitivity to arguing relevantly. Furthermore, it was observed that participants' maneuvering with the topical potential can be an effective argumentative move but not always a reasonable one.

Key words: *Multi-participant TV debate, strategic maneuvering, fallacy, ignoratio elenchi, pragma-dialectics*

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ÇOK KATILIMCILI BİR TV TARTIŞMA PROGRAMINDA STRATEJİK MANEVRALARIN RAYINDAN ÇIKMASI: *IGNORATIO ELENCHI* (İLGİSİZ SAVLAMA) SAFSATASI

Özet: Edimsel-eytişimsel yaklaşıma göre *ignoratio elenchi* safsatası, bir tartışmacının stratejik manevrasının, eleştirel tartışma kurallarından olan ilgililik kuralını ihlal etmesi dolayısıyla rayından çıkması durumudur (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, & Henkema, 2002). Bu çalışmanın amacı çok katılımcılı televizyon tartışma programının kurumsal kısıtlamalarını tanıtmak ve ilgisiz savlamanın bu iletişimsel aktivite biçimde safsata olarak sayıldığına delil olan durumları ve safsatanın ortaya çıkış biçimini örneklemektir. Çalışmada veri olarak Siyaset Meydanı programının iki bölümü kullanılmaktadır. Bazı kesitlerin analizi sonucunda, savlamada ilgililik kuralına hem moderatörün hem de katılımcıların duyarlılık gösterdiği ortaya konulmuştur. Aynı zamanda, katılımcıların konu avantajından yararlanmasının etkili bir stratejik manevra yöntemi olabileceği ancak bunun her durumda makul bir savlama hareketi olmayabileceği gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Çok katılımcılı tartışma, stratejik manevra, safsata, *ignoratio elenchi* safsatası, edimsel-eytişimsel yaklaşım

1. INTRODUCTION

TV debates are one of the most widely-used instruments to incorporate public into deliberative democracy. In such debates, people from various viewpoints or ideologies get together to voice their opinions about a topic (i.e., a contemporary topic from social, cultural, and political aspects) and try to produce convincing arguments for their claims. In a TV debate, there are not only supporters of a certain standpoint but there are also ones who criticize, cast doubt on, or claim the opposite of that standpoint, for controversial topics are evaluated differently by people with opposing ideologies or viewpoints. As a TV debate involves participants' putting forward a standpoint and presenting arguments in support of or against a standpoint, it is predominantly an argumentative event and can be studied effectively from an argumentative perspective.

There are a number of theoretical approaches that have offered fruitful insights in studying contexts of argumentation (cf. “Dialogue Types” by Walton & Krabbe, 1995; “Argumentation Designs” by Jackson & Jacobs, 1980; and “Pragma-Dialectics” by van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004 (later developed further in collaboration with Houtlosser). Pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation provides the necessary theoretical, heuristic, and analytical tools to study argumentation systematically in a given context². In pragma-dialectical conception, argumentation is a rational act which is not only governed by dialectical norms of reasonableness but also pragmatic principles as arguers produce speech acts in real life argumentative practices in order to convince a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004; van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2003, 2004; van Eemeren, 2010).

Convincing a critical audience of the acceptability of a standpoint requires a party to carry out sound argumentation. The soundness condition of argumentation in pragma-dialectics is determined by a set of rules that arguers are assumed to abide by in order to resolve a difference of opinion on the merits. These rules specify the dialectical standards of reasonableness.³ However, dialectically sound

² Several contexts of argumentation were studied though adopting the paradigms provided by the pragma-dialectical program. As van Eemeren (2010) notes, the approach aims to provide a basis for detecting the argumentative patterns that come about as a consequence of the institutional preconditions prevailing for certain argumentative contexts and set forth the stereotypical ways of arguing in the political (e.g. Andone, 2013), legal (e.g. Feteris, 2006), medical (e.g. Pilgram, 2009), and academic (Wagemans, 2016) domains of communication.

³ Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004) came up with ten commandments for reasonable discussants, each corresponding to a rule of a critical discussion. These are; (1) freedom rule: parties should have the freedom to advance and criticize a standpoint, (2) obligation-to-defend rule: a party who raised a standpoint should defend that standpoint if he/she is asked to do so, (3) standpoint rule: attacks should bear on a standpoint that has actually been raised, (4) relevance rule: a standpoint should be defended by relevant argumentation, (5) unexpressed premise rule: discussants should not falsely attribute unexpressed premises to each other, (6) starting-point rule: discussants should not falsely present something as an accepted starting point, (7) validity rule: arguments used to defend a standpoint should be valid, (8) argument scheme rule: parties should use appropriate argument schemes to defend a standpoint conclusively, (9) concluding rule: a conclusively defended standpoint may not receive further doubts and an inconclusively defended standpoint may not be maintained, and (10) language use rule: parties should use appropriate language in defending their standpoints.

argumentation is not the only concern of arguers in their attempt to be convincing for their audience. They also try to find the most effective means to defend their stands. The endeavor of discussants to carry out effective argumentation while maintaining the dialectical standards of reasonableness is defined in pragma-dialectics as ‘strategic maneuvering’ (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2003, 2004; van Eemeren, 2010). However, arguers sometimes fail to maintain the balance between dialectical and rhetorical goals in argumentation, and their strategic maneuvering derails due to the violation of one of the rules of a critical discussion (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2003). These cases are, in pragma-dialectical view, fallacious argumentative moves.

One such derailment of strategic maneuvering stems from the violation of the relevance rule of a critical discussion, which reads as follows: “Standpoints may not be defended by non-argumentation or argumentation that is not relevant to the standpoint” (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004, p. 192). The relevance rule (Commandment 4) of a critical discussion ensures that standpoints advanced are defended by relevant argumentation. Argumentation that is not relevant to the standpoint reduces the credibility of the standpoint and hinders the resolution of a difference of opinion. The fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* is an instance of irrelevant argumentation, and like other fallacies, it impedes in the resolution process. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004) note that the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* is committed when a protagonist “puts forward argumentation that does not allow a reconstruction of an argument scheme that would establish an argumentative connection between the propositional content of the argumentation that is advanced and the proposition that is expressed in the standpoint” (p. 171).

In a study that investigated the argumentation strategies of participants in a Turkish TV debate involving multiple-participants, named *Siyaset Meydanı*, Demir (2014, pp. 151-152) has observed that the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* is the most typically committed fallacy in the two episodes of the debate program. 17 of the total 83 fallacies committed are an instance of *ignoratio elenchi*, reaching a percentage of 20.5 of all the fallacies committed. The prominence of the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* among other fallacies is worth paying careful attention to and evaluating by reference to the activity type of a multi-participant TV debate. The aim of this paper is to introduce the institutional constraints

of a multi-participant TV debate⁴, which motivate the participants to regard irrelevant argumentation as fallacious (i.e., an unacceptable argumentative move) in this communicative activity type and exemplify how attempts to maneuver strategically can go wrong and lead to *ignoratio elenchi*. To this end, I will draw my examples from two episodes of the debate program *Siyaset Meydanı*.

In the following section of the paper, I will identify the institutional constraints of an MPTD that affect the argumentative practices of the individuals participating in this activity. In section 3, I will characterize the argumentative features of an MPTD by drawing on the four parameters proposed by van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2005; van Eemeren, 2010), which correspond to the four stages of a critical discussion⁵. In section 4, I will discuss some examples which show that irrelevant argumentation is regarded as a fallacious argumentative move in the context of an MPTD. Section 5 is dedicated to exemplifying how attempts to maneuver strategically may derail and result in irrelevant argumentation in this activity type. Finally, I will conclude by outlining the main results of this paper.

2. THE INSTITUTIONAL PRECONDITIONS OF AN MPTD AND THE WAY THESE PRECONDITIONS ARE EMBODIED IN *SİYASET MEYDANI*

An MPTD is a moderately conventionalized activity type that can be situated in both the political and interpersonal domains of communication. It can be regarded as an activity type in the political domain in the sense that political topics often dominate the discussions. In addition, it can rightfully be related to interpersonal communication domain as well, for it enables the exchange of viewpoints between people. The institutional point of an MPTD is deliberation aimed at opinion-formation. This institutional point is realized through the

⁴ The expression “multiple participants” is used to contrast an MPTD with debates involving two or a few participants, which allow for face-to-face interaction. Although it is not possible to indicate a certain number to meet the criterion of “multiple”, we can say that MPTD involves many participants, whose interaction is mediated by a moderator and who are constrained by time and the amount of contribution they can make to the debate. The MPTD *Siyaset Meydanı*, which this paper draws its data from, involves more than 20 participants.

⁵ For a full argumentative characterization of the activity type of a multi-participant TV debate, see Demir (2017).

agency of a moderator who brings together multiple participants with different perspectives to discuss a topic of public concern. The moderator undertakes the responsibility to obtain varied views in an equal and democratic way, poses questions to the participants with due impartiality⁶, makes explanations when needed, and controls the speaking turns. Edwards (2002) sees the moderator as a democratic agent whose job is to increase the quality of debates (i.e., in his case, web-based debates) by serving deliberative democracy.

MPTD is a form of public debate (for the functions of public debates see Sunay, 2012, p. 36), a broad category of debates conducted by ordinary citizens to which a number of particular activity types are relatable. In accordance with the characteristics of public debates specified by van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2009, p. 9), an MPTD is not a fully conventionalized activity type as there are no explicitly recognized regulations that govern the conduct of the communicative practices in this activity type. This peculiarity of MPTD contrasts with some highly conventionalized deliberative activity types in the political domain such as European parliamentary debate (van Eemeren & Garssen, 2010) or Prime Minister's Question Time (Mohammed, 2009), in which the communicative practices of the participants are regulated by explicit procedural rules. Instead, an MPTD is bound by general broadcasting principles that regulate every news representation in order to ensure a democratic and equal conduct of such programs. The rules of debating in an MPTD are attributable to these general principles which are assumed to be known and accepted by the debaters and also to the principles of the program derivable from its inner dynamics.

The fact that an MPTD is a form of public debate involving ordinary citizens makes it comparable to other forms of public debate which

⁶ Andone (2013, p. 43) points out in the case of political interviews that journalists abide by the norm of 'due impartiality' while posing questions to political figures. It involves allowing a variety of views to be heard and not giving prominence to one view over another. Adopting such a norm allows the journalists to be equally adversarial or antagonist to even competing views when public interest is at issue. The same principle is true of moderators who serve as an agent between the public and the TV-watching audience, and this responsibility not only involves asking neutral questions to the participants and giving the turn to speak but also, when needed, asking adversarial questions to people with competing viewpoints to help execute deliberative democracy among ordinary citizens.

share a common institutional goal with MPTD, that is, the goal of opinion-formation. Two of them are internet political discussion forums (Lewiński, 2010) and British debate interviews (Emmertsen, 2007). In all three forms of public debate, opposing viewpoints are confronted and deliberated. They may differ, however, in the degree of conventionalization, in the audience they target, the presence or absence of a moderator, and the functions the moderator serves.

Internet political discussion forums, as Lewiński (2010) notes, involve an informal talk between the participants. It is a medium where people from varying backgrounds and ideologies exchange their viewpoints about controversial topics without any third-party arranging the organization or content of the debates as in the case of moderated ones. It is less conventionalized compared to an MPTD or a debate interview. The targeted audience for a certain participant of an internet discussion forum is the fellow discussants who disagree with him/her about the political topic under discussion.

An MPTD is more similar to a debate interview in that, first of all, they are both televised debates, so the discussants try to be convincing not only for their debate partners but also for the television-watching audience. Another important similarity is that both debates are moderated. Emmertsen (2007) defines a debate interview as a particular form of news representation that feature two or more interviewees invited as protagonists of opposite positions to discuss a controversial issue. A notable feature of this communicative activity type is that the interviewer's challenging questions serve to polarize the interviewees' (IE's) positions and attain an "aggravated and unmitigated IE-IE confrontation" (p. 570). Unlike the role the interviewer plays in a debate interview, which centers upon polarizing the positions of the participants through deliberate hostility, the moderator in an MPTD is mostly neutral, and the questions he uses are more often than not opinion-eliciting questions rather than critical ones. At times, he can exhibit a balanced antagonism towards opposing viewpoints to serve the public interest, but this antagonism is not as harsh as in the case of British debate interviews (cf. Emmertsen, 2007). On the contrary, he tries to mitigate hostile antagonism and encourage leveled and relevant criticism.

The last difference between an MPTD and a debate interview lies in the way different viewpoints about a topic are represented. In contrast to a debate interview in which two opposing positions are invited to discuss a controversial issue, in an MPTD, along with the directly opposing stands, there are also intermediate positions which avoid clear attachment to any of the opposing standpoints. Due to these varying positions, an MPTD represents several forms of opinions that can be voiced or heard in the society.

In Turkey, a TV debate program in the format of MPTD had been very popular for many years and became a typical example of public deliberation in the country. Named *Siyaset Meydanı* (Political Arena), the program was broadcasted for 19 years (between the years 1994 and 2013) with the moderation of Ali Kırca, a journalist and author in Turkey.⁷ *Siyaset Meydanı* brought together different views to deliberate on topics that are of concern to the public. Topics chosen for debating in the program ranged from political, economic and social problems to topics as varied as arts, science, and sports. Nevertheless, political topics had dominance over other topics.

Siyaset Meydanı hosts a fixed group of participants, called *Halk Meclisi* (People's Assembly) in each program, accompanied by a number of special guests – usually experts in the relevant topic – to discuss an issue that is currently of public concern. The program starts with the moderator presenting the topic to be discussed in the relevant episode. He then picks one participant to express his/her viewpoint about the topic (or an aspect of that topic). Usually all participants have preparation for the speeches they will make or at least they have outlined the points that they want to mention during their speeches. The participants of the debate have different political or ideological tendencies, so their views on the topic discussed vary accordingly. When the moderator of the program gives the turn to speak, he takes into consideration these varying tendencies and tries to ensure that opposing views are heard successively. The discussion in *Siyaset Meydanı* proceeds mainly in a monological way rather than dialogical,

⁷ *Siyaset Meydanı* kept the format with multiple participants till 2011 and from then on underwent a structural change, inviting only a few guests to each program. The program had its final episode on 6 June, 2013 and it is no longer broadcast on TV channels.

for the constraints about time and number of debate participants make it difficult to allow direct interaction between the discussants.

Although two opposing viewpoints dominate the discussion, there are also intermediate ways of looking at the issue being discussed. The moderator does not pronounce his own standpoint, as he holds the role of directing the discussion with due impartiality. He undertakes the responsibility to not only control the speaking turns in the debate but also to ensure that each participant voices his/her opinion in a democratic, equal, and acceptable way. The notion “acceptability” is of special importance here as the moderator acts like a control mechanism monitoring, as it were, whether the dialectical standards of reasonableness are maintained in the discussion. To put it differently, the moderator tries to direct the discussion in a way that it is resolution-oriented.

The program does not aim at announcing any winner or loser of the debate. On the surface, the aim is to give people opportunity to talk freely about controversial issues that are currently significant and to express their viewpoints on these issues depending on their personal experience, background knowledge, values, and ideologies. However, at a deeper level, the program has the aim of stimulating public awareness about the issues being discussed and creating a potential for people in authority to be informed about public opinion on these issues, to understand them, and to take actions about them if possible or needed.

The activity type of MPTD is inherently argumentative as the participants of the debate express their standpoints with respect to the topic of the debate, try to come up with convincing arguments to defend their standpoints, criticize other standpoints, and respond to criticisms. While engaging in these acts, the debaters need to construct not only rhetorically effective arguments but also dialectically reasonable ones. In other words, they need to maneuver strategically to steer the direction of the discussion to their advantage (van Eemeren, 2010). However, in some cases attempts to maneuver strategically fail and lead to fallacious (unreasonable) argumentative moves, which impede in resolving the difference of opinion (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004). Pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation emphasizes the importance of studying argumentation in the specific context in which

it occurs as different contexts exhibit different constraints for reasonable argumentation. *Ignoratio elenchi*, which is a derailment of strategic maneuvering by violating the relevance rule, can be efficiently evaluated by reference to the activity type in which it is committed. To this end, in the present section of the paper I have introduced the institutional context of an MPTD in general and *Siyaset Meydanı* in particular. In the next section, I will provide a characterization of MPTD as an argumentative activity type by making use of the four parameters proposed by van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2005; van Eemeren, 2010): the initial situation, procedural and material starting points, argumentative means and criticism, and possible outcome. Argumentative characterization of an activity type is regarded in pragma-dialectics as a necessary step in order to analyze and evaluate accurately the reasonableness of argumentative moves made in the relevant activity type.

3. MPTD AS AN ARGUMENTATIVE ACTIVITY TYPE

The *initial situation* in an MPTD is a difference of opinion among the participants of the debate regarding a controversial topic. The type of difference of opinion is mainly mixed as two opposing views dominate the discussion. However, during the ongoing discussion, there may also be cases when a party merely criticizes or casts doubt on a standpoint expressed by another party without putting forward an opposing standpoint. In this case, a non-mixed difference of opinion is also possible in an MPTD.

When a mixed difference of opinion is at issue, participants act as the protagonists of two opposing standpoints. In an MPTD, the proposition underlying the discussion (p) and the positive and negative stances taken with respect to this proposition can be represented as follows:

1. protagonists of p
2. protagonists of $\sim p$

In addition to the roles stated above, there is also a group of participants that approach both standpoints in a balanced way without necessarily adopting one. These participants agree with some aspects of p and some aspects of $\sim p$ when different criteria of evaluation are taken into

consideration; therefore, they can be said to agree with p' (p-prime), indicating that they agree with a variant of the proposition under discussion. These participants can be addressed as:

3. Participants who agree with p'

The last category of participants is the ones who do not defend any standpoint and just stay neutral. This category is typically exemplified by the moderator as he/she is expected to stay at an equal distance from both standpoints and exhibit no clear attachment to any of them. The last category can be stated as:

4. Neutral stand

In line with the stands specified above, there are protagonists of three prominent standpoints in an MPTD. To illustrate, in the episode of *Siyaset Meydanı* titled “Turkey’s Vision”, the relevant standpoints can be stated as follows:

1. Turkey’s foreign policy is sound (p).
2. Turkey’s foreign policy is not sound ($\sim p$).
3. There are both positive and negative indicators for Turkey’s foreign policy (p').

Excluding the moderator who is not supposed to take any stand in the discussion, each participant of the debate is, from the start, the protagonist of one of these standpoints as he/she has prior planning for the discussion and has noted down or thought of arguments that can be used to defend the relevant standpoint. Identifying the discussion roles is significant in that they directly affect the burden of proof in a discussion (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004). Participants of an MPTD address their discussion partners, but primarily, they strive to be convincing for the TV-watching audience.

The moderator, who is attributed the neutral stand in the discussion, is neutral in the sense that he does not adopt a stand himself; rather he directs other participants to take their positions in relation to the topic of the debate. He helps execute the institutional point of the activity type –

deliberation aimed at opinion-formation. As part of his/her institutional responsibilities, the moderator is the warrantor of due impartiality; that is, he/she can take equal distance to two opposing standpoints, and when public interest is at issue, he/she can even exhibit relevant antagonism to both standpoints. Thomas (2012) stresses that moderators have the responsibility to pursue public interest and reveal “the truth” [emphasis added]. For this purpose, they seize the opportunities that are available to attain the ultimate goal of illumination of facts.

The *procedural starting points* of an MPTD are a set of explicit and implicit conventions that determine the rights and obligations of the individuals in this activity type. These conventions concern the rules of the debate and the distribution of burden of proof.

There may be examples of MPTD worldwide whose rules of debating are explicitly stated for individual programs. However, debate programs are often governed by general broadcasting principles that are applicable to any program that has expressive and informative content, which also applies to an MPTD. Regarded as explicit procedural starting points for the discussion, these principles specify the conditions for carrying out a debate in accordance with democratic conventions. In Turkey, radio and TV broadcasting is monitored by RTUK and governed by the Law on the Establishment of Radio and Television Enterprises and Their Media Services (April, 2012). Article 8 in RTUK Law No. 6112 on the Establishment of Radio and Television Enterprises and Their Media Services lists the provisions that specify the rights and obligations of media/broadcasting services. Some of these provisions are as follows:

Broadcasting services,

(ç) shall not be contrary to human dignity and the principle of respect to privacy, shall not include disgracing, degrading or defamatory expressions against persons or organizations beyond the limits of criticism.

(ı) shall be predicated on the principles of impartiality, truthfulness and accuracy and shall not impede the free formation of opinions within the society;

(o) shall respect the right of reply and rectification of the individuals or institutions.

Although the provisions given above point to general broadcasting principles, they contain expressions that are directly relevant to the structure of MPTD and that constrain participants' argumentation. For instance, the provisions given in article (ı) support the impartiality principle adopted by the program. Accordingly, in an MPTD, giving dominance to a certain viewpoint is particularly avoided, and taking an equal distance to opposing viewpoints is ensured. The principle of impartiality is observed in the warranty of the moderator. The article (ı) also includes constraints that have implications on argumentation along with article (ç). For example, *ad hominem* (attacking an opponent's character rather than answering his argument) and *ad baculum* (attacks that prevent freedom of expression by appealing to threat) attacks are inhibited. The right of reply and rectification expressed in article (o) can be associated with burden of proof in argumentative exchanges. When a party's arguments meet criticism, that party reserves the right to reply and submit evidence.

In addition to explicit procedural starting points that affect an MPTD, there are also implicit procedural starting points that participants are assumed to have accepted and that can be inferred from the debate itself. These implicit starting points concern aspects such as the distribution of burden of proof and the rules of debate.

In an MPTD, the burden of proof is attributed to all the participants of the debate excluding the moderator, for each participant is the protagonist of a standpoint from the beginning of the debate. However, in the course of the discussion, participants can find opportunities to criticize or cast doubt on a certain standpoint. In this case, they take the role of an antagonist. Once a participant's arguments meet with criticism, he/she is obliged to defend his/her standpoint by providing more relevant and convincing arguments. For this reason, the distribution of roles in the debate directly affects the burden of proof.

The moderator is accepted as the leader of the debate. As he is not the direct protagonist of a certain standpoint, he is not obliged to present argumentation and does not hold the burden of proof. Rather, his job is to help execute the deliberative discussion aimed at opinion-formation.

The moderator is also the one who distributes the burden of proof and gives the turn to speak. Turns to speak are organized in such a way to confront opposing views. The participants usually take the turns by asking the permission of the moderator.

Material starting points in an MPTD include facts, information, and standards of judgment that are used by the parties as a basis of argumentation. These starting points are selected from among less objectionable and socially agreed elements. We can speak of mainly three types of material starting points participants make use of in this activity type: scientific facts, expert opinion, and social standards of judgment. Scientific facts may include relevant statistics or other scholarly findings about the issue being discussed. Expert opinion is provided through arguments that appeal to authority. And finally, social standards of judgement draw on generally agreed values of ‘right and wrong’ or ‘acceptable and unacceptable’ in a certain society. By using these material starting points, participants of an MPTD try to narrow down the disagreement space.

The *argumentative* discussion in an MPTD rests upon the exchange of arguments in favour of two main opposing standpoints: p and $\sim p$. Participants are mostly polarized as to the standpoints they take in the discussion. In this sense, they take the protagonist role in a mixed difference of opinion (i.e., the protagonists of p and the protagonists of $\sim p$). Since they are expected to present argumentation in support of their standpoints one by one and usually within one single turn allocated to them, usually a well-organized argumentation structure can be observed. They contribute to the deliberative act aimed at opinion-formation by presenting as strong arguments as possible to prove their rightfulness in taking the stand they do. The protagonists of the two opposing standpoints mentioned construct their argumentation to fulfill the following claims:

My words are sufficient to show that p .

My words are sufficient to show that $\sim p$.

Besides the protagonists of the two opposing standpoints, the third category of participants who construct their argumentation in a balanced way try to show that they partially agree with these

standpoints when they are handled from different perspectives. The standpoint defended by the participants in this category can be represented as p' . They put forward arguments to show that:

My words are sufficient to show that p' .

The protagonist role is the most prominent role for the participants of an MPTD as they already have a stand before they start the discussion. However, that is not the only discussion role of the participants of an MPTD. They can also raise antagonism to an already pronounced standpoint by expressing criticism or doubt about the arguments used to defend that standpoint without necessarily claiming the opposite. Due to the turn and time constraints the participants have to rely on, the responses to a standpoint, challenges, or criticisms can be more remotely arranged. Therefore, the participants may address potential or anticipated criticism as often as they address an actual criticism since the time allotment for the participants may not allow them to talk again unless there is an issue about the use of the right to reply and rectify a claim.

No matter how they construct their argumentation (i.e., in the role of a protagonist or an antagonist), the participants of an MPTD make wide use of concrete facts in arguing for their standpoints. These concrete facts can sometimes be events or states of affairs, at times personal observations and experiences, and often scientific facts or findings. Also used as material starting points, these elements are taken advantage of in argumentation to make a standpoint more agreeable by a critic and the arguments used to justify a standpoint more reasonable.

Possible outcome of the discussion in an MPTD is usually a return to the initial difference of opinion. As the debate involves a deliberative discussion aimed at opinion-formation, no goal is pursued to resolve the difference of opinion in favour of one or more parties. Consequently, there is no winner or loser of the debate. One can say that an MPTD fulfills its institutional goal if it helps the primary audience (TV-watching audience) form their viewpoints and lets the authorities know about the public views on controversial topics about which measures can be taken when necessary.

The argumentative characterization of an MPTD is instrumental in understanding the relevancy of the argumentative moves the participants of an MPTD make in order to steer the discussion to their advantage. There are institutional constraints on the acceptable and unacceptable argumentative moves in an MPTD. In the following section, I will introduce some examples from the two episodes of *Siyaset Meydanı*, which show that irrelevant argumentation is regarded as an unacceptable argumentative move in the context of this activity type, resulting in the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi*. The relevant episodes are titled “Budget of the Citizens” (16.12.2010) and “Turkey’s Vision” (09.12.2010).

4. IGNORATIO ELENCHI AS AN UNACCEPTABLE ARGUMENTATIVE MOVE IN *SİYASET MEYDANI*

The fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* is committed when a protagonist distorts his/her own standpoint by putting forward argumentation that is not relevant to that standpoint. This distortion stems from the protagonist’s concern to make his/her standpoint easier to defend (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, & Henkemans, 2002); however, it also runs the risk of derailment of strategic maneuvering and may result in the fallacious *ignoratio elenchi*. In this section of the paper, I will illustrate with some examples that irrelevant argumentation is regarded as an unacceptable argumentative move in the context of *Siyaset Meydanı*.

The most prominent cases that show irrelevant argumentation is deemed as unreasonable in *Siyaset Meydanı* are the moderator’s interventions in the participants who put forward arguments that are irrelevant to the topic of the debate, and indirectly, irrelevant to the standpoints they have taken with respect to that topic. In this sense, the moderator of the debate in *Siyaset Meydanı* acts, as it were, like a warrantor that the dialectical standards of reasonableness are maintained so that the discussion proceeds in a way that is resolution-oriented. This trait is in line with Edward’s (2002) observation that the moderator is a democratic agent whose job is to increase the quality of debates. In the following extract, the moderator tries to motivate a participant whose argumentation has derailed due to committing the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* to bring his argumentation back into its rail. The extract is taken from the episode “Budget of the Citizens”. The reconstructed standpoint of the participant is (p): “The

budget of the citizens is in a good state”. (**M**: Moderator; **PR**: Public Representative from *Halk Meclisi* [The numbers are assigned to the PRs based on the number of the example, and not on the order these participants take turns to talk in the debates. The numbers refer to different individuals. The examples are translated from Turkish. The original forms can be found in the Appendix.])

(1)

M: Now... Are things going well with the citizens [concerning their budget] these days?

PR1: Mr. Kırca, believe me, the citizens are very happy. They are so happy with their lives. I’m frank. Now, why are they happy? Well, the government [AK Party government] provides support for agriculture, helps with fuel oil, supports the disabled, the blind, the crippled, the old. That is, it provides financial aid for all these people. How could the citizens not be happy with this? Now, my friend [addressing an opposing participant who, he hints, is a CHP supporter] was angry with me. Republican People’s Party (CHP) [the main opposition party in Turkey], on the other hand, is buying ‘their’ [emphasis added: the opposition people’s] needs. You can’t revive a corpse. A corpse is already dead. It’s not possible to revive CHP. Don’t waste your effort. Why do you put an effort in this?

M: Now, our concern is not whether CHP is dead or alive; instead, are the citizens dead or alive? Let’s talk about the citizens.

PR1: The citizens are extremely dynamic and fit. They are tough and strong. I mean it. Now... Mr. Kırca, I went to the city [Adıyaman], for instance. I wish the governor [of Adıyaman] was as self-sacrificing as our mayor... The governor of the Gerger district does good things, too. May Allah bless them. These are nice things. There is also the district of Kahta. The census of Kahta district... [speech interrupted by the moderator]

M: As far as I understand... Is everything fine in Adıyaman or in Turkey? You say things are fine in Turkey, but you talk about Adıyaman.

A reconstruction of PR1’s argumentation is necessary to see how the derailment takes place⁸. The following is, thus, the reconstruction of PR1’s argumentation in the part before the moderator’s first

⁸ In pragma-dialectics, reconstruction of argumentation is needed in order to arrive at a clearer view of a resolution-oriented discussion. It involves determining which speech acts of the arguers contribute to resolving a difference of opinion. Such a task requires the analyst to make the unexpressed premises in the discussion explicit. For a full description of reconstructing argumentative discourse, see van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson, and Jacobs (1993). Unexpressed steps in the argumentation structure are represented in parentheses (see van Eemeren, 2010).

intervention. The unexpressed steps in the argumentation structure are given in parentheses (see van Eemeren, 2010).

(1 The budget of the citizens is in a good state.)

((1).1) (The economic policies of the government are positive, which makes the citizens happy.)

((1).1) a The government provides support for agriculture.

((1).1) b The government helps with fuel oil.

((1).1)c) (The government provides financial aid for the citizens that are in need.)

((1).1)c).1 It supports the disabled, the blind, the crippled, the old.

((1).2) (Republican People's Party (CHP) is supporting its own voters.)

((1).2).1) (It is an attempt to revive CHP.)

((1).2).1).1 It is not possible to revive CHP.

((1).2).1).1.1 CHP is dead.

The structure of PR1's argumentation reveals that the participant distorts his standpoint by putting forward irrelevant argumentation, thus committing the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi*. The standpoint is distorted in the sense that while the participant is expected to provide arguments in favour of the standpoint that "The budget of the citizens is in a good state", taken together, the main arguments he uses (1.1 and 1.2) seem to defend another standpoint which involves comparing the economic conducts of the government and the main opposition party. The resulting standpoint can be reconstructed as "The government's economic conduct is better than the main opposition party's economic conduct". Noticing that PR1's argument is not relevant to the initial standpoint of the participant, the moderator warns the participant to come to the main topic of the debate, which, he says, is not about CHP. The warning comes with the following words:

M: Now, our concern is not whether CHP is dead or alive; instead, are the citizens dead or alive? Let's talk about the citizens.

The moderator's first intervention might have urged PR1 to bring his argumentation back into its rail; however, in the second half of the exchange the participant goes on with further irrelevant argumentation as the following argumentation structure suggests:

- (1 The budget of the citizens is in a good state.)
 - (1).1 The citizens in Turkey are dynamic and strong.
 - ((1).2) (AK Party mayors are carrying out positive activities.)
 - ((1).2.)1) (There are nice improvements in Adiyaman.)
 - ((1).2).1.1 The mayor is self-sacrificing.

PR1 reduces the discussion of talking about the budget of the citizens in Turkey to urban improvements accomplished in Adiyaman, a city in the southeast of Turkey, whose mayor was elected from the governing party. The moderator objects to his restricting the topic to the improvements in Adiyaman, and indirectly, points at the irrelevancy of the arguments PR1 uses to defend his standpoint. The following words suggest this:

M: As far as I understand... Is everything fine in Adiyaman or in Turkey? You say things are fine in Turkey, but you talk about Adiyaman.

As the second intervention also suggests, the moderator shows awareness that violating the relevance rule in the discussion will reduce the credibility of the standpoint a participant holds. Such a practice confirms the pragma-dialectical view that irrelevant argument used to defend a standpoint does not allow a reconstruction of the standpoint originally advanced. Therefore, a standpoint that is defended with irrelevant argumentation cannot be counted as conclusively defended.

In a different example, PR2 defends the standpoint that ($\sim p$): “The budget of the citizens is in a bad state”. The arguments he uses to defend the standpoint, however, does not allow for the generalization that the standpoint suggests. The moderator’s remark in the end shows that overpersonalization of the topic is not a relevant argumentative move:

(2)

PR2: Mr. Kirca, first let me talk about the country in general. Now, we have an export of about 120 or 130 billion dollars. And we have an import of around 320 to 330 billion dollars. We have a total internal-external debt of 600-650 billion dollars. Given these numbers, even retarded people can tell you if our

budget is good or bad. Now... coming to our own budget [...] Look! This is a mandarin. I am farmer myself. I am the one who produces it. Do you know how much it costs to produce this? It costs 35 kurus, and we can't sell it for 40 kurus in Mersin, the place where we produce it. And it has been raining heavily for the past week. [...] If there are 300 kilograms of fruit, 100 kilograms must have already gone bad, and it's still 25 kurus [the price you can sell a kilo of mandarin]. People in İstanbul might be eating it for 2-3 liras. I mean it. The price of Mandarin in Mersin is around 25-30 kurus.

M: OK, thank you. We'll come back to you again. Let's go on with AB [The initials for the following participant]. Now, "the budget of the citizens". This is our question. We have to continue our discussion from this point, though it's been reduced to Adıyaman and Mersin, in particular, or mandarin. Let's talk about the citizens.

The following is the reconstruction of argumentation put forward by PR2. The structure of his argumentation suggests that the participant uses two main arguments: one is about the negative economic indicators in Turkey, and the next one is about the economic hardships mandarin producers experience:

(1 The budget of the citizens is in a bad state.)

((1).1) (The economic indicators are negative in Turkey.) & ((1).1' Negative economic indicators have negative consequences for the budget of the citizens.)

((1).1).1a) (The import rate of Turkey is almost three times as much as the export rate.)

((1).1).1b Total internal-external debt of Turkey is about 600-650 billion dollars.

((1).2) (Mandarin producers in Mersin have economic problems.)

((1).2).1a The cost of producing mandarin is 35 kurus.

((1).2).1b The farmers can sell mandarin in Mersin for 25-30 kurus.

In an MPTD, participants are free to express their viewpoints on a controversial issue by drawing on their personal experiences; however, the moderator's directions as the leader of the debate may define the limits of this personalization. In the extract above, when the topic is about the economic hardships the citizens in general suffer, PR2's confining the topic to the economic hardships of the mandarin producers is regarded as insufficient, if not totally irrelevant, to arrive at

the conclusion that the budget of the citizens is in a bad state. For this reason, while the moderator is giving the speaking-turn to the next participant, he repeats the topic so that the upcoming speakers develop arguments that can make a positive or negative evaluation of the budget of the citizens in general. The following words show this:

M: [...] Now, “the budget of the citizens”. This is our question. We have to continue our discussion from this point, though it’s been reduced to Adiyaman and Mersin, in particular, or mandarin. Let’s talk about the citizens.

The two extracts above suggest that the moderator is equally distant to the opposing views, and the leader role in the debate assigns him the right to interfere when the discussion diverges from the dialectical standards of reasonableness. He is, therefore, actively involved in the discussion, and, when needed, acts as a constructive critic to direct the participants to bring their strategic maneuvers back into rail. Such an endeavor indicates that although there is no goal to resolve the difference of opinion at the end of the discussion in this activity type, the moderator tries to increase the quality of the debate and arranges it as if the discussion is resolution-oriented.

Maintaining the dialectical standards of reasonableness is not only monitored by the moderator. Other participants in the discussion can be equally sensitive when a party’s strategic maneuver derails due to putting forward irrelevant argumentation. The following extract is taken from the episode “Turkey’s Vision” in which PR3 defends the standpoint that (*p*): “Turkey’s foreign policy is sound”. In the broader context, the participant puts forward arguments to defend this standpoint by drawing on examples from the practices of the government. Meanwhile, she also mentions a photo which she uses to make a comparison between the present image of the Turkish government and its image in the past. The photo depicts the then former Prime Minister, Ecevit, with the then president of the USA, Clinton. She implies that in the relevant picture Ecevit looked like a “loser”. The participant’s mentioning this case rests upon the implicit premise that “the strength of Turkey’s foreign policy is reflected to the non-verbal signs of the Turkish prime ministers.” This claim arouses criticism in the opponent participants as follows:

(3)

PR3: My point of view regarding Turkey's vision is as follows: I think Turkey is really successful in evaluating the Middle East countries. Actually, I didn't bring it with me today, but I posted a photo on Facebook. Well, he is no longer alive, but you know, the posture of Bülent Ecevit in that picture was so different than the posture [Erdoğan displays during the gathering with Obama] at present. That is, I believe we were rescued from the status of a loser country.

M: ... I told earlier that I would read some public comments that come via Facebook or Twitter. Now EA voices criticism against PR3 in Facebook. She states that "PR3 claims there is a photo of Ecevit with Clinton in which Ecevit draws a loser image for the country and that the present image of the country is much more different. First of all, it is very rude to call a deceased prime minister 'loser'. Moreover, the conjuncture which the country now operates in is different, and the president of the USA has changed. There is also a difference between our Prime Minister's [Erdoğan's] photo with Bush and his photo with Obama. Even if the points of view are different, calling Ecevit "loser" is a big disrespect and unjust. We'd like to ask her to apologize." What would you like to say, PR3?

PR3: No, I won't apologize because Ecevit, on the other hand, has dismissed Merve Kavakçı from the Parliament [an MP of AK Party who was not admitted to the Parliamentary talks because she was wearing a scarf]. This is a behavior I condemn and object to. Then, under these conditions, we won't have any right to say anything about our deceased prime ministers. It's not something personal about him. Therefore, I won't apologize.

M: Before we move on to the next participant, is there anyone who has a word to say about this? Yes, PR4...

PR4: Now, PR3 started with the scarf issue and ended up with calling Ecevit "loser". That Ecevit, whom she calls "loser" conquered Cyprus when the capabilities of the country were so restricted. She should not say a word about Ecevit. With the "loser" image, Ecevit was awarded legions of merit by American and Israeli Jewish communities.

Based on extract (3), the argumentation of PR3 can be reconstructed as follows:

(1 Turkey's foreign policy is sound.)

(1).1 Turkey is really successful in evaluating the Middle East countries.

((1).2) (Turkey has a better image in international politics.)

((1).2).1) (The strength of Turkey's foreign policy is reflected to the non-verbal signs of the Turkish prime ministers.)

((((1).2).1).1a) (The posture of the present Prime Minister, Erdoğan, in his gathering with Obama reflects self-confidence.)

((((1).2).1). 1a).1 We were rescued from the status of a loser country.

((((1).2).1).1b) (The former Prime Minister, Ecevit, drew a 'loser' image of Turkey.)

(((((1).2).1).1b).1) (This was apparent from his posture in the photo taken with Clinton.)

It is observed in the extract that PR3's argumentation encounters challenge from two other participants, one via Facebook and another from one of the debate participants. The first participant, voiced by the moderator, invites PR3 to apologize for the words she uttered against Ecevit. PR3 refuses to apologize as she does not approve of a behavior of Ecevit, namely, dismissing a former MP of AK Party, Merve Kavakçı, from the Parliament talks. The reason was not made explicit by PR3, but it is to the knowledge of the audience (as it is apparent from PR4's remark) that it was a case of trying to attend the Parliament talks with a scarf, something that was contrary to the dressing code of the Turkish Parliament by then.

PR4, on the other hand, points at a divergence in PR's argumentation. This is a divergence from argumentation in favour of the present foreign policy of the government. PR3 defends the standpoint that "Turkey's foreign policy is sound" first with the argument that the present government is capable of evaluating the Middle East countries successfully. She then continues the discussion by drawing attention to the 'loser' image of Turkey created by the former Prime Minister Ecevit. On being invited by an opponent participant to apologize, she rejects to do so stressing that Ecevit dismissed an MP with a scarf from the Parliament. PR4 evaluates this as an unacceptable argumentative move due to the fact that the new arguments are irrelevant to the original standpoint held by PR3. The reaction comes with the following words:

PR4: Now, PR3 started with the scarf issue and ended up with calling Ecevit "loser".

Although PR4 misrepresents the order of arguments used by PR3 (i.e., in fact, she first mentions the ‘loser’ image and then introduces the case with the MP with a scarf), such a reordering of PR3’s arguments may well be motivated by PR4’s attributing her an intention. It is apparent from PR4’s reaction that he thinks PR3 has the intention to call Ecevit ‘loser’ due to the fact that she does not approve his behaviour towards the MP, and not because he showed weakness in foreign politics. This is the reason why this sub-argument (i.e., The former Prime Minister, Ecevit, drew a ‘loser’ image of Turkey) is regarded by PR4 as irrelevant to the main argument (i.e., The strength of Turkey’s foreign policy is reflected to the non-verbal signs of the Turkish prime ministers.), and in turn to the original standpoint.

All in all, the three extracts discussed exemplify the sensitivity shown by the moderator and the debate participants about arguing relevantly. When the argument of a participant does not allow a reconstruction of the original standpoint advanced by that participant, both the moderator and the fellow discussants can verbally show that a derailment has occurred. The moderator’s attempts to bring derailed argumentation back into rail are motivated by his leader role in the discussion who tries to ensure that the quality of the debate is maintained. The fellow discussants’ interventions to the irrelevant argumentation of a party, on the other hand, are used as counter arguments to challenge and weaken the position of the party who advanced an irrelevant argumentation (i.e., committing the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi*) and attain an advantageous position in the debate.

In the following section, I will exemplify how a participant’s attempt to maneuver strategically goes wrong in the context of *Siyaset Meydanı* and results in the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi*.

5. DERAILMENT OF STRATEGIC MANEUVERING THAT LEADS TO IGNORATIO ELENCHI IN SİYASET MEYDANI

A party may resort to irrelevant arguments in defending a standpoint because such arguments are readily available to the person who uses them, and they are the easiest way to defend his/her standpoint. However, the easiest argument that a party can come up with based on his/her subjective viewpoint may not always be a reasonable and

acceptable argument in a debate as the user of this argument runs the risk of going for a rhetorically effective argumentation at the expense of a dialectically reasonable one.

Pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1997, 2002, 2005; van Eemeren, 2010) emphasizes the bipolar goal arguers pursue in a critical discussion in order to resolve a difference of opinion on the merits: the dialectical goal of maintaining reasonableness and the rhetorical goal of achieving effectiveness. In order to keep a balance between these two goals, arguers resort to strategic maneuvers. Strategic maneuvers can be regarded as argumentative moves that are made in order to stay on track while trying to convince a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint. However, the delicate balance between dialectically reasonable and rhetorically effective argumentation may derail at times, resulting in fallacious acts. *Ignoratio elenchi* comes out due to the derailment of strategic maneuvering by violating the relevance rule of the critical discussion (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004).

Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002) distinguished between three interrelated aspects of strategic maneuvering: (a) selecting from the topical potential, (b) meeting the audience demand, and (c) exploiting presentational devices. In strategically maneuvering between their dialectical and rhetorical aims, parties opt for topics that they find easiest to discuss, they consider audience expectations in formulating their standpoints and converge to the points they think the audience will agree with, and they try to use the most effective presentational devices to convince the opposing party. Managing these three aspects of strategic maneuvering successfully is instrumental in resolving a difference of opinion on the merits.

In what follows, I will discuss, by drawing on an extract from a participant's argumentation in "Turkey's Vision" debate, in the first place, how the participant tries to make use of the three interrelated aspects of strategic maneuvering, and later show how his strategic maneuvering with the topical potential derails, resulting in the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi*.

(4)

PR5: Now, Mr. Kırca, there is no shift of axis in Turkey. Our direction is definitely towards EU. Both the Prime Minister and the President of Turkey receive various international awards in Europe and in Africa, and in many other regions of the world. Today 22 Turkish executives manage companies and corporations abroad. I don't want to name them one by one, but they are 22 in number. Now...what happened, and we came to a point in which we have no problems at all with our neighbours? [Referring to some opposing voices] "Don't be friends to Iran; otherwise, they will impose their own politics on us" or "Don't be friends with Greece; they are enemy to us", "Don't do this, don't do that". Our Prime Minister developed a very good dialogue with all the nations. Today our export reached 140 billion dollars. They [AK Party government] increased it from 32 billion dollars to 140 billion dollars. Our gross national product has increased to 15.361 dollars, and the total gross national product of the country has increased to 1 trillion 600 billion dollars. Still these people [referring to some opponent participants] claim that our Prime Minister is a proponent of an axis shift. There's no such thing as Turkey's axis shift, but there are people who take advantage of a possible axis shift.

In extract (4), PR5 uses statistical facts as a material starting point for his argumentation. The information he provides shows that the participant has made a prior planning for his speech and noted down some numbers to use for exemplification, which would otherwise be difficult to remember (e.g. "Our gross national product has increased to 15.361 dollars"). Statistical facts and findings are usually advantageous starting points in a discussion as they are less objectionable due to their scientific value. Therefore, making use of these points is assumed to benefit a party in his pursuit of convincing his opponents of the acceptability of his standpoint. PR5's drawing on statistical findings in this context indicates that he takes into consideration possible criticisms that can be directed against him by the critical audience. His appeal to such argumentation is also meant to be convincing for the TV-watching audience too, which is the primary audience for such programs. Strategic appeal to statistical information is not only opted for as an attempt to meet the critical audience's demand for evidence, but it is also deemed as an effective presentational device enhancing the plausibility of an argument, and in turn, increasing the persuasiveness of the party using that argument.

PR5 draws on a number of different topics in this extract. These topics constitute separate arguments he uses to defend his standpoint that (*p*):

“Turkey’s foreign policy is sound”. The participant chooses to discuss these topics since they are easier to defend, given that he has statistical evidence to confirm their truthfulness. The topics include international awards given to the Prime Minister and the President of Turkey, Turkish executives’ managing companies abroad, the government’s positive dialogue with other nations, and positive economic indicators. However, PR5’s strategic maneuvering with the topical potential concerning the economic indicators of Turkey derails and leads to *ignoratio elenchi* considering that there is not an immediate connection between positive economic indicators in a country and its sound foreign policy. The reconstruction of PR5’s argumentation in the following lines suggests that this argument does not allow a reconstruction of the standpoint “Turkey’s foreign policy is sound”, and it is, therefore, irrelevant.

(1 Turkey’s foreign policy is sound.)

(1).1 There is no shift of axis in Turkey

((1).1.1 Our direction is definitely towards EU.

((1).2) (Turkey’s politics is appreciated worldwide.)

((1).2.1 Both the Prime Minister and the President of Turkey receive various international awards in Europe and in Africa, and in many other regions of the world.

((1).3) (Turkish executives became trustable managers for international corporations.)

((1).3.1 Today 22 Turkish executives manage companies and corporations abroad.

(1).4 Our Prime Minister developed a very good dialogue with all the nations.

((1).4.1) (We have become friends with Iran and Greece.)

((1).5) (The present government accomplished economic achievements.)

((1).5).1a Today our export reached 140 billion dollars.

((1).5).1a.1 They increased it from 32 billion dollars to 140 billion dollars.

((1).5).1b Our gross national product has increased to 15.361 dollars

((1).5).1b.1 The total gross national product of the country has increased to 1 trillion 600 billion dollars.

The reconstruction of PR5's argumentation reveals that the argument ((1).5) (The present government accomplished economic achievements) does not relate to the main standpoint. The participant's committing the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* in this case shows that by resorting to a topic that he can defend the easiest, he opts for a rhetorically effective argumentation rather than a dialectically reasonable one. While his appeal to statistical evidence counts as a reasonable argumentative move concerning the topic about Turkish executives who manage corporations abroad, it is not so concerning the topic on positive economic achievements of the government. The argumentation of PR5 in this extract suggests that although statistical facts and findings can be a widely-exploited material starting point for the participants of an MPTD, their relevant and appropriate use matters in a discussion. In this context the statistical facts about Turkish economy marks an unreasonable argumentative move that stems from the derailment of the participant's maneuvering with the topical potential. The participant apparently has taken a position to give a positive evaluation of the government's general conduct, and he regarded the economic policies as a good candidate for an effective argument. However, ((1).5) does not qualify as a relevant argument to show that positive economic indicators in a country means it does not have an axis shift, and it has a sound foreign policy.

To sum up, parties' attempts to maneuver strategically with the topical potential, audience demand, and presentational devices may derail at times and result in irrelevant argumentation. The analysis of extract (4) shows that although statistical facts and evidence can normally count as an acceptable and less objectionable argument due to its scientific status, its relevancy in a given situation is the issue that matters the most. Therefore, preparing arguments to use in advance depending on ideological stances may not always be a reasonable argumentative move although at first sight it may look effective.

6. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I aimed to introduce the institutional context of an MPTD, which provides a point of reference in regarding irrelevant argumentation fallacious, that is an unacceptable argumentative move in the discussion, and shed light on how strategic maneuvering in an

MPTD can derail and give way to *ignoratio elenchi*. Evaluating reasonableness efficiently in an argumentative event requires an analyst to describe the institutional constraints prevailing for the activity type in question. To this end, in the first place, I discussed some of the peculiarities of the activity type of MPTD that have an implication on argumentative exchanges. Next, I characterized MPTD as an argumentative activity type by using the four parameters proposed by van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2005; van Eemeren, 2010). Argumentative characterization of the activity type was instrumental in evaluating the argumentative moves the participants made in order to gain advantage over their opponents. Further in the paper, I drew on some examples from two episodes of the MPTD program *Siyaset Meydanı* to show that irrelevant argumentation is regarded as an unreasonable argumentative move both by the moderator and other participants of the debate. Finally, I have analyzed an extract from the same data to illustrate how a party's strategic maneuvering can derail while trying to manipulate the topic of the discussion to his/her advantage.

I have argued in this paper that MPTD is a form of public debate that has the institutional goal of conducting a deliberative discussion aimed at opinion-formation. The institutional role of the moderator as the leader of the debate assigns him the responsibility to lead the discussion in a way that is reasonable. Although resolving the difference of opinion is neither the aim of the program nor the aim of the participants, the moderator strives, as it were, to make the discussion one that is resolution-oriented. He does this by urging the participants to develop relevant argumentation so that they can defend their standpoint in a more convincing way. Such an endeavor plays part in increasing the quality of the debate and helps to serve the primary institutional point of the activity type. Based on the debate participants' sound argumentation, which involves dependable justification of the standpoints, the TV-watching audience is motivated to shape their opinions in a more grounded way. As the activity type centers upon the expression of different views, democratic and impartial perspective adopted by the moderator is the *sine qua non* of the debate. Therefore, argumentation in favour of opposing standpoints are monitored by the moderator in an equal way. When antagonism is needed to bring the irrelevant argumentation back into its rail, the moderator takes the duty to be critical about the argumentation of the opposing participants.

Through the analysis of a number of extracts from *Siyaset Meydanı*, it has been suggested that the moderator is not the only participant in the debate who shows sensitivity about reasonable argumentation by heeding relevance in the discussion. Similarly, fellow debaters can react critically when a participant's strategic maneuvering derails due to putting forward an argument irrelevant to the standpoint advanced. Critical reactions pointing at the irrelevancy of a party's arguments can be evaluated as counter attempts of the opposing party to gain advantage in the discussion in terms of persuasiveness.

The paper has also illustrated how a party's strategic maneuver can derail and give way to the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi*. The institutional preconditions of the activity type are instrumental to understand this process, too. Because each participant in an MPTD is the protagonist of a standpoint from the start of the debate, they are able to make use of readily-prepared arguments based on their ideological tendencies to defend their standpoints. They try to draw on widely-agreed material starting points to minimize the disagreement space and maintain their standpoints. Appealing to scientific facts and findings such as statistical information is a strategy that participants use in order to gain an advantageous position in the discussion, for arguments drawing on scientific facts are less objectionable. They can use such arguments as strategic maneuvers to exploit the topical potential, appeal to audience expectation for concrete evidence, and attain an effective presentational strategy. However, statistical evidence as an argument can count as an acceptable and less unobjectionable argument only if it is employed relevantly and appropriately. Otherwise, as the analysis of extract (4) in this study shows, it may turn out to be an irrelevant argument, which does not allow a reconstruction of the standpoint already advanced by a party. Such cases illustrate that a party's strategic maneuvering with the topical potential can derail due to committing the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi* by violating the relevance rule of a critical discussion. Consequently, preparing arguments to use in advance depending on ideological stances may not always be a reasonable argumentative move although at first sight such arguments can look effective.

The institutional constraints of an MPTD specified in this study have been instrumental in understanding the unreasonableness of irrelevant argumentation in *Siyaset Meydanı*. Evidence from MPTD examples in different cultures will be functional in strengthening the observations of this study.

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APPENDIX

(1)

M: Peki ... Vatandaşın işleri yolunda mı bugünlerde?

PR1: Sayın Kırca inanın ki vatandaş çok güler yüzlüdür. Çok mutludur hayatından. Şunu samimi söylüyorum. Bakınız samimi söylüyorum. Şimdi nasıl mutlu efendim? Şimdi...devlet ürüne veriyor, mazota veriyor, sakata veriyor, köre veriyor, topala veriyor, ihtiyara veriyor. Yani hepsine para yardımı yapıyor. Halk nasıl memnun olmasın ki? Şimdi arkadaşımız kızdı mesela. Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi ise bunlara malzeme alıyor. Yahu arkadaşım ölüyü diriltemezsiniz yahu. Ölü ölmüş bir kere yahu. CHP'nin dirilmesi mümkün değildir. Uğraşmayın, ne uğraşıyorsunuz?

M: Şimdi Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi değil de vatandaş ölmüş mü dirilmiş mi? Vatandaşı bir konuşalım.

PR1: Vatandaş son derece dinamik ve dinçtir. İri ve diridir. Şunu samimi söylüyorum. Şimdi Sayın Kırca...mesela ben vilayeti gezdim, keşke gerçekten bizim Adıyaman valimiz de belediye başkanımız kadar özverili olsa...Gerger kaymakamımız keza. Allah bin kere razı olsun onlardan. Bunlar güzel. Şimdi bir Kahta ilçemiz var. Kahta ilçesinin nüfus sayımı...

M: Benim anladığım kadarıyla Adıyaman'da mı işler yolunda, Türkiye'de mi işler? Türkiye'de işler yolunda deyip Adıyaman'ı anlatıyorsun.

(2)

PR2: Sayın Kırca, önce ülkeyi genelde ben bir söyleyeyim. Şimdi 120-130 milyar dolar aralığı bir ihracatımız var. 320-330 milyar dolar aralığı bir ithalatımız var. Toplam 600-650 milyar dolar da iç-dış borcumuz var. Yani bunu köre topala da sorsan bütçemiz iyi mi kötü mü onlar da karar verir. Gelelim bizim bütçemize [...] Bak bu mandalina [...] Ben çiftçiyim ben üretiyorum bunu ben. Bunun kilosu kaç maliyetli bize biliyor musun? [...] Bu mandalınanın maliyeti 35 kuruş. Şu anda Mersin'de dalında 40 kuruşa satamıyoruz. [...] Bir haftadır sağanak yağışlar da oluyor. [...] 300 kilo meyve varsa, o mandalınanın 100 kilosu zaten gitti ve hala 25 kuruş. İstanbullular 2-3 liraya yiyor olabiliyorlar. Samimi söylüyorum mandalina Mersin'de 25-30 kuruş aralığında.

M: Peki tamam teşekkür ederim. Döneceğiz yine. AB [The initials for the following participant] ile devam edelim. Hemen mikrofonu verelim. Şimdi "vatandaşın bütçesi". Sorumuz belli. Yani bu çerçeveden gidiyoruz. Gerçi böyle Adıyaman, Mersin özel ya da mandalina çerçevesinde oldu ama. Vatandaş bir konuşalım.

(3)

PR3: Evet ben de Türkiye'nin vizyonu ile ilgili şöyle düşünüyorum. Türkiye gerçekten Ortadoğu ülkelerini değerlendirme konusunda başarılı. Ben tabi buraya getiremedim ama, Face'de bir resim yayınlamıştım. Rahmetli oldu gerçi ama Bülent Ecevit'in işte biliyorsunuz Clinton'la görüşmesindeki pozunu ile şimdiki pozunu arasında çok fark olduğunu düşünüyorum. Yani bir ezik ülke durumundan çıktığımıza inanıyorum.

...

M: ...Bu arada söylemiştim hem Facebook'tan, hem Twitter'dan, hem de telefonlar aracılığı ile sizin mesajlarınız geliyor, gelmeye devam ediyor. Ben onlardan zaman zaman okumak istiyorum. EA hanım Facebook'tan PR3'e bir eleştiride bulunuyor... "Merhabalar," diyor, "Sayın PR3 Ecevit'in Clinton ile görüşürken ezik bir ülke imajı çizen şeklinde fotoğrafı olduğunu söyledi. Şimdi durum daha farklı dedi. İlk olarak TC'nin merhum başkanlarından birine ezik demek saygısızlıktır, ayrıca ülkenin konjonktürü ve ABD başkanının değiştiğini hatırlatalım. Sayın Başbakanımızın Bush ile çektiği fotoğrafla Obama ile çektiği fotoğraf arasında da fark vardır. Görüşler farklı olsa da bu ülkeye hizmet etmiş, tarihimizde yer etmiş sayın Ecevit'e 'ezik' demek büyük haksızlık ve saygısızlıktır," dedikten sonra "özür dilemesini rica ederiz" diyor. Ne diyor PR3?

...

PR3: Yok ben özür dilemiyorum çünkü Ecevit'in ona bakarsanız Bülent Ecevit Merve Kavakçı'yı meclisten kovmuştur. Bu da kınadığım ve eleştirdiğim bir harekettir. O zaman söylemeyelim. Geçmişte yaşamış başkanlarımız hakkında hiç konuşmayacağız. Yani onun şahsıyla ilgili bir şey değil. Onun için özür dilemiyorum.

M: Bir sonraki katılımcımıza geçmeden önce buna yanıtı olan var mı? Evet PR4...

PR4: Şimdi PR3 yine türbandan girdi, rahmetli Ecevit'e ezik mezik demeye başladı... O ezik dediği rahmetli Ecevit ülkenin hiçbir imkanı yokken Kıbrıs'ı fethetti. Ecevit'e laf söylemesin. Yani ezik surette Amerika'daki, İsrail'deki Yahudi konfederasyonlarından üstün liyakat madalyası alan başbakanı.

(4)

PR5: Şimdi Sayın Kırca, bugün Türkiye'nin eksenine baktığımız zaman, Türkiye'nin hiçbir eksen kayması yok. Kesinlikle bizim eksenimiz AB'ye yöneliktir... Şimdi bugün dünyada, Avrupa'da olsun gerek de Afrika'da olsun her tarafta Sayın Cumhurbaşkanımıza, Sayın Başbakanımıza sürekli ödüller veriliyor. Bugün dünyada 22 tane yöneticimiz [yabancı] ülke kurumlarını, kuruluşları yönetiyorlar. İsimleri şimdi saymak istemem. 22 kişidir. Şimdi ne olmuş da komşularımızla sıfır... bir problemimiz yok. Vay efendim sen İran'a yanaşma bize siyaset ihraç eder. İşte Yunan'a yaklaşma bize düşmandır, şuna yaklaşma, buna yaklaşma. Sayın Başbakanımız herkesle gayet güzel diyaloglar kurdu. Bugün bizim ihracatımız 140 milyar dolara çıkmış. 32 milyar dolardan almış 140 milyar dolara çıkartmış. Bugün gayri safi milli hasılamız çıkmış 15.361 dolara, ülke gayri milli safi hasılamız çıkmış 1 trilyon 600 milyar dolara çıkmış. Beyefendiler hala diyorlar ki Sayın Başbakan eksen kaymasından yanaymış. Türkiye'nin eksen kayması kesinlikle yoktur ama bu eksen kaymasından nemalananlar var.