

News Coverage of the Gulf Crisis in the Turkish Mediascape: Agendas, Frames, and Manufacturing Consent

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Using a data set of 2,968 articles collected from 22 different newspapers in Turkey, this article maps media responses to the ongoing Gulf Crisis. In doing so, we deploy a pioneering methodology derived from natural language processing and correspondence analysis to test whether categorical variables such as political affiliation, ownership, and ideological outlook had any impact on how a news publication covered the Gulf Crisis. In the results and interpretation sections, we attempt to connect our findings to broader discussions on agenda setting, framing, and building consent. Based on our analysis, we propose the following conclusions: (a) Political affiliation, ownership structure, and the ideological outlook all had unique effects on how a publication covered the Gulf Crisis, (b) the progovernment press embarked on a campaign to sway public opinion about the government's decision to side with Qatar. The dimensions of this campaign strongly resembled an executive act of consent manufacturing, and (c) corporate-owned news organizations were the driving force shaping both the public agenda and the dominant framing of the Gulf Crisis in the Turkish mediascape.

Keywords: mass media, computational methodology, correspondence analysis, Gulf Crisis, framing theory, agenda setting

On June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Yemen, the Maldives, and the United Arab Emirates simultaneously broke off all ties with Qatar, setting off a massive diplomatic crisis in the region. At the same time, these countries imposed trade and travel sanctions on Qatar, leaving the country isolated in the region. Others soon followed, and by January 2018, nine countries had cut all ties with Qatar. The declared *casus belli* was that Qatar, by sponsoring terrorism, had violated a 2014 agreement with the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Although Qatar has repeatedly denied such allegations, the Saudi-led coalition has refused to lift sanctions. More secondary reasons put forth by the coalition include the supportive stance of

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Date submitted: 2018–02–26

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Qatar-affiliated Al Jazeera Network toward the Arab Spring rebellions (Barnard & Kirkpatrick, 2017) and Qatar's nonhostile relations with Iran (Roberts, 2017). Commentators have argued that the ongoing crisis is a result of Qatar's desire to pursue a foreign policy independent from other Gulf countries ("Qatar's 'Independent' Foreign Policy," 2017). Nevertheless, it is important to note that this transformation did not occur overnight and needs to be understood within the context of Qatar's gradual departure from Saudi tutelage (Roberts, 2012).

During the initial phase of the crisis, the Turkish government attempted to keep a neutral stance, choosing to position itself as an intermediary between the Saudi-led coalition and Qatar. This position, however, was rapidly undermined when Qatar preferred Kuwait over Turkey as the crisis mediator. Soon afterward, on June 13, the Turkish government decided to side with Qatar. In a public statement, Turkish president Erdoğan condemned the isolation of Qatar as "inhumane and against Islamic values," claiming that "victimizing Qatar through smear campaigns serves no purpose" ("Turkey's Erdogan Decries," 2017). After the statement, Turkey and Iran initiated talks with Qatar to secure the country's food and water supplies while the Turkish military renewed its pledge to continue troop deployment at the Tariq bin Ziyad military base. This later move in particular was considered to be a response to the Saudi-led coalition's demand that Qatar shut down the Turkish army base in the country. In the meantime, Turkey, along with Russia and Iran, led the call to negotiate a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Turkey has chosen to side with Qatar in the international arena for several reasons. In the past decade, because of Turkey's growing interest in the Middle East (Ehteshami & Elik, 2011), Neo-Ottoman foreign policy ideals (Çağaptay, 2009) and the economic ties generated by Qatari overseas investment have brought Turkey and Qatar close together as strategic partners (Başkan, 2016). These ties, however, have been cultivated during the past decade of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule. In other words, the strategic partnership with Qatar is a direct product of the AKP's foreign policy objectives. Accordingly, our base assumption was that the Turkish opposition press would provide negative coverage in regard to the AKP's decision to side with Qatar, or at least to voice some hostility.

To test this hypothesis, we decided to develop a computational methodology that could measure the degree of semantic similarity among newspapers in terms of output. This would allow us to see if there was any difference in how news publications in Turkey covered the Gulf Crisis. Such an approach would also allow us to check whether categorical variables such as affiliation, ownership, or political leanings had any impact on how the crisis was covered. Accordingly, this article uses a data set of 2,968 articles from 22 newspapers to explore how the Gulf Crisis was covered in the Turkish mediascape while looking to find answers to the following hypotheses:

- H1: Affiliation (progovernment, opposition, neutral) makes a difference in coverage of the Gulf Crisis.*
- H2: Ownership (private, corporate, and nonprofit) makes a difference in coverage of the Gulf Crisis.*
- H3: Political leaning (left, Islamic, conservative, mainstream, independent, and Kemalist) makes a difference in the coverage of the Gulf Crisis.*

Literature Review

Before proceeding any further, it is worthwhile to devote some space to describing the Turkish mediascape. One can say that the primary fault line dividing the mediascape in Turkey is opposition to the AKP and president Erdoğan. A more careful examination, however, indicates that newspapers on both sides of the fault line are not homogenous in terms of political orientation; the opposition press tends to lean toward Kemalist and leftist ideologies, whereas publications with apolitical, conservative, and hardline Islamic ideologies dominate the pro-AKP press. Moreover, the ownership structures of newspapers on both sides of the fault line are not entirely uniform. Because ownership structures of newspapers in Turkey can be quite varied and complex, we chose to simplify these structures into three principal categories: corporate, private, and nonprofit. Here, it is important to note that there is a significant correlation between specific categories of ownership and the political affiliation of the publication. For instance, Turkish newspapers owned by corporations are predominantly progovernment in their political affiliations. The corporate owners of these publications also have some of the highest circulation figures and ratings in Turkey.¹

As of 2017, the top five owners of corporate mass media in Turkey have access to around 45% of all audiences. The two largest corporations, Doğan and Kalyon Group, have investments in all categories of mass media and share 15% and 9% of the total media audience, respectively. Doğu Media (8%), Demirören Media (7%), and Ciner Media (6%), all of which are the media divisions of their respective corporations, follow Doğan and Kalyon ("Audience Concentration," 2019). Other than the Doğan Corporation, which had occasionally been critical, the remaining corporations express open support toward the current ruling party. In April 2018, Demirören Corporation bought out Doğan Media Group, turning Demirören Media into the biggest and most influential media group in the country. Demirören Media now commands a total audience market share of roughly 30%. As a result of the purchase, three daily newspapers (*Hürriyet*, *Posta*, and *Fanatik*), two television channels (*CNN Türk*, *Kanal D*), one satellite television provider (*D-Smart*), and one media distribution company (YAY-SAT) have changed hands. As of 2018, of the 26 national newspapers, 18 are owned by corporations with close ties to the AKP. A very similar scenario holds valid for television channel ownership. As numerous commentators (Baybars-Hawks & Akser, 2012; Tunç, 2015; Yeşil, 2016) have noted, the corporate press is almost entirely progovernment because of the political and economic transformations that have occurred in Turkey over the past decade.

Since their arrival into power in 2001, successive AKP governments have invested heavily in building a progovernment mass media, often using a carrot-and-stick strategy to entice media owners into alliances with them. Much has been written about the consolidation of AKP hegemony over Turkey's mass media (Kaya & Çakmur, 2010) and the hybrid ownership structure that has emerged in the wake of the 1980 coup in Turkey (Kurban & Sözeri, 2012). Accordingly, it suffices to say that the corporate mediascape is dominated by forces whose interests are deeply vested in maintaining clientelist relationships with the AKP government and president Erdoğan (Tunç, 2015). Within such a landscape, accumulating and preserving political capital has become a crucial factor in determining the future of a media organization. This dynamic, when combined with the lack of a legal framework that could guarantee the autonomy of the

¹ This site provides daily Turkish TV ratings that can be extended back to 2014: <http://www.medyatava.com/rating>

newsroom from the boardroom (Elmas & Kurban, 2011), creates a scenario wherein special interests between the government and media owners tend to play an overdetermining role in defining editorial policies and output. In other words, those working in corporate media have little to no chance of retaining an editorial policy that is independent of corporate interests or critical of the government.

In this context, corporate media aims for increasing profits and ratings with products that can be broadly classified as apolitical, mainstream, and consumerist. For instance, we see that the production (and export) of Turkish television serials into the global arena has become a primary policy objective for corporate media television organizations (Berg & Zia, 2017). Television series not only are immensely popular with the national audience but also create space for brands (usually owned by the same corporations) to advertise particular products or lifestyles. The content produced by corporate media pushes one to assume that consumerism rather than politics is the dominant political leaning common among these organizations. Accordingly, an emphasis on consumerism, Turkish popular culture, and tabloid journalism is the primary agenda of newspapers owned by corporate organizations (Bek, 2004).

In contrast to the corporate mediascape, privately owned newspapers are situated on both sides of the political fault line and have heterogeneous political leanings. The ownership structures of these publications are also varied; some are joint-stock companies with multiple partners, whereas others are limited liability enterprises with just one owner. Nevertheless, all these publications depend on advertising and hybrid revenue generation practices similar to those commonly encountered in the corporate mediascape.

Newspapers such as *Milat*, *Karar*, and *Yeni Akit* are examples of privately owned publications whose agendas are not necessarily directly aligned with corporate interests. Whereas *Milat* and *Yeni Akit* tend to have hardline Islamist ideological leanings, *Karar* is a liberal Islamist publication. Regardless of their different ideological leanings within the framework of political Islam, all three have progovernment affiliations. On the other hand, *BirGün* (2004) and *Günlük Evrensel* (1995) are publications with joint-stock ownership structures and left-wing political leanings. The origins of both are in the radical student and union movements of the 1970s, and both have ties to socialist parties such as the Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP) and the Turkish Labour Party (EMEP). Another privately owned opposition publication is *Sözcü* (2007). The daily newspaper has become one of the country's top-selling newspapers through its antigovernment stance. *Sözcü* has a more nationalist and Kemalist political orientation than the rest of the opposition press. Having an even more hardline nationalist and Kemalist political orientation is *Aydınlık* (2011).

In the opposition press, one also encounters some privately owned, online-only publications. These include *Artı Gerçek*, *Diken*, and *Gazete Duvar*. The origins of these publications can be traced to the 2013 Gezi Park protests, wherein the use of the Internet as a medium to express political dissent led to the birth of an alternative public sphere (Ataman & Çoban, 2018; Çoban & Ataman, 2015). Although it is debatable as to whether the Internet has solved the structural problems of the Turkish media landscape (Çevikel, 2004; Sözeri, 2011; Tunç, 2016) or can be used to create sustainable revenue models (Saka, Görgülü, & Sayan, 2017), the broadcasting opportunities offered by the medium have led to the creation of several different private initiatives that operate outside the typical environment of the Turkish mediascape. Although

such initiatives do not enjoy the reach of the corporate press, they nevertheless enjoy quite a bit of autonomy to pursue an independent (and quite often critical) editorial policy.

On the other end of the ownership spectrum, there is a strong correlation between publications with nonprofit ownership structures and the opposition press. Because such publications depend on neither advertising revenues nor government patronage, they are relatively free to have a critical agenda. Instead, such publications tend to be linked to various charitable foundations (*vakıf*) that withhold the right to determine editorial principles and publishing policies. These foundations sponsor their publications in a variety of ways, including with donations from individual donors or foundations, sponsorships from corporations or supranational institutions (for example, the European Union), income from programs, services, or merchandise sales, and income from investments. Nonprofit publications can be broadly divided into two subcategories: online and offline. Belonging in the offline category is *Cumhuriyet* (founded in 1924), which has a historical lineage that can be traced to the early years of the Turkish Republic.

Both *Bianet* (2000) and *T24* (2009) are nonprofit, online-only publications. The *Bianet* foundation is a nonprofit press agency based in Istanbul, established by journalist Nadire Mater (former representative of Reporters Without Borders) and left-wing activist Ertuğrul Kürkçü. Since November 2003, the *Bianet* foundation has become a partner of the Inter Press Service and is funded mostly by the European Commission through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. The *T24* foundation was founded by a veteran journalist, Doğan Akın, who had worked in mainstream media publications such as *Milliyet* before establishing the online news site. For the sake of maximizing the range of viewpoints on the Gulf Crisis, these publications, as well as both corporate and private ones, are included in our study.

Methodological Approach

To detect patterns in the media coverage of the Gulf Crisis and test our three hypotheses, we decided to compile a sample that included 22 newspapers (see Table 1). We classified our selected publications according to three categories of ownership (corporate, private, nonprofit), six categories of ideological leanings (Kemalist, leftist, mainstream,² conservative, Islamist, independent) and three positions of political affiliation (pro, anti, neutral). Whereas determining the ownership structure of a newspaper was relatively straightforward, determining the political affiliation and ideological leaning proved to be quite challenging. Shifts in ownership or external social dynamics can radically alter the political affiliation and the ideological leaning of a newspaper in Turkey. For instance, *Cumhuriyet* is historically known to be a Kemalist and staunchly secular daily (Yeşil, 2016) but has, in recent years, evolved into a center-left publication. On the other hand, the *Milliyet* newspaper used to be a highly respected center-left daily. However, after Doğan Media sold it to a progovernment corporation, the newspaper switched affiliations and became a progovernment publication. Nevertheless, despite being progovernment, *Milliyet's* output is mainstream and not Islamist. As noted previously, the Doğan Corporation sold off both *Hürriyet* and *Posta*

² What constitutes *mainstream* deserves a separate discussion. Here we attribute being mainstream to repeated labeling as such in academic publications, including Gorravett (2004), Sezgin and Wall (2005), Sünbuloğlu (2017), and Yaylacı and Karakuş (2015). Mainstream is used to signify the consumerist, pop-cultural, tabloidesque output of organizations such as *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, and *Habertürk*.

to the progovernment-affiliated Demirören Corporation in July 2018. This effectively means that both publications now belong in the progovernment cluster; however, the sale had not yet taken place during the sample collection phase of this study. Accordingly, both publications have been categorized as having neutral political affiliations.

Table 1. Selected Newspapers.

Newspaper	Political Affiliation	Ownership	Ideology
Artı Gerçek	Anti	Private	Independent
Aydınlık	Anti	Private	Kemalist
Bianet	Anti	Nonprofit	Independent
Birgün	Anti	Private	Leftist
Cumhuriyet	Anti	Nonprofit	Kemalist
Diken	Anti	Private	Independent
Gazete Duvar	Anti	Private	Independent
Günlük Evrensel	Anti	Private	Leftist
Habertürk	Pro	Corporate	Mainstream
Hürriyet	Neutral	Corporate	Mainstream
Karar	Pro	Private	Conservative
Milat	Pro	Private	Islamist
Milliyet	Pro	Corporate	Mainstream
Posta	Neutral	Corporate	Mainstream
Sabah	Pro	Corporate	Mainstream
Sözcü	Anti	Private	Kemalist
Star	Pro	Corporate	Conservative
T24	Anti	Nonprofit	Independent
Türkiye Gazetesi	Pro	Corporate	Conservative
Vatan	Pro	Corporate	Mainstream
Yeni Akit	Pro	Private	Islamist
Yeni Şafak	Pro	Corporate	Islamist

After determining the newspapers to be included in our study, the next step was to collect content relevant to the Gulf Crisis. For this, we used a simple inclusion technique based on the keywords "Qatar Crisis" (*Katar Krizi*) or "Gulf Crisis" (*Körfez Krizi*). These keywords were queried using search engines on the website of each publication included in the study. Articles from opinion columns were also included. This selection method was applied to all articles from the beginning of the crisis (June 5, 2017) until the present (January 15, 2018). We also manually checked each individual article and eliminated any irrelevant to the topic of investigation. This resulted in a data set of 2,910 articles consisting of news texts, articles, and opinion columns from 22 different newspapers. All the content collected for each publication was stored in

a text file. This process was repeated for all newspapers, leading to the creation of 22 text files. At the same time, a catalog file containing all the metadata related to the sample was created.

As a final step, we built three categorical variables with 12 subcategories by combining the text files assigned to each newspaper according to three main criteria (political affiliation, ownership, and ideology). Thus, 22 separate files consisting of 2,910 articles collected from each publication were transformed into 12 files. After this process was completed, textual data obtained from the selected articles became suitable for the application of algorithms derived from natural language processing (NLP).

Computational Methodology

The computational methodology developed for this study was derived from NLP (Bird, Klein, & Loper, 2009; Jurafsky & Martin, 2009; Manning & Schütze, 1999) and correspondence analysis (Greenacre, 1999) and has previously been applied in communications research to map media responses to the refugee crisis in Croatia (Biliç, Furman, & Yildirim 2018). Most typically, NLP methods are used to classify linguistic units into separate categories, correct misspelled words in a corpus, or detect the grammatical roles of words such as subject, object, or predicate. The algorithms used in this study were coded in the Python programming language and relied on the NLTK helper library during the preparatory phase of the analysis.

The first step in an NLP-driven methodology is *tokenization*. Here, textual elements of the collected articles were converted into their linguistic components. Words, punctuation, dates, URLs, currency, and emoticons are captured with simple string-matching algorithms called regular expressions. Regular expressions cut the formulated string from a given text. The second step was to remove (annotate) stop-words. Stop-words are functional words, such as “the” or “of,” that connect the syntactic structure of a sentence. These terms were eliminated from the corpus because they do not have any analytical value for our study. Once eliminated, Ngram collocation techniques were applied to capture noun phrases remaining within the annotated corpus of collected articles. The rationale for applying Ngram collocation techniques was as follows: Counting each word as an individual token would be an incorrect approach because terms such as “Saudi Arabia” would appear as two separate units (“Saudi” and “Arabia”). Accordingly, we modified our collocation technique to compile lists of unigrams (one-word noun phrases), bigrams (two-word noun phrases), trigrams (three-word noun phrases), and quad grams (four-word noun phrases).

In the next step of the methodology, we manually selected the terms that were meaningful within the context of the Gulf Crisis. Starting with an initial list of more than 1,500 terms, we narrowed down the number of terms down to 591. When doing so, we eliminated terms that were commonly used by all publications with high frequency because they did not carry any analytical value within the framework of the study. Accordingly, we eliminated terms such as “Qatar” (*Katar*) and “Crisis” (*Kriz*).

For the analysis phase of our methodology, each newspaper was represented as a vector comprising the terms it used to cover the Gulf Crisis. This representation method—called the bag-of-words technique—creates a matrix in which rows and columns represent the publication and the terms,

respectively. To disclose the hidden relation between the terms and newspapers, we applied correspondence analysis (CA). This method reduces dimensionality and can represent the publications and terms using only two dimensions. In the resulting scatterplots, publications with incongruous profiles are positioned at the extremes of the plane of projection while ones with similar semantic profiles are located near the center.

Another important characteristic of CA is that distance between the terms and the newspaper can be measured. Moreover, we can measure the distances between two terms, between two publications, and also between a term and a publication. These distances became the basis of our cluster-building strategy. Deploying a k-means algorithm built with the R programming language, we used proximity between terms and newspapers as a measure to determine the total number of clusters.

Results

Our methodology allowed us to test whether any of the categorical variables in our hypotheses had an impact on how a news organization covered the Gulf Crisis. Our results were visualized as scatterplots (see the appendix, Figures A1a and A1b).

Affiliation

Figures A1a and A1b (see the appendix) indicate that progovernment and opposition news publications are distanced from one another. Publications with neutral political affiliations are close to progovernment news ones. Although *Hürriyet* and *Posta* (formerly Doğan Holding) have been at times critical of the AKP's policies and antagonistic toward president Erdoğan,³ the output of both publications seems to be converging with progovernment ones within the context of our sample. Naturally, this brings up questions regarding the validity of the political affiliations associated with *Hürriyet* and *Posta*. Although both are quintessentially opportunistic newspapers seeking to cash in on emerging social or political trends, our findings suggest that there is more to this than meets the eye. It is a striking coincidence that within the context of the Gulf Crisis, both publications pursued an editorial policy that aligned closely with the progovernment press. One might tentatively argue that such editorial policies foreshadowed the sale of both newspapers to the progovernment Demirören Holding two months after the end of our study. It seems that both newspapers had already shifted their editorial policies to accommodate the political agenda of Demirören Holding before the sale that occurred in March 2018.

Given these results, we can keep our first hypothesis (H1) and assert that affiliation (pro, opposition, and neutral) causes a divergence in how an publication covered the Gulf Crisis. Newspapers with similar affiliations used similar language to cover the crisis.

³ For instance, after Erdoğan's imprisonment in April 1998, *Hürriyet* (in)famously ran the headline "Muhtar bile olamayacak" ("Now, he [Erdoğan] will not be able to even become a neighborhood head").

Ideology

Our results show that the output of publications classified as leftist (*BirGün, Diken, Günlük Evrensel*), and independent (*Artı Gerçek, Bianet, Gazete Duvar, and T24*) strongly resemble one another (Figure A1b). This might be interpreted as a blurring of ideological distinctions within the context of Gulf Crisis. Moreover, the terms exclusively associated with the leftist and independent press are relatively few. In comparison with the wealth of terms associated with mainstream/Islamist/conservative or Kemalist clusters, only 31 terms are exclusively associated with publications categorized as left or independent (see Tables A1 and A2 in the appendix). The only evidence of an agenda divergent from the mainstream is to be found in the use of the term "HDP," an abbreviation of Turkey's pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party. Articles with this term feature news wherein HDP politicians criticize the relationship between Qatar and the government ("Kemalbay'dan Erdoğan'a [From Kemalbay to Erdoğan]," 2017). In other words, by giving space to the views of HDP spokespeople, these publications are indirectly criticizing the Turkish government's embrace of Qatar during the Gulf Crisis. The small number of concepts associated with this cluster suggests that within the context of the Gulf Crisis, newspapers categorized as left and independent were unable to form an independent vocabulary when covering the Gulf Crisis.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, publications labeled as Kemalist (*Aydınlık, Cumhuriyet, Sözcü*) constitute a grouping distinct from both the leftist/independent and the conservative/Islamic/mainstream clusters.⁴ The uniqueness of this cluster is reflected in the politicized language used by these publications (see Table A2 in the appendix). For instance, the Syrian premier is referred to with the proper spelling of his name ("Esad"), in comparison with "Esed," which is used by the main cluster. The organization referred to as "Daesh" in the mainstream/Islamic/conservative cluster is referred to as "İŞİD" here. The term "Müslüman Kardeşler" (Muslim Brotherhood) is used in contrast to "İhvan," the term preferred by the main cluster. The embargo is referred to as a siege ("kuşatma"). There are also references to "Adalet Yürüyüşü," an event that was widely derided in progovernment circles. Finally, there are references to "OHAL" (state of emergency) rather than terms related to the actual coup attempt.

Although the language used by the Kemalist cluster is almost diametrically opposed to the language used by newspapers belonging in the mainstream, conservative, and Islamist clusters, it is questionable as to whether Kemalist publications can challenge the frame set by progovernment ones. In terms of volume, the output of publications labeled as Kemalist only constitute 13.44% (including the controversial *Aydınlık*) of total content. This is relatively minor in comparison with the primary conservative/Islamic/mainstream cluster, which produces around 70.59% of the total coverage on the Gulf Crisis.

Finally, as the scatterplots demonstrate (see Figures A1b, A2, A3a, A3b, and A4 in the appendix), there is a high level of similarity in the language used by publications classified as mainstream (*Habertürk, Milliyet, Sabah, Vatan, Hürriyet, Posta*), conservative (*Karar, Türkiye, Star*), and Islamist (*Milat, Yeni Akit, Yeni Şafak*). Given the results, we can retain our second hypothesis (H2) and assert that ideology (conservative, left, Kemalist, independent, Islamic, mainstream) causes a divergence in how a publication

⁴ One could speculate that this is perhaps caused by the historical legacy of Kemalist indifference and distancing from the Middle East (Kardaş, 2010; Krueger & Krüger, 2016; Robins, 2007).

covered the Gulf Crisis. The three identified clusters are (a) conservative, mainstream, and Islamist, (b) leftist and independent, and (c) Kemalist.

Ownership

The scatterplots (Figures A1a and A1b in the appendix) show that there is a higher degree of similarity between private and nonprofit newspapers. This is remarkable given that the ownership structures of publications such as *Karar*, *Milat*, and *Yeni Akit* are all private. Paradoxically, when we look at the data on the level of individual publications and not categorical variables (Figure A2 in the appendix), there is a high level of convergence in the language used by publications classified as mainstream (*Habertürk*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah*, *Vatan*, *Hürriyet*, *Posta*), conservative (*Karar*, *Türkiye*, *Star*), and Islamist (*Milat*, *Yeni Akit*, *Yeni Şafak*).

The discrepancy between the results may be explained by the ratio of privately owned progovernment publications versus oppositional ones. *Karar*, *Milat*, and *Yeni Akit*, the three privately owned progovernment publications, are a relative minority in terms of their political affiliation. The remaining publications (7) in the privately owned newspapers category are all oppositional. Furthermore, if one looks at the relative coverage of all privately owned newspapers in the data set, we see that *Karar*, *Milat*, and *Yeni Akit* make up 40.86% of the entire output (Table 2).

Table 2. Newspapers' Article Numbers and Distributions According to Category.

Newspaper	Affiliation	Ownership	Number of Articles	% of Category
ARTI GERÇEK	Anti	Private	184	13.24
AYDINLIK	Anti	Private	97	6.98
BIRGÜN	Anti	Private	124	8.92
DİKEN	Anti	Private	56	4.03
GAZETE DUVAR	Anti	Private	76	5.46
GÜNLÜK EVRENSEL	Anti	Private	72	5.18
KARAR	Pro	Private	374	26.91
MİLAT	Pro	Private	156	11.22
SÖZCÜ	Anti	Private	213	15.33
YENİ AKİT	Pro	Private	38	2.73
Total			1390	

The remaining publications constitute the remaining 59.14%. These two factors cause the categorical variable of ownership to be aligned to the nonprofit variable, which itself is made up of only oppositional publications.

Despite the described discrepancy, we can still safely confirm the third hypothesis (H3) and assert that ownership (corporate, private, and nonprofit) causes a divergence in how a publication covered the Gulf Crisis.

Interpretation

When we look at the data on the level of individual publications and not categorical variables (Figures A2, A3a, A3b, and A4), one can observe a high degree of similarity in the language used by *Habertürk*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah*, *Vatan*, *Hürriyet*, *Posta*, *Karar*, *Türkiye*, *Star*, *Milat*, *Yeni Akit*, and *Yeni Şafak* to cover the crisis. Not only do these publications occupy the center of the scatterplot, but they are also very closely aligned with one another (Figures A3a and A3b in the appendix).

There are two possible explanations for the similarity exhibited by publications of diverse ideologies and ownership structures. The first explanation is that, other than *Hürriyet* and *Posta*, all the publications mentioned in the previous paragraph have progovernment affiliations. Building on this, one can argue that these publications are merely conforming to the “party line” or, in other words, to the official position of the government. Nevertheless, it would be overly deterministic to explain the complex relationship among ownership, ideology, and coverage with just one categorical variable. Although political affiliation is indisputably crucial in determining the language used by media organizations to cover the Gulf Crisis, we would like to propose an alternative explanation.

As one can observe, all nine corporate publications are located within the central cluster. Moreover, when we look at the combined volume of coverage generated by these publications, the output of all nine makes up more than 49% of the entire corpus (Table 3). This means that these publications are responsible for the bulk of the news coverage produced on the Gulf Crisis.

Table 3. Outlet Versus Output.

Newspaper	Articles	% of Corpus (n= 2,910)
HABERTÜRK	313	11
HÜRRİYET	330	11
SABAH	276	9
MİLLİYET	123	4
POSTA	129	4
STAR	80	3
VATAN	71	3
YENİ ŞAFAK	59	2
TÜRKİYE	38	1
Total	1,419	49

Considering the dominance of corporate media organizations in terms of both total volume of coverage and total market share for audiences, one can argue that they are the principal actors setting the agenda on how the Gulf Crisis was covered in the Turkish mediascape.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) argue that although mass media has little sway on the direction or intensity of attitudes, it can set the public agenda and influence the salience of attitudes toward social issues. By providing coverage of events, mass media ends up defining the range of issues pertinent to the public agenda. Ghanem (1997) argues that while mass media sets the public agenda, individual news organizations provide a frame for the public to think about specific issues. Framing can be an extremely effective method for emphasizing certain aspects of social reality and activating certain opinions for audience members (Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997). Framing plays a role in telling the audience about what to focus on or what to leave behind when thinking about a particular issue (Entman, 1993).

According to framing theory, news organizations influence public opinion by building a narrative wherein editorial policies curate facts to underscore certain angles (Valkenburg, Peter, & Walther, 2016). Entman (2007) describes framing as “the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (p. 164). Not only does the media identify supposed “causes of problems,” but it also can “encourage moral judgments” and “promote favored policies” (pp. 164–165). One of the long-term implications of framing is that it naturalizes and legitimizes certain ideologies or worldviews (Budd, Craig, & Steinman, 1999). Accordingly, being able to set the frame constitutes the basis of media power insofar as it creates the setting through which social relations are imagined, discussed, and, most important, naturalized (Reese, 2007). The capacity of mass media to present (and manipulate) a mediated frame of reality brings us to what has been described as the manufacturing consent paradigm.

In their seminal text, Herman and Chomsky (1988) define mass media as “effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function, by reliance on market forces, internalized assumptions, and self-censorship, and without overt coercion” (p. 306). In other words, mass media supports the status quo of political systems by producing propaganda.⁵ Robinson (2001) argues that within the abounding literature on the manufacturing consent paradigm, two implicit versions can be discerned—an executive version and an elite one. In the former version, news organizations conform with the official framings of the government or state, whereas in the latter, news organizations conform to the political interests of elites in general. Evidence from our case study suggests that the executive version of the manufacturing consent paradigm can be applied to describe Turkish media responses to the Gulf Crisis.

Accordingly, one can propose a tentative scenario wherein progovernment news organizations made the editorial decision to follow the government’s official position during the crisis. As soon as the Turkish government abandoned its initial position as mediator and chose to side with Qatar, the progovernment press embarked on a public relations campaign to justify and legitimize this decision. By providing coverage, the goal of progovernment press was to put the crisis on the public agenda. On the

⁵ Yet it is important to note that the original model put forth by Herman and Chomsky has evolved over the years to include some major differences. For example, the model supposes a targeted object such as anticommunism, which would later be replaced by other targets such as “war on terror” (Falcous & Silk, 2005). In another case, Isakhan (2009) focuses on the post-Saddam Iraq media sector and finds (international) competing powers for setting media agendas.

level of framing, the goal of individual publications was to emphasize aspects of the crisis that would justify the government's decision to side with Qatar. Such a strategy strongly resembles an executive act of manufacturing consent, with corporate news organizations being the key actors. Accordingly, when the coverage of publications such as *Habertürk*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah*, *Star*, *Vatan*, and *Yeni Şafak* are combined (Figure A4), their common frame emphasizes the following themes:

- Solidarity with Qatar
 - Emphasis on aid sent from Turkey (*Katar'a destek, Katar'a gıda, Türk ürünleri, süt ürünleri, gıda ürünleri, ihtiyaç, dayanışma, yardım, muhtaç*)
 - The alleged solidarity shown by Qatar during the July 15 coup attempt (*15 temmuz darbe girişimi, 15 temmuz gecesi, Gülen, FETÖ*)
 - Social media campaign of Qatari citizens showing gratitude to Turkey for sending aid (*sosyal medya, Twitter*)
 - The military alliance between Turkey and Qatar (*türkiyenin katardaki askeri üssü, askeri üssünün kapatılması, ortak tatbikat, genelkurmay baskani hulusi, türk askerleri, türk silahlı kuvvetleri*)
- The connection of the Gulf Crisis to wider geopolitical conflicts
 - Palestinian–Israeli conflict (*Filistin, Israil, Hamas, Gazze, Kudüs, Mescid-i Aksa*)
 - Syrian civil war, Islamic State and Kurdish insurgency (*Suriye, ÖSÖ, Esed,⁶ Esad, deas, nusra, pkk, pyd, rakka operasyonu, ypg, kuzey irak, daes*)
 - Arab Spring aftermath (*Arap Baharı, ihvan, libya, sisi, arap_baharı, mısır, mursi, tunus*)
- Emphasis on a peaceful diplomatic solution involving international institutions and the Islamic world (*barış, barışçıl, birlesmis milletler, g20, islam dünyasi, siyasi çözüm, arap birliği, diyalog çağrısı, uzlaşi, islam isbirliği teskilati*)

One may argue that this common frame is dominant enough to force privately owned publications such as *Karar*, *Milat*, and *Yeni Akit* to follow suit. Privately owned progovernment publications provide framing support but cannot alter the agenda set by corporations. On the other hand, oppositional publications provide critical commentary but are unable to establish a counterframe that can contest the one established by progovernment ones. In such a scenario, oppositional publications provide criticism but do not have the capacity to shift public opinion.

Other than *Hürriyet* and *Posta*, the remaining anomaly to our proposed scenario is *Aydınlık*. The unofficial mouthpiece of the Kemalist Eurasianist (Akçali & Perinçek, 2009) *Vatan* Party and its leader Doğu

⁶ Pronunciation and transliteration of Syria leader Bashar al-Assad's last name in Turkish had become an issue of political stance against the Syrian leadership. Before the civil war in Syria began, President Erdoğan and all the Turkish media used "Esad." However, following the Turkish leadership's explicit opposition to the Assad regime, "Esed" was used to imply opposition. In the meantime, antigovernment media continues to use "Esad."

Perinçek, a possible explanation for the proximity of *Aydınlık* to progovernment clusters lies in political developments that have put the publication's owners in a possible alliance with the government. Although the Vatan Party has never won any notable electoral successes, some of the party sympathizers are allegedly well positioned in the Turkish army and judiciary. After the coup attempt, allegedly by Gülen movement followers in 2016, there seems to be a rapprochement between Erdoğan's cadres and Eurasianists. Perinçek himself has begun to be regularly featured on the news of Islamist media. Again, one may tentatively argue that the rapprochement between Erdoğan and Perinçek has led *Aydınlık* to adopt a progovernment stance on specific issues. This shift can be proffered as a possible explanation for *Aydınlık*'s association with *Milliyet*, *Karar*, *Vatan*, *Yeni Safak*, *Yeni Akit*, *Sabah*, and *Star*.

Conclusions

Using a data set of 2,968 articles collected from 22 different newspapers in Turkey, this article mapped media responses to the ongoing Gulf Crisis. In doing so, we deployed a pioneering methodology derived from NLP and CA to test whether categorical variables such as political affiliation, ownership, and ideological outlook had any impact on how a publication covered the Gulf Crisis. Our results show that all three variables had unique effects on how a newspaper covered the crisis.

Our first conclusion is that there is a high level of convergence in the coverage of publications classified as mainstream, conservative, and İslamist, as well as those classified as leftist and independent. The former cluster was dominant in terms of both total output and the number of unique terms deployed when covering the crisis. Evidence suggests that a third Kemalist cluster employed a divergent vocabulary to cover the Gulf Crisis. This language seems to be diametrically opposed to the one used by progovernment publications, proving our base assumption to be correct. Kemalist publications provided most of the critical commentary on the government's decision to side with Qatar. Leftist or independent newspapers were more secondary actors in this regard.

Yet at the same time, the volume of output from both Kemalist and leftist/independent publications was much smaller in comparison with progovernment ones. This made them unable to establish a counterframe that could contest the one put forth by progovernment newspapers. *Aydınlık* was an anomaly insofar as it is a Kemalist opposition publication but displays high levels of similarity to progovernment ones in terms of coverage.

Our second conclusion is that the progovernment news organizations made the editorial decision to follow the government's official position throughout the crisis. By providing coverage, the goal of progovernment news organizations was to put the crisis on the public agenda. On the level of framing, the goal of individual publications was to emphasize aspects of the crisis that would justify the government's decision to side with Qatar. The dimensions of this public relations campaign strongly resembled an executive act of consent manufacturing.

Accordingly, our third conclusion is that corporate-owned news organizations were the driving force shaping both the public agenda and the framing of the Gulf Crisis in the Turkish mediascape. Corporate organizations dominate the data set in terms of output and are at the center of all measurements. Depending

on their political affiliation, noncorporate organizations were only able to criticize or support the frame put forth by corporate ones. Neither had the capacity to either alter the agenda or shift public opinion.

Last, it is worthwhile to note that this study has some methodological limitations. Most important, it only focuses on semantic content and not visual content. Although images play significant roles in setting media agendas and frames, further innovation in our computational methodology would be required to include images in our study. The other significant limitation is regarding the number of publications in our data set. Rather than taking all the content from all 39 national newspapers cited in the News Advertising Authority (*Basın İlan Kurumu*), we were only able to capture content from 17 national newspapers. Luckily enough, the 17 publications used for this study were also the ones with the highest circulation and readership. Nevertheless, for future research, one would need to develop a solution for capturing content from the remaining 22 news organizations. Finally, a framing study (McLeod & Detenber, 1999; Prat & Strömberg, 2013) is needed to assess if the scenario proposed in this article had any impact on shaping public perception in a positive manner.

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Appendix

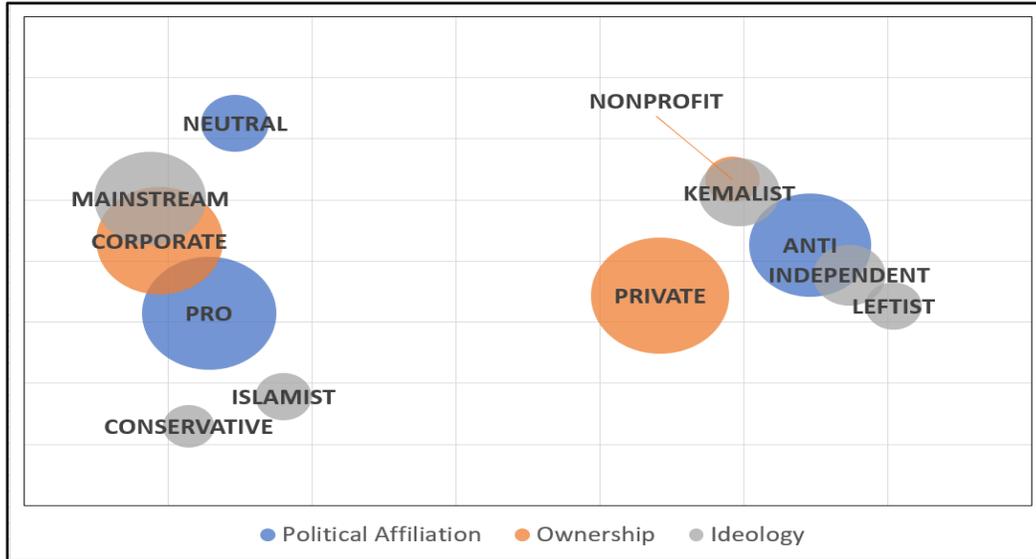


Figure A1a. Semantic distance of affiliation and ownership categories according to correspondence analysis.

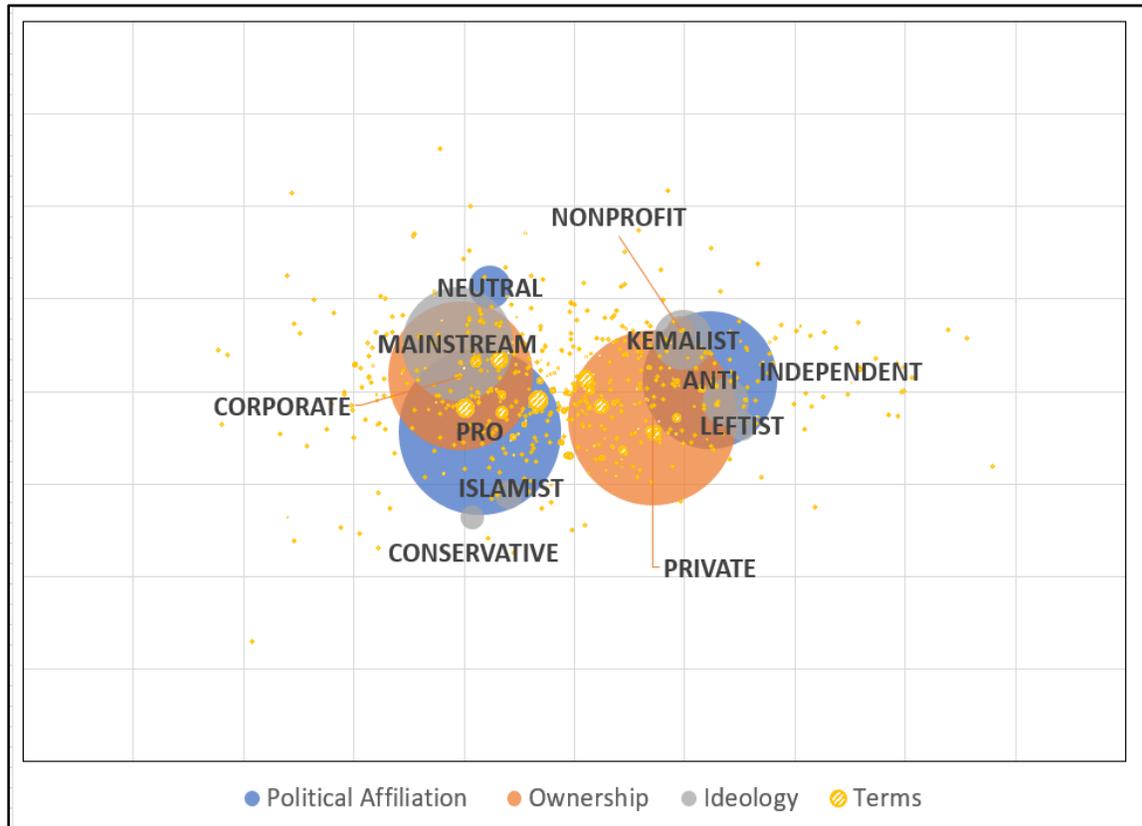


Figure A1b. Correlation of different categories and terms (n = 591) according to correspondence analysis.

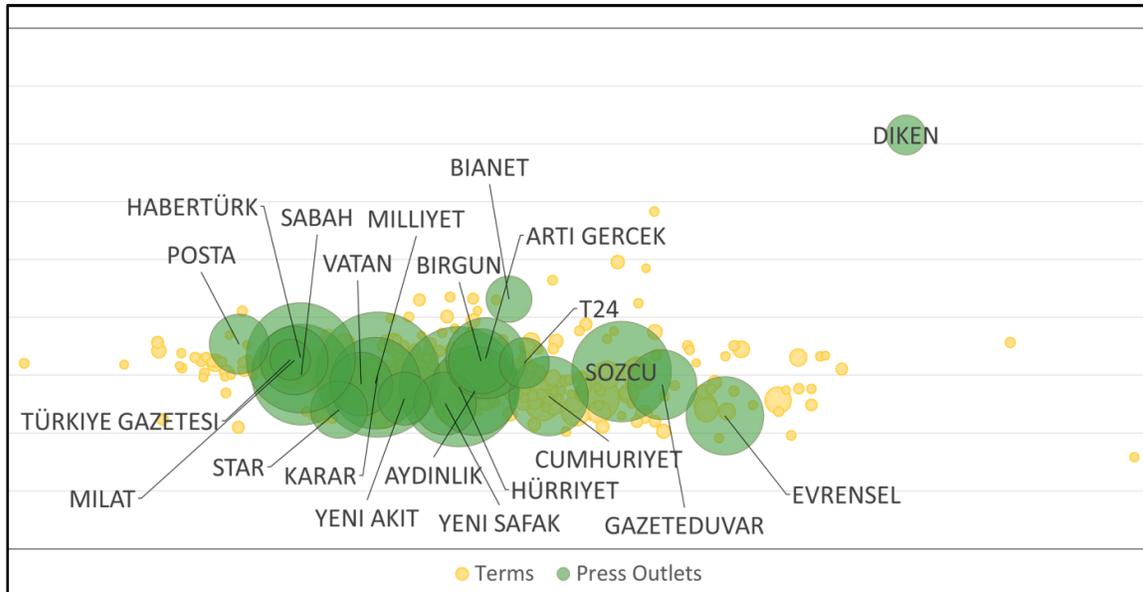


Figure A2. Correlations of media organizations (n = 22) and terms (n = 591) according to semantic distance.

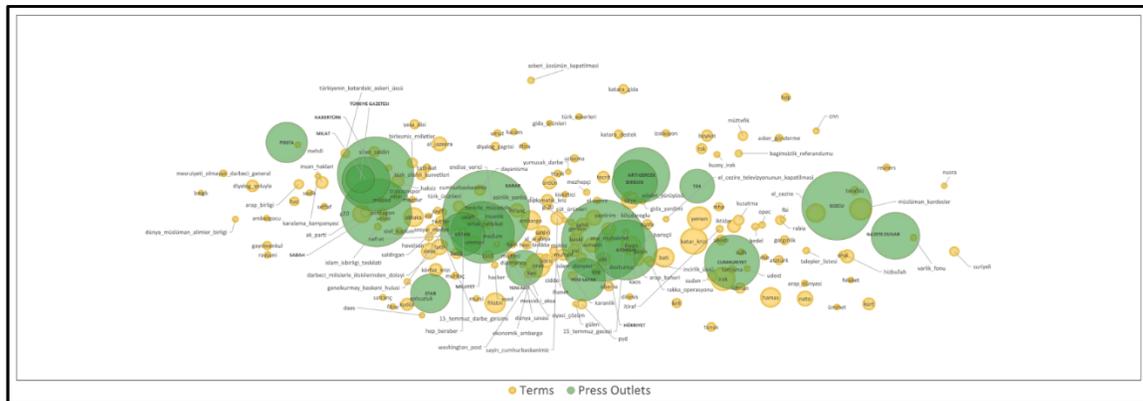


Figure A3a. Main cluster without Evrensel and Diken, which are outliers (n=20).

Table A1. Terms Associated With BirGün, Diken, Günlük Evrensel, Artı Gerçek, Bianet, Gazete Duvar, and T24.

TERMS	SIZE	TRANSLATION OF THE TERM
Almanya_Disisleri_Bakani_Sigmar	67	Sigmar Gabriel minister of foreign affairs of Germany
asirilikçi	26	extremist
asker_gönderme	36	sending troops
askeri_üssünün_kapatilmasi	29	shutdown of military base
Askerimiz	22	our soldier
bagimsizlik_referandumu	33	referendum of independence
Barcelona	25	Barcelona
Basin_Özgürlüğü	27	Freedom of Press
boycot	78	boycott
Chp_Genel_Baskan_Yardimcisi	23	Vice President of CHP (secular opposition political party in Turkey)
CNN	25	CNN
hava_sahasi	31	air space
HDP	43	HDP
Izolasyon	34	isolation
Katar_hükümeti	36	Qatar government
Katar_merkezli_Al_Jazeera	41	Qatar Al Jazeera
Katara_gida	53	aid to Qatar
Kuzey_Irak	26	Northern Iraq
Maldivler	62	Maldives
mezhepçilik	22	sectarianism
Misir_ve_Birlesik_Arap	31	Egypt and United Arab Emirates
müttefik	55	Alliance
Qatar_Airways	28	Qatar Airways
Ruhani	45	Hassan Rouhani (President of Iran)
savas_uçagi	54	fighter aircraft
stratejik_isbirliği	29	strategic alliance
terörizme_destek	46	support to terrorism
tim	34	task force
TSK	65	Turkish Armed Forces
Türkiye_İran	66	Turkey Iran
uluslararası_kanunlar	21	international laws

Table A2. Terms Associated With *Aydınlık*, *Cumhuriyet*, and *Sözcü*.

TERM	FREQUENCY	TRANSLATION OF THE TERM
Adalet_Yürüyüşü	34	2017 March for Justice
Adana	41	Adana
akil	60	wise
anayasa	39	constitution
Arap_Dünyasi	28	Arab world
askeri_müdahale	33	military intervention
Asya	63	Asia
Atatürk	50	Atatürk
Barzani	49	Masoud Barzani (Iraqi Kurdish politician)
Basra_Körfezi	33	Arabian Gulf
bedel	32	price
boru_hatti	34	pipeline
çatisma	104	conflict
cihatçi	39	jihadist
Davutoglu	58	Ahmet Davutoğlu (former AKP foreign minister and prime minister)
demokrasi	102	democracy
Devlet_Bahçeli	30	Devlet Bahçeli (leader of ultra nationalist Turkish political party, MHP)
dogal_gaz	66	natural gas
dolar	240	United States Dollar
Dünya_Kupasi	45	World Cup
El_Cezire	198	Al Jazeera
El_Cezire_televizyonunun_kapatilmasi	23	Shutdown of Al Jazeera
emperyalist	37	imperialist

TERM	FREQUENCY	TRANSLATION OF THE TERM
Esad	80	Bashar Hafez al-Assad (President of Syria)
FBI	21	FBI
felaket	23	disaster
fidye	38	ransom
Finansbank	21	Finansbank
futbol	43	football
garip	21	weird
Gazze	54	Gaza
gerginlik	51	tension
gida_yardimi	24	food aid
güven	27	trust
hakli	45	right
halife	62	caliph
Hamas	222	Hamas
hisse	25	share
Hizbullah	106	Hezbollah
hükümet_sözcüsü_Numan_Kurtulmus	23	Numan Kurtulmuş Turkish government spokesman
ihtilaf	29	controversy
iktidar	96	power
ilimli	32	moderate
Irak	311	Iraq
Iran_a_karsi	27	against Iran
Iran_destekli	36	Iran assisted
Irana_karsi	70	against Iran
işçi	31	worker
ISID	185	ISIS
ISIDe_karsi	32	against ISIS
issizlik	35	unemployment

TERM	FREQUENCY	TRANSLATION OF THE TERM
istihbarat	93	intelligence service
İsviçre	21	Switzerland
itham	32	accusation
itiraf	33	confession
itiraz	43	objection
ittifak	82	alliance
ittifaklar	25	alliances
kadim	27	ancient
kardesimiz	26	our sibling
Katar_a_karsi	23	against Qatar
Katar_a_yönelik	41	to Qatar
Katar_Krizi	386	Qatar Crisis
Katar_Yatirim_Otoritesi	24	Qatar Investment Authority
kavga	52	fight
koalisyon	65	coalition
konut	31	housing
korkunç	27	terrifying
Kuran	40	Quran
kurban	24	victim
Kürdistan	27	Kurdistan
Kürt	86	Kurdish
kusatma	67	blockade
laik	28	secular
Libya	165	Libya
Lübnan	66	Lebanon
mali	102	financial
mesnetsiz	23	unwarranted
MHP	46	MHP (ultra nationalist Turkish political party)
müdahil	31	involved

TERM	FREQUENCY	TRANSLATION OF THE TERM
Müslüman_Kardesler	268	Muslim Brotherhood (İhvan)
Musul	29	Mosul
müteahhitlik	25	construction business
müzakere	106	negotiation
NATO	135	NATO
OHAL	42	state of emergency
OPEC	30	OPEC
ÖSO	22	Free Syrian Army
oy	51	vote
oyun	38	play
özgürlük	32	freedom
problem	28	problem
protesto	25	protest
QNB	38	QATAR NATIONAL BANK
rabia	52	Rabia Sign
Recep_Tayyip_Erdoğan	40	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
rekabet	39	competition
Saddam	38	Saddam
sermaye	50	capital
sii	146	Shia
sikinti	61	trouble
sok	30	shock
Sudan	57	Sudan
sulh	27	peace
sünni	147	Sunni
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taviz	27	compromise
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Türkiyeye_karsi	46	against Turkey
Türkiyeye_yönelik	26	directed to Turkey
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