

# Hate Speech in The Context of Digital Violence in Türkiye: Perceptions and Biases on Afghan Identity

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## Abstract

According to the data of the Presidency of Migration Management (2021), the largest group of irregular migrants detected in Türkiye in 2021 were Afghans. The arrival of irregular migrants from Afghanistan to Türkiye alongside the Syrian refugees have caused a negatively charged reaction in Turkish society and from the main parties in the opposition. Based on this apparent reaction against the arrival of Afghan refugees, the claim can be made that Afghans are now the new "other" category in Türkiye. We identify two hashtags used on Twitter to protest the arrival of Afghans, which are #sınınamustur (border is honor) and #hudutnamustur (frontier is honor) having the same meaning in Turkish and are Trend Topics on Twitter. The purpose of this study is to examine the reason why there are two hashtags on Twitter to protest the arrival of Afghan immigrants, what the differences and similarities are between the two in terms of how Afghans are defined and what kinds of hate speech they are subjected to. For this purpose, we applied Craswell's mixed model in this study using both content analysis and social network analysis techniques. The investigation results reveal that the hashtag #sınınamustur is a manifestation of a political endeavor, asserting that Afghan refugees are associated with a 'security challenge'. In contrast, the hashtag #hudutnamustur represents a response from the general populace, embodying elements of cultural superiority.

**Keywords:** Afghan Refugees, Hate Speech, Social Network Analysis, Content Analysis, Hashtag Analysis, Digitalization.

## Türkiye'de Dijital Şiddet Bağlamında Nefret Söylemi: Afgan Kimliğine İlişkin Algılar ve Önyargılar

### Öz

Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı'nın (2021) verilerine göre, 2021 yılında Türkiye'de tespit edilen düzensiz göçmenlerin en büyük grubunu Afganlar oluşturdu. Afganistan'dan gelen düzensiz göçmenlerin Suriyeli mültecilerle birlikte Türkiye'ye gelmesi, Türk toplumunda ve ana muhalefet partilerinden kaynaklanan olumsuz bir tepkiye yol açtı. Afgan mültecilerin gelişi, Türk toplumunda yeni bir "öteki" kategorisi olarak algılanmış olabilir. Araştırmamızda, Afgan göçmenlerin gelişine karşı Twitter'da kullanılan iki hashtag belirledik: #sınınamustur ve #hudutnamustur, her ikisi de Türkçede aynı anlama gelmektedir. Bu hashtag'ler Twitter platformunda Trending Topic haline gelmiştir. Çalışmamızın temel amacı, Afgan göçmenlerin gelişine karşı Twitter'da neden iki farklı hashtag kullanıldığını incelemektir. Araştırmamız, bu iki hashtag arasındaki farklılıkları ve benzerlikleri, Afganların nasıl tanımlandığı ve hangi tür nefret söylemlerine maruz kaldıkları açısından aydınlatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amacı gerçekleştirmek için, içerik analizi ve sosyal ağ analizi tekniklerini bir araya getirerek Craswell'in karma modelini uyguladık. Araştırma sonuçlarımız, #sınınamustur hashtag'inin, Afgan mültecilerini bir 'güvenlik sorunu' olarak niteleyen siyasi bir girişimin sonucu olduğunu göstermektedir. Öte yandan, #hudutnamustur hashtag'i, genel halktan gelen bir tepkiyi yansıtarak kültürel üstünlük unsurlarını içermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Afgan Mülteciler, Nefret Söylemi, Sosyal Ağ Analizi, İçerik Analizi, Hashtag Analizi, Dijitalleşme.

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DOI: 10.36484/liberal.1314063

Liberal Düşünce Dergisi, Yıl: 28, Sayı:111, Yaz 2023, ss. 93-120.

Gönderim Tarihi: 13 Haziran 2023 | Kabul Tarihi: 13 Eylül 2023

## Introduction

The phenomenon of migration, characterized by a large population inflow, can cause citizens to question the borders of the country's territory and this in turn will affect their attitudes towards and relations with the migrants. In this case, nationals can perceive immigrants as a threat to their national identity, conferred by anti-immigrant political discourses on identity (Finchelstein, 2019; Billig, 1990: 25). Since 2015 the main flows of immigrants towards the European Union, originate from the countries such as Syria, Libya, Iraq, Eritrea, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. (Assimakopoulos et al, 2017: 1).

It is a fact that Türkiye has become a prominent destination for migrants and refugees in the last ten years and that has been one of the most important political issues. Some of the features that make Türkiye to be chosen are her relative political stability, a liberal visa regime, and open border policy compared to other countries in the region (e.g., Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria) (Düvel, 2018: 179- 180). In 2020 Türkiye hosts the largest refugee population in the world, which makes this issue creates intense public debates to concern government in power, opposition parties, academicians, and the media (Filibeli and Ertuna: 2021). On the other hand, the increase of irregular migration to Türkiye in recent years has caused an increase in hate speech against migrants and refugees. Especially Afghan refugees, who were the largest irregular migrant group in 2021 to Türkiye, became one of the focal topics in social media outlets as well as traditional media. Particularly #hudutnamustur and #sınırnammustur hashtags on Twitter targeting the arrival of Afghan refugees found a place in Trend Topic (TT) list.

The main aim of this study is to understand the reason for two separate Trend Topic hashtags. Although both hashtags have almost the same meaning in Turkish vocabulary they use different terminologies to prompt a desired response from multiple audiences against Afghan refugees or their influx. By analyzing both hashtags, this study tries to reveal types of hate speech, analyze the relations between power spheres (political, cultural, and economic) and hate speeches, and finally attempt to define a representative profile of "the hate speech spreaders". For all these purposes in this study, the following research questions were asked to be answered;

RQ1: What is the reason for existing two different but synonym hashtags becoming TT throughout the arrival of Afghan refugees'?

RQ2: What are the differences and similarities between #hudutnamustur and #sınırnammustur?

RQ2A: Which types of hate speech are used in both #hudutnamustur and #sınırnamustur hashtags?

RQ2B: Which themes are used to describe Afghan Refugees' arrival? What is the difference between the two hashtags in that sense?

RQ2C: Which spheres of power are used in #hudutnamustur and #sınırnamustur hashtags?

RQ2D: Which actors are playing a key role in the networks for #hudutnamustur and #sınırnamustur hashtags?

## Hate Speech Against the “Other”

Within the rise of nation-state concept in Europe in the 19th century, the mechanisms in defining and protecting national identity or nationhood came into play were mainly devaluing other nations and excluding other national, ethnic, and religious minorities (Habermas, 2012: 19). The main ideological currents of nationalism and racism provide the necessary resources for the continuous construction of the “other”, who supposedly harm the security of the nation and/or purity of race (Billig, 1990: 24). The process of internalization of the consciousness of “us” by the citizens as the goal of constructing a national identity, cannot be realized without some “others” to strengthen this consciousness (Üstel, 2008: 209). The notion of “other” as a constructed and/or emerged concept through social and political processes describes what is not from “us” and differentiates people and groups from each other (Bilici, 2011: 4).

It is the claim of superiority in the social structure that constitutes the concept of the “other.” As depicted in Hegel’s famous master/slave dialectic, man is necessarily either a master or a slave; after becoming one of them, its existence and characteristics are determined by the “other” (Stern, 2012). The concept of master describes the sovereign, and the concept of slave describes the one who submits to the sovereign. The slave serves the master to satisfy the master’s desires, and in doing so the slave goes into the process of self-negation by suppressing his own desires. It is known that the position of universal divisions such as subject-object, agent-passive, and perpetrator-victim or particular divisions such as women, black, ethnic or even happy minorities, are positioned in this form of relationship (Young, 1990: 17).

One of the tools used in the process of othering people by categorizing them as “us” and “them” is discourse. According to Van Dijk, discourse creates “us” and “them”, distances people, dramatizes the facts by exaggerating, and victimizes the “us” as a group. Van Dijk claims that when others tend to

be negatively represented, especially when they are associated with threats, then the in-group needs to be represented as a victim of such a threat (van Dijk, 2003: 107; Finchelstein, 2017).

Considering the variety of definitions, it can be claimed that there is no agreement in the literature on the denotations and connotations of hate speech (Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2015: 120). A common theme in the definitions of hate speech is that the attack is based on some aspect of the identity of a person or a group (MacAvaney et al., 2019: 3). The purpose of hate speech is to generate discrimination between superior groups and inferior groups in favor of the former. Generally superior groups which exhibit anti-social behavior disregard inferior groups who also have equal human rights.

Fortuna and Nunes (2018: 6) propose a definition of hate speech as, “*a language that attacks or diminishes, that incites violence or hate against groups, based on specific characteristics such as physical appearance, religion, descent, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or other, and it can occur with different linguistic styles, even in subtle forms or when humour is used.*”. Additionally, hate speech can be analyzed into six main categories; political hate speech, hate speech against women, hate speech against foreigners and immigrants, sexual-identity-based hate speech, religious or sect-based hate speech and, lastly hate speech against people who are disabled or have a diverse disease (Binark and Çomu, 2012).

## The Impact of Digitalization on Hate Speech

As a globalized, decentralized, and multi-faceted interactive computer network, the Internet offers individuals the ability to cross borders and break the barriers of distance in the real world (Banks, 2010: 233). The development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) offers freedom of communication and expression of ideas in almost unrestricted ways. Social scientists have emphasized that social media has levelled the political playing field and has the capacity to give voice to marginalized groups and new actors (Ganesh, 2021: 30). Thus, social upheavals of recent times, such as the Arab Spring of 2011 and the Gezi Park protests in Türkiye in 2013, clearly demonstrate that social media tools are helping to spread more news than the traditional press does (Karkin et al., 2015; Wolfsfeld, et al. 2013).

Social media has a democratizing effect like the print media. Social media provides opportunities for every citizen to participate in democratic process and provides them with avenues to represent their views, information and

experiences to government and general public (Macintosh, 2004: 2). On the other hand, the democratizing power of social media also includes some risks. According to Ganesh (2018: 31), a clever group of “anonymous amateurs” can have the power to spread extremism, bigotry, and propaganda with their comments on anything, anywhere, anytime. Also, the anonymity, immediacy and global nature of the Internet have made it an ideal tool for extremists to incite hatred. Along with the globalization of technology, there is an increase in the number of online hate groups and hate-related activities in cyberspace (Banks, 2010: 233).

On the other hand, Rheingold (2002) defines the smart mob concept in order to define collective action in digital spaces by giving some examples to clarify the concept. For instance, people came together via text message to overthrow President Estrada in Manila, the Philippines in 2001. Other examples are “lovegeety” which is one of the first examples of digital dating applications and works based on location, and finally websites where celebrities and journalists can meet with his fans. The common feature of these examples is that digital means of communication provide the necessary basis as a ground to make people communicate with each other despite their social status, gender, culture, class and geographic location. In other words, digital communities can create a great deal of networks that enable people to disseminate information. In the case of hate speech, digital means of communication ensure that hate speech can be adapted to a diverse public simultaneously even though it is not possible to create a mob in the physical world.

Brown (2018) has attempted to explain why it is plausible that online hate speech has a different quality compared to offline speech. He argued that the default anonymity of the Internet may not be as distinctive as initially assumed, but the instantaneous nature of communication in parts of the Internet can encourage people to spread hate speech easily. The instantaneous nature of the Internet also partly explains why Internet companies are considered to have a special role in regulating online hate speech. When compared to offline speech, online speech has special features such as anonymity, invisibility, engaging with like-minded communities, instantaneousness, and harmfulness of different forms due to the large audience of the Internet (Brown, 2018).

In the case of Türkiye, the literature has shown that the media and politicians commonly use hate speech against ethnic, religious and gender-based groups and this is considered as ‘normal’. As a result of these studies, hate speech in the media has recently been recognized as a critical issue to be discussed in public debate. Nowadays, the issue of hate speech attracts further

attention from politicians, journalists, and academics from all over the country (Arcan, 2013: 44). In Türkiye, with the murder of Hrant Dink, who was killed after an intensive hate speech campaign against him, many academics, journalists, and authors have started to pay more attention to the danger of hate speech and hate crime. By this awareness, the Hrant Dink Foundation was also founded to monitor hate speech in Türkiye by publishing books and articles on the subject (Deveci and Binbuğa Kınık, 2018: 39-40).

Mass media in Türkiye reinforces ethnic conflicts among both Turkish people and other groups such as Kurds, Greeks, Armenians and Alevis etc. Studies found that minorities particularly non-Muslims in Türkiye are represented in mass media (Arcan, 2013; Polat et al. 2018) and in social media (Öztekin, 2015) as disloyal citizens and traitors who are accused of being historical enemies. Especially over the last few years, social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Instagram, and online forums have been effective tools for creating hatred and ethnic divisions by intensifying existing tensions between Turkish people and other ethnic minorities (Özarslan, 2014: 64). For instance, it is determined by academic studies that Kurds also encounter hate speech on social media platforms such as Ekşisözlük (Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2015). After the civil war, Syrian refugees in Türkiye have been facing many difficulties by becoming a target group for intolerance, hostility and hate speech on online platforms (Kavaklı, 2018), such as Youtube (Kurt, 2019) and Twitter (Taşdelen, 2020).

## The Turkish Identity Based on Otherness

In the process of the Early Republic of Türkiye, the idea of establishing a “nation-state” won a victory against the “religious state” and many reforms were made in this direction (Berkes, 2019: 521). Accordingly, the understanding of nationalism put forward by the Kemalists during the establishment process is an anti-dynastic, non-Islamic nationalism that sometimes includes ethnic implications (Yıldız 2015: 210- 211). On the other hand, the intellectual and psychological traces of Ottoman patriotism and the influence of the founding bureaucrats of the Republic led to a certain extent softening discourses towards minorities (Bora, 2015: 83).

In the process of building the national state, Turkish nationalism had undertaken the difficult task of establishing the balance between Western civilization and Turkish culture. Kemalists tried to resolve this tension by striking a balance between the materialism of the West and the spirituality of the East. However, this balance was very difficult to achieve because once a

combination of Western civilization and Eastern culture had been transferred to the field of nationalism, several problems arose at the societal level such as polarization and hate crimes (Kadıoğlu, 1996: 178).

In the Kemalist period, nationalism was one of the basic principles of the new nation-state and one of the six symbolic arrows (principles) of the Republican People's Party. Although Christian minorities were once economically and numerically important group in the period of the Ottoman Empire, they nowadays make up a small part of the population in Türkiye because of the Turkification efforts among the immigrants from the Balkans, Tsarist Russia, and Greece. As a matter of fact, nationalism was seen as the most important tool to homogenize these population groups that were subject to Turkification. There was the creation of a Turkish identity that would replace belonging to the Islamic community (Georgeon, 2006: 20).

From the perspective of this ideology of nationalism, minorities within the national state are seen as "others", "enemy", and "alien" in the social imagination. According to Bora, this is how Turkish nationalism emerged with the disintegration of a multi-ethnic and multi-element empire by perceiving minorities in this way (Bora, 2015: 81). Enemy or the "other" as a concept is liquid, amorphous and contextual in Türkiye. In the late Ottoman era, Christian West and Shi'ite East were the prime others among other groups. In this case, Ottoman Empire defined itself as a non-Christian (Islam) and non-Shi'ite (Sunni) civilization which was also an inheritor of classical (Byzantine) culture (Ortaylı, 2008).

Furthermore, after 1923 the Republic of Türkiye had two distinct others, namely non-Turks (such as Armenians, Kurds, Greeks etc.) and Islamists/Ottomanists. Moreover, non-Turkish identity was also one of the outgroups since Turkish identity was the core element of the nation of the Turkish Republic amongst other identities that were descended from the Ottoman Empire at that time. Islamists/Ottomanists were otherized because it represented the "Ancient Régime" of Turkish history. Also, Islamist/Ottomanist identity contradicted the objective of reaching the level of contemporary civilizations of the one-party regime (Zurcher, 2004: viii-x, 170). Furthermore, some specific identities had been marked as "hard other" such as Jewish during the Second World War. For instance, Wealth Tax Law was considered as a tax burden (levy) which targeted non-Muslim citizens, especially the Jewish bourgeoisie, in Türkiye (Subay, 2020; Subay et al., 2023).

On the other hand, from the mid-60s to the late 90's the content of the others was designated as Kurds, Islamists, Alevi, and Leftists (Bora, 2017: 294,



324, 714, 226; Ahmad, 1993: 12). Hence there were severe violent incidents occurred in this period such as rape and looting against Greek-origin Turkish citizens on 6-7 September 1955 (Kuyucu, 2005; Güven, 2011). Similarly, the Alevi people were brutally mass slaughtered in Kahramanmaraş on 19 December 1978 (Gürel, 2020). After, the 1980 coup d'état, Leftists and Kurdish Leftists was oppressed by using military or legal forces (Kutlay, 2012; Jwaideh, 2006). Lastly, the 1997 military memorandum, in other words, the postmodern coup d'état took place against political Islamists in Turkish political history (Gülalp, 1999: 40). After that, the conservative partner of the coalition and Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan resigned, and the main opposition party re-established the government. In brief, Turkish nationalism and the Turkish state regards themselves as Turkish, Sunni, secular and rightist, and thus oppressed people identified as others, Kurds<sup>1</sup>, Leftists, Islamists and Alevies. Subsequently, Kurdishness became one of the focal points in othering during the 2000s. During this period, lynchings towards Kurdish seasonal workers, students, and football fans peaked (Bora 2018, Gambetti, 2007).

After 2010s, a huge wave of immigration hit Türkiye from the Middle East. First, Syrian refugees have chosen Türkiye after the civil war break out in 2011. Then Iranian, Iraqi and Afghan refugees came to Türkiye with increasing waves. As a result of these migrations from the Middle East, recently refugees have been otherized because they are classified as outsiders (refugees) and stigmatized as radical Islamist and subjected to hate speech and violent acts on social media as well as traditional media and daily life (Onay-Coker, 2019; Gökcalp, 2022).

## Methodology of Research

In this research, Craswell's mixed model will be used. The mixed model suggests that qualitative and quantitative methods must be employed to reach comprehensive and inclusive conclusions. The stages of the methodology are as follows.

1. Data gathering
2. Application of Ngram Tests
3. Applying Content Analysis via Atlas.ti software.
4. Creating Sankey Diagrams and basic tables to show relationships between three-layered coding frames.

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<sup>1</sup> Kurdish leftists established a terror organization called Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in 1979 and after 1980 coup d'état other Kurdish organizations was perished and the remaining members was joined PKK and Kurdish leftist identity united in one roof.



5. Creating sociograms based on “mentions” from the designated hashtag on Twitter.
6. Applying centrality analyses to figure out the important actors.

## Data Gathering

In this study, two hashtags which have the same meaning but represent different words, namely #hudutnamustur and #sınırnামustur will be tackled in the context of hate speech. “Hudut” and “sınır” both mean the border and “namus” has manifold meanings such as honor and chastity in Turkish language. Hence, both #hudutnamustur and #sınırnামustur can be translated as “the border is the chastity (and honor)”. The data retrieved from Twitter for #hudutnamustur and #sınırnামustur hashtags from the very first tweet to December 2021 by using Phyton. For #hudutnamustur 9186 tweets and 2472 mentions are collected to conduct social network analysis. Likewise, 3010 tweets and 1333 mentions are gathered from #sınırnামustur to analyze. After this step, the data will be separated into two categories. First, the “text” part of the tweet will be separated in order to conduct content analysis. Second, the mentions will be stored in an individual document.

## Ngram Tests

Ngram tests are a kind of frequency analysis of words in a text. The type of Ngram test is named after the number of the word group in order to use in frequency analysis. For example, monograms are frequency analyses of one-word sequences of words such as “network” alone, bigrams are frequency analyses of two-word sequences of words such as “social network”, trigrams are frequency analyses of three-word sequences of words such as “social network analysis”, etc. While the “n” value increase, the phrases, ways of expression or ways of describing one particular item in a text will be more visible.

In this case, trigram tests are conducted to analyze the general tendencies of the data. In other words, Trigram tests illustrate the most repeated three-word sequence of the words that have been tweeted during Afghan refugees’ arrival. Based on trigrams tests, the tweets will be coded due to their themes (what is the subject of the tweet?), types (what are the types of subjects to describe the Afghan refugees?) and spheres (which power sphere e.g. political, cultural or economic is used?) by using Atlas.ti software. According to the literature, the coding process will be carried out by two researchers by creating a coding sheet to increase the validity and reliability of the study.

## Content Analysis

In this study, the categories used by the Hrant Dink Foundation<sup>2</sup> will be used to identify the types of hate speech. In Türkiye, Hrant Dink Foundation (2019: 11) categorizes types of hate speech according to the nature of discourse they adopt with under consideration international academic studies and cultural and linguistic differences unique to Türkiye. Accordingly, types of hate speech are (a) exaggeration/ ascription/ distortion, (b) invectives/ defamations/ denigrations, (c) war discourse and (d) symbolization. Firstly, as a type of hate speech, exaggeration/ ascription/ distortion consists of discourses that contain negative references to a community based on a person or an event. Secondly, invectives/ defamations/ denigrations include direct swearing, humiliation, and insulting speech about a community or a group. Thirdly, war discourse consists of discourses involving hostile, warlike statements about a community or a group. Lastly, discourses in which a natural identity element is used as an element of hatred, humiliation and symbolized are coded in the category of symbolization.

**Table 1:** Examples of tweets by types of hate speech

Types of hate speech	Examples of tweets
Exaggeration/ Ascription/ Distortion	You will not be able to Arabize!!! The torch that burned on the Bandırma ferry never went out, it still burns in our hearts #GodBlesstheTurk
Invectives/Defamations/ Denigrations	Pimps have raped our border! They still say it is sexist to say but, I don't know what they say, I say that those who do not have a border have no honour.. period #HudutNamustur
War Discourse	It would be better if I shout this again, "The frontier cannot be abandoned until it is wet with the blood of the citizen" 26 August 1921 Commander-in-Chief Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Either Independence or Death"
Symbolization	We do not want militants in Afghanistan to enter our country disguised as refugees.

After the coding phase is completed the Sankey Diagram and basic tables will be exported from Atlas.ti. The diagrams and tables illustrate the relationships between spheres, types, and themes. Thus, it can be possible to designate the ways that people use to describe Afghannes and so it is shown the form of nationalism to designate us/them conceptualization.

<sup>2</sup> The Hrant Dink Foundation works on hate speech for a long time, particularly in Türkiye. The foundation's categorization is deemed reliable.

## Social Network Analysis

Network analysis is a research technique that enables the examination of the individual as a social entity with its social context (Ağcasulu, 2018: 1916). Network analysis is based on two basic assumptions associated with social behavior. Firstly, all individuals are in social relations with other individuals and secondly, social structures arise from various relations in society (Knoke & Kuklinski, 1982: 9).

The point representing each actor on social network maps is called a node. With social network analysis, it is useful to determine how certain groups cooperate, especially from social media platforms, which are network organizations. It includes the examination of relationships, ties, communication patterns, and behavioral performance within social groups (Ortiz-Arroyo, 2010: 27).

While the nodes in graphics represented by the dots represent the actors of the social network, the relations expressed by the lines between the nodes represent the links between the actors (Ortiz-Arroyo, 2010: 27). While these lines characterize relations such as cooperation, consultation, hatred or trust, the combination of two points with a single line indicates that they are neighboring actors (Abraham, et al., 2010: V; Borgatti, et al., 2013: 12). The maps consist actors and the lines between them are called sociograms (Ağcasulu, 2018: 1920).

In order to designate the key actors in the sociogram, Degree Centrality, Closeness Centrality, Betweenness Centrality and Eigenvector Centrality analysis will be applied.

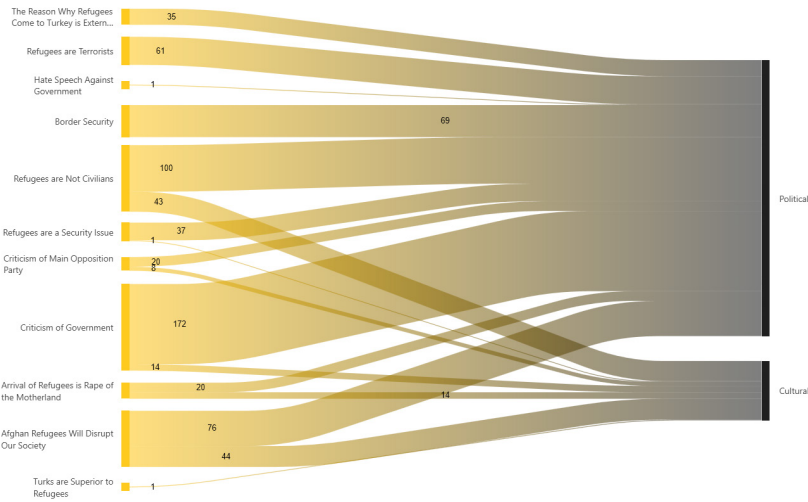
Table 2: The centrality measures and their roles on a sociogram (Gökalp, 2022)

Centrality Analysis	The “Meaning” on a Sociogram
Degree Centrality	Ability to Communicate Quickly with Other Actors
Closeness Centrality	Highest Intermediary Capacity in Information Transfer
Betweenness Centrality	Connecting Actors, Connecting One End of the Map to the Other
Eigenvector Centrality	he Actor Who Has the Most Relationships with Other Actors (The most prestigious actor)

## Research Findings

In this section, the content of the tweets posted in the hashtags #sınırnamustur and #hudutnamustur in the study and the analysis of who are directed these hashtags is explained. In addition, two hashtags are compared within the framework of the results.

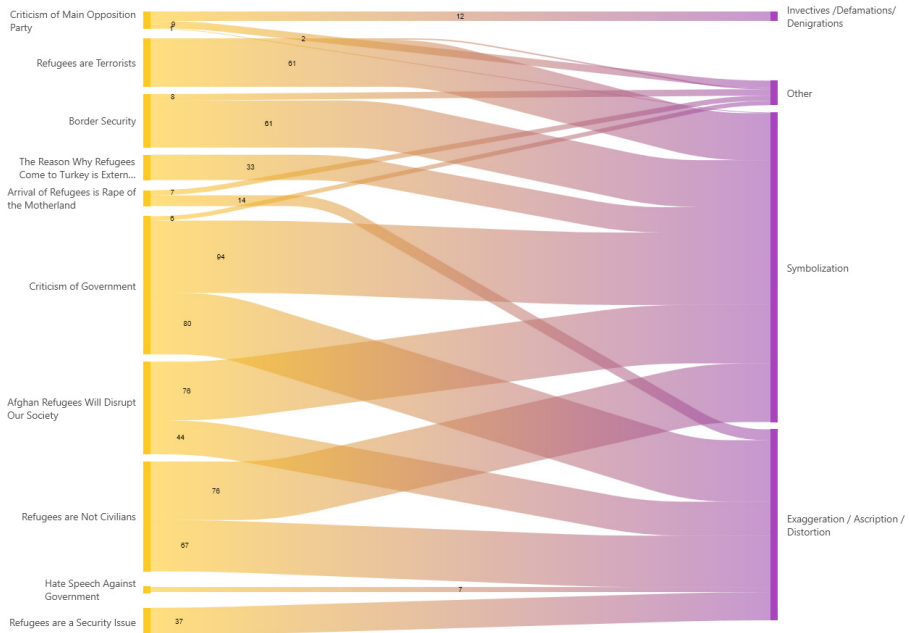
**Graphic 1:** The relationship between themes and spheres for #sınırnamustur



As it is seen in the Graphic 1, indicating the relation between themes and spheres used in #sınırnamustur, most of the tweets are belonged to the political sphere rather than the cultural sphere. Therefore, the language of the discourse about the arrival of Afghans in this hashtag is considered to be political rather than cultural. The fact that the majority of tweets from the political sphere contain “criticism of the government” which strengthens the claim that this hashtag is used to criticize the government’s policies. The majority of tweets in this hashtag are from the political sphere, the themes of tweets in the political sphere are mostly related to security issues as “refugees are not civilians”, “refugees are terrorists”, “border security”, “refugees are a security issue”, and “the reason why refugees come to Türkiye is external forces”. Besides, most of the themes of the cultural sphere developed within the framework of the claim that “Afghan refugees disrupt the society” and “refugees are not from the civilian population”. Themes where the political sphere and the cultural sphere overlap are the belief that “Afghan refugees will disrupt the society”, “the criticism of the government”, and “arrival of refugees is a rape of the motherland”. The least used themes in this hashtag are “Turks are

superior to refugees” in the cultural sphere and “hate speech against government” in the political sphere.

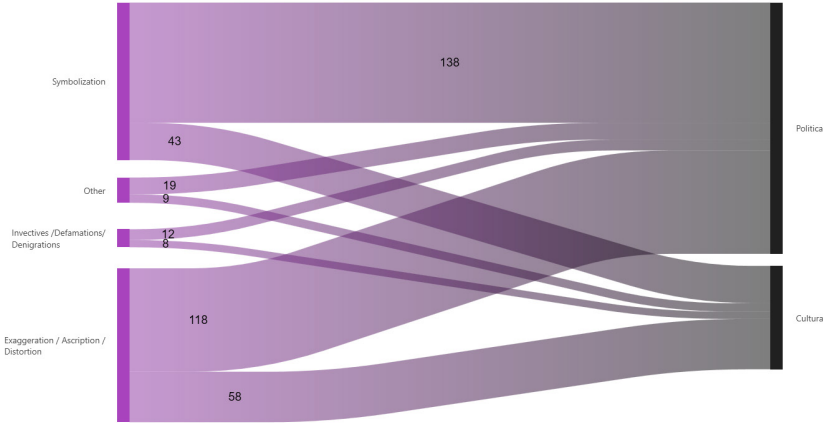
Graphic 2: The relationship between themes and hate speech types for #sınıramustur



Accordingly, in Graphic 2, which shows the relationship between themes and types of hate speech for #sınıramustur, in the context of hate speech types, symbolization is used the most, while tweets that do not contain hate speech are coded the least. Tweets that are coded as “criticisms against the government” are considered as the symbolization of hate speech, while “criticisms against the main opposition party” mostly contain invectives. In the tweets posted in this hashtag, the people who enter the border are considered as a security issue since they are Afghans and refugees, and the objection to their arrival is expressed by using hate speech in the context of symbolization. While people who cross the border freely have been symbolized by being terrorists, not being civilians, having the potential to disrupt society, being a pawns of external forces, and also many people who tweeted in this hashtag criticize the government for allowing these crossings. Even though the migration of Afghan people to Türkiye is comprehended by Turkish people as a rape of the motherland and this detection, that Turkish people have, is expressed with the usage of exaggeration. Moreover, these refugees are also blamed for not being civilians and disrupting society with the idea of

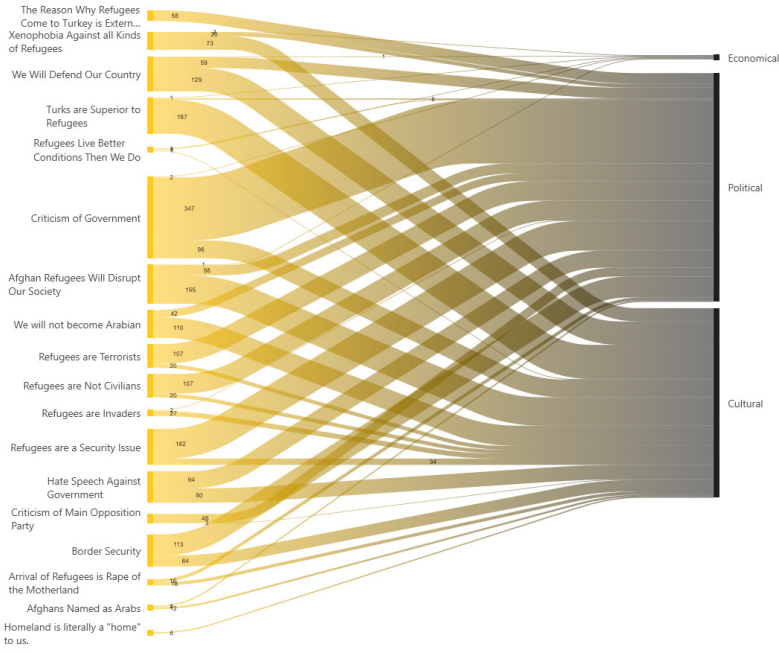
having the possibility of a security issue for Türkiye subsequently and all these themes that are coded are expressed also by exaggeration itself.

**Graphic 3:** The relationship between types of hate speech and spheres for #sınınamustur



In accordance with Graphic 3, examining the relationship between types of hate speech and spheres, in this hashtag, while the concerns about the arrival of Afghans are expressed in the political and cultural sphere, the economic sphere is not included. In this hashtag, tweets from the political sphere, compared to the cultural sphere constitute the majority, while these tweets are used as hate speech by symbolizing and exaggerating. Besides, the fact that insulting tweets are less than other types of hate speech can be claimed to indicate a political “opposition” aim for the people who are against the refugee policy of the government in this case. In other words, this hashtag is used by those who oppose the arrival of Afghan refugees with a nationalist “reflex” in the political and cultural sphere.

Graphic 4: The relationship between themes and spheres for #hudutnamustur

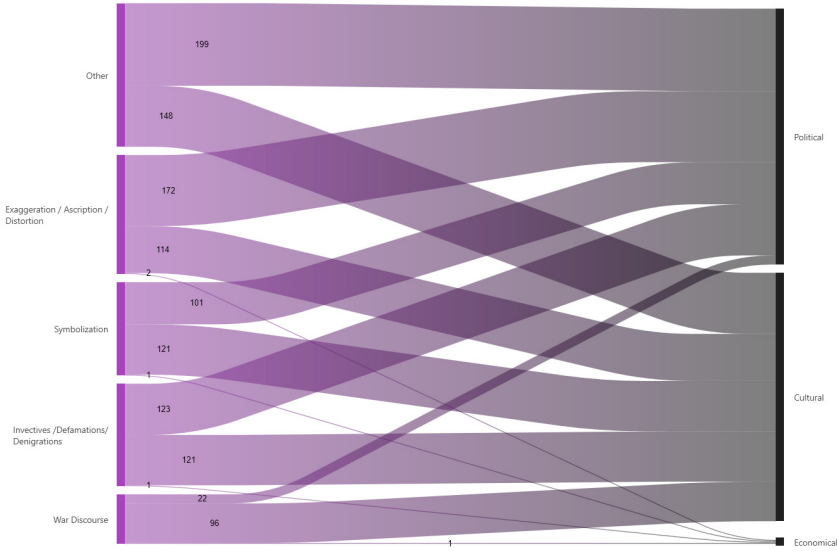


Graphic 4 indicates the relationships between themes and spheres for #hudutnamustur which is a different hashtag from #sınırımamustur but it is also a hashtag where tweets about Afghan refugees are the subject. The new adding themes that are different from the other hashtag are “xenophobia against all kinds of refugees”, “we will defend our country”, “refugees live in better conditions than we do”, “we will not become Arabian”, “refugees are invaders”, “afghan named Arabs” and “homeland is literally a “home” to us”. In this hashtag, it is seen that cultural elements have increased and turned into hate speech within new themes and identity-based hate speech has begun to strengthen. At the same time, the more frequent processing of the theme that “Turks are superior to others” highlights the identity-based perspective. Tweets that describe Afghans as Arabs are also observed. In this context, it has been stated that anti-Afghan discourses are built on the basis of Arab hostility and defenses are made against the danger of Arabization. Besides in the theme “we will defend our country”, it is clearly stated that they will defend against the refugees as “invaders”, which also explains the reason why war discourse in this hashtag is visible. In this context, tweets that involve not only Afghans but also all refugees as invaders, also explain the existence of a theme named as “xenophobia against all kinds of refugees” and that the



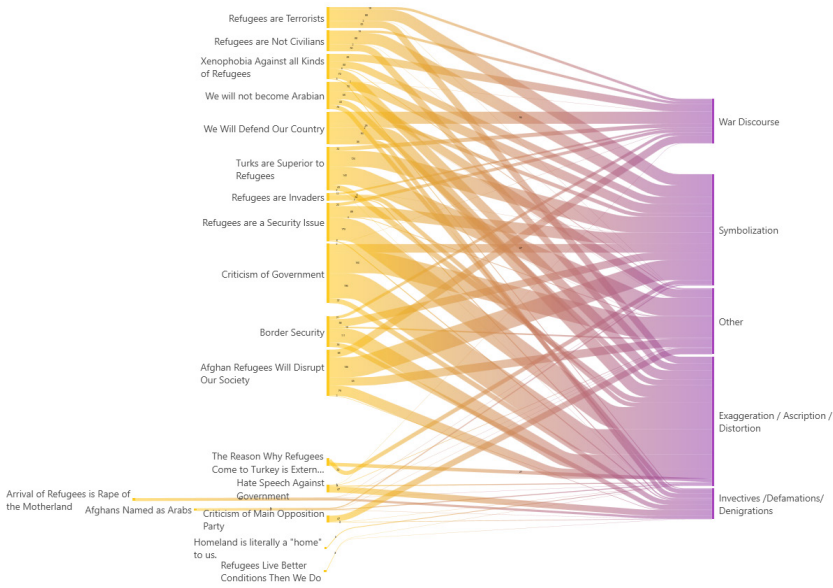
homeland should be protected against them draw attention. Therefore, in this hashtag, different from the other one, it can be stated that the description of Afghans as Arabs, having hospitality against Arabs and the fear of becoming Arabian are themes including each other.

**Graphic 5:** The relationship between types of hate speech and spheres for #hudutnamustur



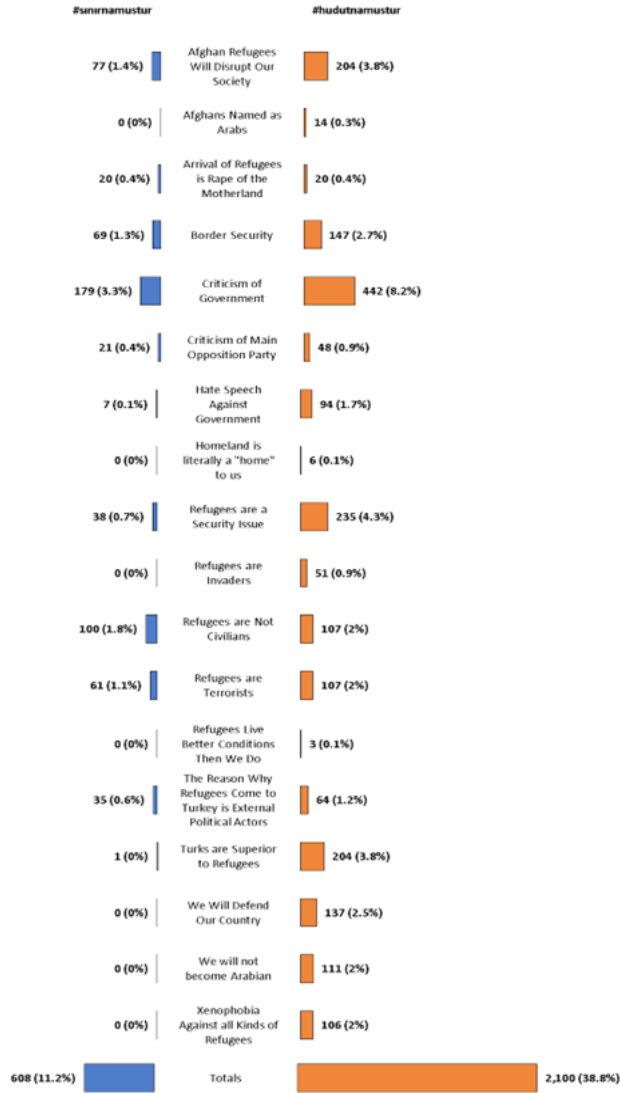
As it is seen in Graphic 5, in addition to culture and politics, the economy has also been added to the spheres where tweets are posted in this hashtag which is different from the #sınırnamustur. Tweets from the cultural sphere and tweets from the political sphere are close to each other in terms of quantity. In addition, when the tweets are examined, it is seen that war discourse is added to the types of hate speech which also differs from the other hashtags examined. Tweets containing hate speech on this hashtag are mostly insulting and exaggerating. Tweets have a balanced distribution in the context of hate speech types, except for war discourse. Tweets from the political sphere are mostly exaggerated/distorted and insulted/insulted in the case of hate speech types. Tweets from the cultural sphere appear as symbolization and insult according to the types of hate speech. While the war discourse is mostly found in tweets from the cultural sphere, the rate of containing war discourse in tweets from the political sphere is much lower. Although almost 1 out of 5 tweets do not contain hate speech, a form of criticism, especially preferred by the political sphere has been adopted.

Graphic 6: The relationship between themes and types of hate speech for #hudutnamustur



According to this Graphic 6 which shows the relationship between themes and types of hate speech, symbolization and exaggeration occupy a large place in the distribution of themes in this hashtag. When it comes to symbolization, the claim that the Turks are superior to the Afghan refugees and the claim that their arrival will disrupt this “superior” society is in the first place in terms of quantity of tweets. While exaggeration and distortion are observed in all themes, it is determined that the theme that society will deteriorate with the arrival of refugees is mostly expressed with exaggeration and distortion. While there is no criticism of the government in symbolization, the most criticism of government occurs in exaggeration/distortion. Therefore, it is thought that the criticism of power is carried out mostly through exaggeration/distortion. Invectives, one of the types of hate speech, are mostly seen in the themes of “we will not become Arabian”, “refugees are invaders”, “criticism of government”, “we will defend our country”, “border security”, and “hate speech against government”. When it comes to war discourse, the most used themes are determined as “we will defend our country”, “xenophobia against all kinds of refugees”, “Afghan refugees will disrupt our society”, “Turks are superior to refugees”, and “refugees are terrorists”. It is seen that tweets that do not contain hate speech and are coded as other are generally considered as criticism of the government and the main opposition party.

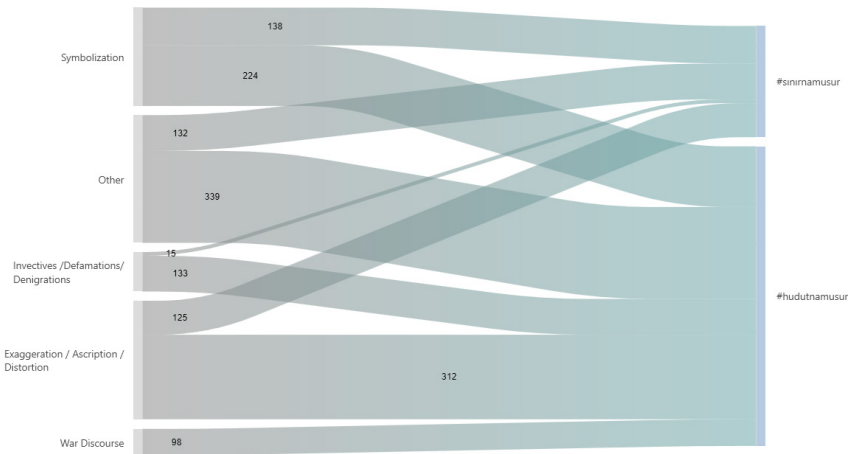
Table 3: The comparison between themes of #sınırnamustur and #hudutnamustur



When the themes of the tweets posted under the hashtags #sınırnamustur and #hudutnamustur are compared in the table, first of all, it is seen that the themes examined in the hashtag #hudutnamustur have quantitatively more themes than #sınırnamustur. The new adding themes in #hudutnamustur are “xenophobia against all kinds of refugees”, “we will defend our country”, “refugees live in better conditions than we do”, “we will not become

Arabian”, “refugees are invaders”, “Afghan named Arabs and “homeland is literally a “home” to us”. In this hashtag, it is seen that cultural elements have increased and turned into hate speech within new themes and identity-based hate speech has begun to strengthen. It can be claimed that people tweeting with the hashtag #sınırnামustur position themselves politically and culturally differently from those tweeting with the hashtag #hudutnamustur. Besides, only 1 tweet of #sınırnামustur is coded as “Turks are superior to refugees”, it is also seen 204 times in the hashtag #hudutnamustur. This indicates that the hashtag #hudutnamustur is more marginalized over identity superiority. It is revealed that the most used theme in both hashtags is “criticism government”, therefore people used these two hashtags to criticize the refugee policy of the government.

**Graphic 7:** The comparison between #hudutnamustur & #sınırnামustur in accordance with types of hate speech

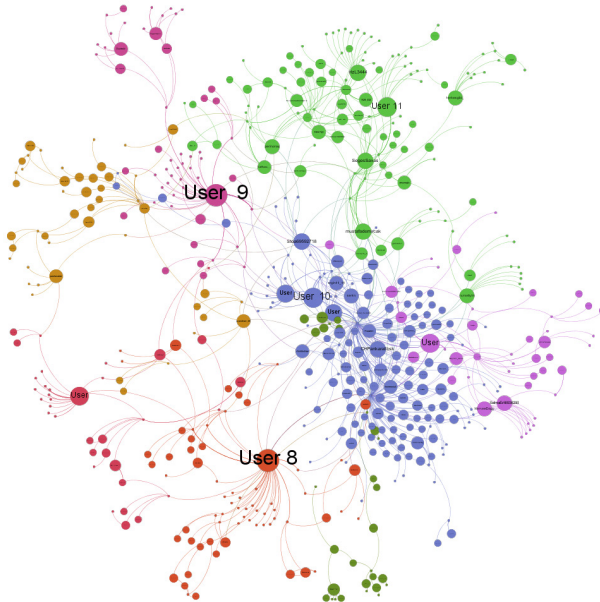


Graphic 7 puts forward the comparison between two hashtags that are analyzed in the study in respect of types of hate speech. In our study while the most used hate speech type in #sınırnামustur is symbolization, in other hashtag, #hudutnamustur, the most used type is other, which means that people express their opinions about the issue without using any type of hate speeches. Furthermore, one of the crucial differences between the two hashtags in respect of types of hate speech is that in #sınırnামustur the usage of war discourse is not seen. Considering the existence of security-related themes in the themes used in the #hudutnamustur hashtag, the emergence of the war discourse is meaningful.

**Table 4:** The comparison between #hudutnamustur & #sınırnamustur in terms of spheres

	#sınırnamustur		#hudutnamustur	
	Absolute	Column-relative	Absolute	Column-relative
Cultural	67	21.61%	434	43.84%
Economical	0	0.00%	2	0.20%
Political	243	78.39%	554	55.96%
Totals	310	100.00%	990	100.00%

In accordance with Table 4 indicating the co-occurrence of #sınırnamustur and #hudutnamustur in terms of spheres, it is seen that the most coded hashtag is #hudutnamustur in the analysis. One of the differences between the two hashtags is that #sınırnamustur is used more for political purposes with a rate of 78.39%, this rate is lower in #hudutnamustur. Instead, the cultural sphere of tweets in #hudutnamustur, with a rate of 43.84%, is more than the cultural sphere of tweets posted in #sınırnamustur. It supports the idea that tweets under the hashtag #hudutnamustur are more cultural and identity oriented. In addition, 0.2% of tweets in the economic sphere are coded in the #hudutnamustur hashtag, which is also different from the #sınırnamustur.

**Graphic 8:** Social Network Analysis of #sınırnamustur

According to the sociogram generated based on mentions in the hashtag #sınırnamustur, the highest degree centrality value is 49 which is acquired by User 8. In this case, User 8 is designated as the most quickly communicating with other actors. Thus, User 8 is the leader of the network due to its high ability to access other actors. The Twitter account of User 8 consists of 593 followers and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's photos as profile pictures and background pictures. On the other hand, User 8's tweets also display Turkish nationalism associated with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk which resembles User 1, the leader of the #hudutnamustur hashtag. The most important discrepancy between User 1 and User 8 is their involvement in politics. According to the bio section of User 8, he/she is the former vice-president of the district administration of CHP in Buca district in İzmir. The second highest value actor is User 9 who has 3.540 followers. Moreover, his/her Twitter account has the same picture as his/her profile photo and background photo which contains a sketch of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

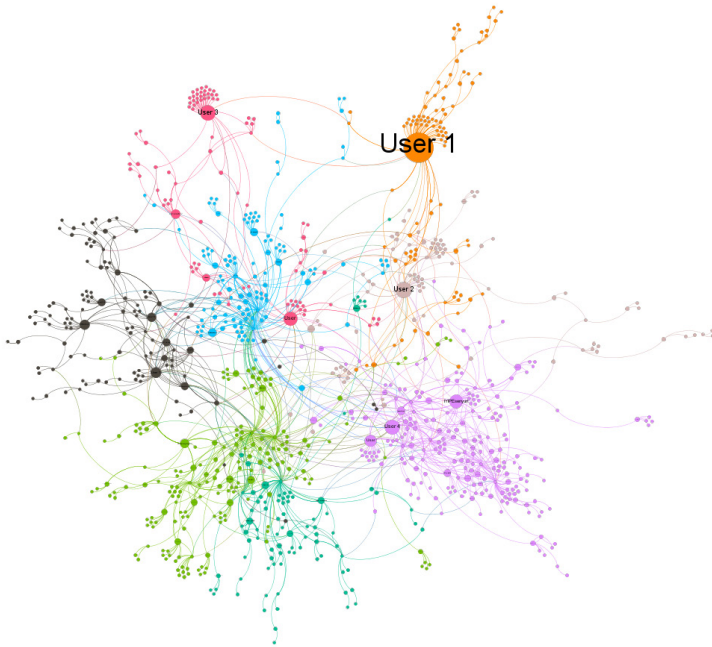
In the case of the betweenness centrality measures, the analysis reveals that @suleymansoylu account has the highest value of betweenness centrality. In other words, the official account of the Minister of the Interior, Süleyman Soylu is designated as the actor with who highest capacity connecting one end of the map to the other. However, his position as a bridge is not a result of his actions on Twitter. On the contrary, he became a bridge because he mentioned different actors in tweets under the #sınırnamustur hashtag. It means different components of the network (shown with a different colour) came to life just by mentioning Süleyman Soylu in their tweets. In this case, the hate speech has been combined with a policy request and criticism of the government. This assertion can be corroborated by the identity of the second-highest value of betweenness centrality, namely the official Twitter account of the Ministry of the Interior. Hence, the network of #sınırnamustur is formed around the Minister of Interior Süleyman Soylu and the official account of the Ministry of Interior. This situation overlaps with the finding of content analysis that demonstrated political tweets occupy a serious percentage of all tweets in #sınırnamustur.

Furthermore, the third and fourth users that are designated as a result of the betweenness centrality measure are also political figures. The third-highest actor is @isik\_ozkefeli (Işık Özkefeli) who is Ataturkist Thought Association Samsun Branch President and former CHP 27th Term Samsun Province Deputy Candidate. Likewise, the fourth user is Canan Kaftancıoğlu who is İstanbul CHP provincial head. As can be seen, the betweenness centrality measure reflects the network's political nature in parallel with the content analysis.

According to closeness centrality analysis, 411 of the actors scored 1 while 586 of the actors scored lower than 1. That means %41,22 of the actors are manipulators which is the most successful to transmit hate speech. On the other hand, %37,43 of the actors have the same role in the #hudutnamustur hashtag. In conclusion, the actors of the #sınırnamustur hashtag are more eager to fasten hate speech transmission which is compatible with its relation to the main oppositional party.

Lastly, the most prestigious actors in the network are as follows, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (@kilocdaroglu) who is the chairman of CHP, the official Twitter account of CHP (@herkesicinCHP), the Interior Minister of Türkiye Süleyman Soylu and official account of Zafer Partisi (Victory Party) which is famous for anti-refugee discourse they embrace.

Graphic 9: Social Network Analysis of #hudutnamustur



According to the sociogram generated based on mentions in the hashtag #hudutnamustur, the highest degree centrality value is 86 which is acquired by User 1. In this case, User 1 is considered as most quickly communicating with other actors. Thus, User 1 is the leader of the network due to its high ability to access other actors. The Twitter account of User 1 consists of his/



her personal photos as profile photos and background photos. On the other hand, User 1's tweets display Turkish nationalism ideologically associated with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who is the founder of the Turkish Republic and represents a more secular and modern Turkish identity. The second highest value actor is the Twitter account of the IYI Party Istanbul provincial organization. The profile photo of the account is a picture that contains the Turkish flag, the expression of *Hudut Namustur* and the party emblem. The bio part of the account contains party propaganda and slogans.

In the case of the betweenness centrality measures, the analysis reveals that User 5 has the highest value of betweenness centrality. In other words, User 5 is designated as the actor with who highest capacity connecting one end of the map to the other. According to the tweeter account of User 5 who has 23.5 thousand followers, his/her identity was shaped by secular nationalism associated with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. While the profile photo is a personal picture, the background photo and bio section contain Kemalist content. User 6 who is the second high betweenness centrality measure also represents similar features to User 5. The Twitter account of User 6 contains a background photo with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's picture and the Turkish flag. Also, the bio section contains praise for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The username of User 6 who has 10.7 thousand followers has T.C (short for Türkiye Cumhuriyeti- Turkish Republic) expression along with a Turkish flag.

With respect to closeness centrality analysis which designates the actors who have the highest intermediary capacity in information transfer, reveals that 857 of the actors scored 1, and 1432 of the actors scored lower than 1. That means 37.44% of the network has perfect conductivity to convey hate speech against Afghan refugees. The rest which is 62.56% of the network has semi-conductivity. This situation indicates that %62.56 of the actors tweeted their opinions but did not seek to transmit them to other actors. In other words, actors shared their discomfort with Afghan refugees but did not deliberately create a violent group.

Furthermore, according to the eigenvector centrality measure which is used to designate the most prestigious actors of the network, @MedyaEge is the most prestigious actor. The user is a Twitter profile of a media agency. The second highest eigenvector centrality value actor of the network is @kilicdaroglu (Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu) who is the president of CHP (RPP-Republican People's Party). The official account of CHP follows Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's account. CHP is also the main opposition party in Turkish politics and its founder is Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Lastly, Buğra Kavuncu (@SBugraKavuncu) who is

the president of the province administration of IYI Party has the fourth-highest degree of eigenvector centrality.

## Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, the arrival of Afghan immigrants to Türkiye is tackled in the context of its reflections on Twitter. As a result of this mobility, people have risen their reactions in two different hashtags on Twitter. As a result of the analysis, it has been determined that these two hashtags serve two different purposes by manifesting themselves in the answers to research questions.

Firstly, the analysis reveals that the Q1 can be addressed by underlying the usage of both hashtags. In this context, #sınınamustur is a production of a project to create an oppositional agenda against AK Party which is a governing party in Türkiye. The content analysis, as well as social network analysis, indicates the endeavors in order to create a political criticism sphere by CHP which is the main opposition party in Türkiye since 2002. Besides, the answer to Q2 also has supportive arguments for the Q1's answer. The content analysis of #sınınamustur denotes that most of the tweets have political components while #hudutnamustur mostly consists of cultural tweets. Moreover, the actors who contributed to the #sınınamustur hashtag mostly have an organic connection with CHP or IYI Party while #hudutnamustur poses a genuine reaction of ordinary people to Afghan refugees' arrival. Hence #sınınamustur is designated as a political project that was promoted by secular, Kemalist political actors while #hudutnamustur is a more vulgar reflex to Afghan refugees. This conclusion is coherent with the different usage of both hashtags.

In the case of Q2A, the most used hate speech types are symbolization and exaggeration for #sınınamustur and #hudutnamustur together. Nevertheless, in #hudutnamustur, war discourse as a type of hate speech was detected, unlike #sınınamustur. Additionally, the hate speech content that is classified as "other" and "invectives" has more value in #sınınamustur compared with #hudutnamustur; on the other hand, symbolization and exaggeration are used more often in the #sınınamustur hashtag. Also, invectives are used more in the #hudutnamustur hashtag. In these circumstances, it could be asserted that the #sınınamustur hashtag is focusing on Afghan refugees as a symbol, and the symbolization process is carried out by employing exaggeration as a tool. Moreover, the #hudutnamustur hashtag contains exaggeration and invectives as a tool to utter cultural superiority over the Afghan refugees.

The analysis reveals that Q2B has two-faced answers like the mythological creature Janus. First of all, in the case of #sınınamustur, Afghan refugees

are defined in the frame of “security”. Afghan refugees who fled from the Taliban regime are securitized because, they are mostly identified as terrorists, trained killers by serving the disruption of society. This means for the prosumers of the #sınırnamustur hashtag the image of Afghan refugees representing a security issue, hence pro-refugee discourses are endangering the country’s security. Furthermore, according to the #hudutnamustur hashtag, Afghan refugees are designated as the ones who are inferior compared to the Turks, additionally, there is an anti-Arab discourse although Afghan refugees are not Arab. In this case, the Afghan identity and being a part of the Middle East became an amalgam in peoples’ minds. In order to humiliate the Afghans, the prosumers of the hashtag use another “inferior” otherness on a cultural basis namely Arabness. In addition to this, the reflections of the same securitization process with the other hashtag can be seen in #hudutnamustur. Nevertheless, in the first one, securitization is used as a tool to create political opposition while in the second one demonstrates cultural superiority. In short, Afghan identity is securitized with regard to conducting a political opposition and thus the main emphasis is on their potential security risk, while in the #hudutnamustur hashtag, the main emphasis is the superiority of Turks because Afghan refugees are backward and could disrupt the societal order.

On the other hand, Q2C demands the analysis of power spheres for both hashtags. Accordingly, for the #sınırnamustur hashtag, most of the tweets are classified as political while cultural tweets are relatively fewer and there are no tweets that can be coded as economical. Furthermore, in #sınırnamustur hashtag, most of the tweets are political while cultural tweets cover more places than #hudutnamustur. Also, in this hashtag, there are economic tweets even though there are quite a smaller number of them. Besides, the “criticism of government” theme is feeding the political sphere. Thus, it could be asserted that this theme can be neglected in order to reveal political attitudes against Afghan refugees.

Finally, Q2D seeks the roles of the main actors in both hashtags. The results of the social network analysis confirm the content analysis by displaying that the leading accounts of #sınırnamustur are mostly politicians, not just ordinary citizens. Accordingly, the sociograms in the study #hudutnamustur are mostly led by ordinary citizens. Except for the Twitter account of Süleyman Soylu, other active accounts in both hashtags are belonging to the politicians from opposition parties, CHP and İYİ Party. Hence, the irregular migration of Afghan refugees is an important political agenda for opposition parties in Türkiye.

In any case, the #sınınamustur hashtag is a project to create a political counter-digital sphere on Twitter using the arrival of Afghan refugees. Moreover, the #sınınamustur hashtag is more organic and formed with bottom-up efforts. Thus, its content is consisting of more cultural tweets as well as themes that remark on Turkish superiority over the “others”. Also, Turkish identity building up at the Republican Period of Türkiye has features of being secular, anti-dynastic, and non-Islamic. The arrival of Afghan people who are considered an Islamic community has led to the reaction of people who define themselves as Kemalist and nationalist.

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### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank to Mert Aksoy for assisting us to obtain the data from Twitter for hashtags used in our research.