

Turkish Media Framings of the NATO-Led Intervention in Libya

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Abstract

There is a general consensus among the scholars that foreign policy making in Turkey is traditionally an elite-driven process, which is largely immune to public opinion influences. In this context, the role of Turkish media in foreign policy processes conforms to the elitist model, which restricts it to transmitting information from political elites to the masses, rather than to the pluralist model, which cites a wide-array of media impact on the processes of foreign policy. This study questions the validity of such contentions by analyzing the arguments of foreign policy columnists in a remarkable case; Libya in 2011. Turkish foreign policy dramatically shifted during the 2011 crisis in Libya, particularly on the question of military intervention against Qaddafi forces. The AKP (Justice and Development Party) government first resolutely opposed to the NATO-led military intervention in Libya, but a short while after stepped back. Such dramatic change presents an opportunity to analyze whether the media maintains an independent position from the government, which is necessary but not sufficient condition for media impact on decision-makers. In this context, the article presents a content analysis of selected foreign policy columns within the Turkish media regarding the AKP government's Libya policy before and after the NATO intervention in 2011. The article aims to contribute to our understanding of the nature of media's role in Turkish foreign policy and addresses the following question: Is the effect of media limited to transmitting information from policy-makers to the masses, or is it an active effort to influence foreign policy decision-makers?

Keywords: Turkish foreign policy, Libya crisis, media, elitist model, pluralist model

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Türkiye’de, NATO’nun Libya’ya Müdahalesinin Medyada İşlenişi

Özet

Akademik çevrelerde, Türkiye’de dış politika yapımının geleneksel olarak kamuoyu etkilerinden geniş ölçüde muaf seçkin-merkezli bir süreç olduğuna dair bir fikir birliği mevcuttur. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye’de medyanın dış politika süreçlerinde oynadığı rol, medyanın çeşitli etkileri olduğunu ifade eden çoğulcu modelden ziyade, bu rolü, siyasi seçkinlerden kitlelere bilgi aktarımına sınırlayan seçkinci modele uymaktadır. Bu çalışma, dış politika yazarlarının dikkat çekici bir vaka olan 2011 Libya krizi konusundaki savlarını inceleyerek sözkonusu kanaatin geçerliliğini sorgulamaktadır. Türk dış politikası Libya’daki 2011 krizi esnasında, özellikle Qaddafi güçlerine karşı NATO müdahalesinde yeralma konusunda kendisiyle çelişen bir görünüm arz etmekteydi. AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) hükümeti, NATO’nun Libya’ya askeri müdahalesine önce kararlı bir şekilde karşı çıkıp kısa bir süre sonra geri adım attı. Bu keskin değişim, medyanın dış politika konusunda hükümetten bağımsız bir pozisyona sahip olup olmadığı konusunu inceleme fırsatı sunmaktadır. Bağımsız pozisyon medyanın karar-alıcıları etkileyebilmesi için gerekli ancak yeterli olmayan bir koşuldur. Bu bağlamda, makale NATO’nun 2011 müdahalesi öncesi ve sonrasında yayınlanan ve AKP hükümetinin Libya politikasını konu edinen dış politika köşeyazılarının içerik analizini sunmaktadır. Makale medyanın Türk dış politikasındaki rolünün doğasını anlama çabalarına katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır ve şu soruya yanıt aramaktadır: Medyanın etkisi politika-yapıcılardan kitlelere bilgi aktarımı ile mi sınırlıdır, yoksa dış politika karar alıcılarını etkileme yönünde etkin bir çaba mıdır?

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk dış politikası, Libya krizi, medya, seçkinci model ve çoğulcu model

كيفية تناول موضوع تدخل الناتو في ليبيا في وسائل الإعلام التركية ايشيك كورلايان

الملخص :

يوجد ثمة اتفاق في وجهات النظر لدى الأوساط الأكاديمية التركية على أن هيكل السياسة الخارجية التركية هو عملية مركزية- نخبوية بعيدة بشكل كبير عن التأثيرات التقليدية للرأي العام وفي هذا الإطار فإن الدور الذي يلعبه الإعلام التركي في عمليات السياسة الخارجية التركية، هو اتباع للنموذج النخبوي الذي ينحصر في نقل المعلومات من النخبة السياسية الى عامة الناس، أكثر من اتباعه للنموذج الشمولي الذي يعبر عن التأثيرات المختلفة للإعلام وتقوم هذه الدراسة بمناقشة مصداقية الرأي المذكور وذلك عن طريق تحليل وجهات نظر الكتاب المتخصصين في السياسة الخارجية حول موضوع مثير للإنتباه وهو الأزمة الليبية في عام ٢٠١١. قدمت السياسة الخارجية التركية صورة للتناقض مع النفس خلال الأزمة التي عاشتها ليبيا في عام ٢٠١١ ، وبالاخص فيما يتعلق باشتراك تركيا مع قوات حلف الناتو التي تدخلت ضد قوات القذافي. ففي البداية اعترضت حكومة حزب العدالة والتنمية بشكل حازم وجاد على التدخل العسكري لحلف الناتو في ليبيا، ولكنها تراجع عن هذا الموقف بعد فترة قصيرة. إن هذا التغير الحاد يتيح الفرصة لمناقشة قضية كون الإعلام صاحب موقف مستقل عن الحكومة، في مجال السياسة الخارجية أم لا. إن الموقف المستقل للإعلام شرط ضروري لإمكان أحداث أي تأثير على صانعي القرار، غير أنه غير كاف أيضا في هذا المجال. وفي هذا الإطار، فإن هذا المقال يعرض تحليلا لمحتويات المقالات المحررة من قبل محرري السياسة الخارجية في الصحف في الفترة السابقة لتدخل حلف الناتو في ليبيا عام ٢٠١١ والتالية له والتي كان موضوعها سياسة حكومة حزب العدالة والتنمية حول ليبيا. ويهدف المقال الى المساهمة في فهم طبيعة دور الإعلام في السياسة الخارجية التركية، اضافة الى محاولة الاجابة على هذا السؤال : هل يقتصر تأثير الإعلام على نقل المعلومات من صانعي السياسة الى الجماهير، أم انه جهد فاعل في مجال التأثير على صانعي القرار في السياسة الخارجية؟

كلمات مفتاحية : السياسة الخارجية التركية، الازمة الليبية، الإعلام، الموديل الانتقائي والموديل التعددي.

Introduction

Turkish foreign policy making has traditionally been an elite-driven process, largely immune to the influences of domestic actors and factors. Consequently, their impact on foreign policy decision-makers has remained considerably under-researched, although more recently, domestic factors, such as public opinion and civil societal organizations, have been more widely studied in the context of Turkey's integration with the European Union. Nonetheless, the impact of domestic actors in other areas of foreign policy is still rarely studied, and the role played by the Turkish media in foreign policy has been neglected as well.

This article aims to contribute to our understanding of the role played by the media in the foreign policy-making process in Turkey by analyzing media framings regarding policy change during the popular unrest in Libya in 2011. More specifically, the article aims to analyze foreign policy columns on the issue of NATO-led military intervention against Qaddafi to determine the model that the Turkish media adhere to, whether elitist or pluralist. On the basis of the Libya case, this article argues that Turkish news media do not display a monolithic configuration on foreign policy issues, and that ideological differences might explain the dividing lines. That is, while some foreign policy columnists play a more limited role, such as transmitting information from government officials to the masses, others actively try to influence foreign policy decision makers.

The article is divided into four parts. The first discusses how realist and liberal theories of international relations perceive the media's role in the foreign policy decision-making process. The second explains the AKP government's Libya policy within a broader foreign policy framework to demonstrate the challenges it faced in shifting its policy from a Qaddafi-friendly stance to a hostile one after the outbreak of popular protests. Such a shift in the government's position was also observed regarding the NATO-led military operation in favor of Qaddafi's opponents. The third part considers the arguments presented in the Turkish media regarding the possibility of a NATO-led intervention in Libya and classifies them in line with elitist and pluralist models. This part also addresses the question of whether there was a change in media framings following the shift in the Turkish government's position to support NATO intervention in Libya. The last section presents the findings and suggestions for further research.

The Media's Role in the Foreign Policy Decision-making Process

The literature on political communication focuses on the question of how media pressure on the government influences its foreign policy. Research shows that the media plays a crucial role in democratic societies as a mediating actor between the masses and the decision-making elites. The media has various functions in a democracy which help the public to determine their policy preferences, both domestically and internationally. Scholarly attention to the media's influence in the foreign policy decision-making process has been increasing since 1990, when CNN emerged as an influential actor in international politics. This attention has gained momentum with the current uprisings in the Arab Spring. Among the various media instruments, newspapers are still seen as playing a significant role, despite the rise of new media forms.

There are two fundamentally different perspectives on the significance of the media for understanding foreign policy processes: the elite model and the pluralist model. The elite model argues that the media depend on political elites for information on foreign policy issues, and therefore have little independent influence. The media are therefore viewed as being largely subservient to foreign policy makers, tending to perceive international politics "through the cultural and political prisms of their respective political and social elites".¹ There are various studies that demonstrate how the media can function as a sophisticated tool for conflict resolution in the hands of officials.² In this view, because of the close relationship between journalists and official sources, the media functions solely as a communicator of policy makers' views, with journalists deferring to official sources out of an awareness of the risks of offending powerful economic and political interests.³

In contrast to the elite model, the pluralist model views the media as a constraining factor for decision-makers, emphasizing that the

- 1 Piers Robinson, "Theorizing the Influence of Media on World Politics: Models of Media Influence on Foreign Policy", *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 2001, p. 525.
- 2 Eytan Gilboa, "Media-Broker Diplomacy: When Journalists Became Mediators", *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2005, pp. 99-120.
- 3 Piers Robinson, "The Role of Media and Public Opinion" in Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield and Tim Dunne (eds.), *Foreign Policy: Themes, Actors, Cases*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 138, 143.

media can, like other domestic actors, remain independent from political influence. Scholarly work suggests various media effects, ranging from limiting the policy alternatives available to decision-makers, to stronger influences, such as forcing a certain policy on political leaders.⁴ Overall, this perspective argues that the media performs two main functions in the foreign policy decision-making process. First, they play a role in educating and informing the public by providing objective information and facilitating debate. Secondly, they hold decision-makers accountable by scrutinizing their decisions and representing public opinion.⁵

Regarding the media's first function, there are three mechanisms through which they shape public opinion, namely agenda setting, priming and framing. These three mechanisms refer to different abilities of the media. Agenda setting mechanism is the ability of media to direct people's attention on certain issues by focusing on some issues rather than others. While, priming means media's ability 'to prepare and direct publics to the issues by which they should judge their leaders', and 'framing refers to the way solely in which the actual presentation of news information influences how people perceive specific issues'.⁶ Firstly, studies focusing on agenda setting search for correlations between the amount of coverage of a foreign policy event and the importance that public opinion attributes to that event. Secondly, studies that focus on priming explore news content, assuming that publics use specific issues as benchmarks to evaluate the foreign policy performance of their governments. Finally, the concept of framing analysis is used to understand how foreign policy issues are characterized in the media, and how such characterizations influence public opinion.⁷ In all such studies, the main aim is to analyze the media's indirect influence on decision makers via public opinion. That is, the literature assumes a triangular relationship between media coverage, public opinion and policy making.⁸ The following broad issues are addressed: How do certain international political issues become a priority for the public? How are citizens primed to judge the ability of political leaders to handle

4 Gilboa, "Media-Broker Diplomacy: When Journalists Became Mediators", p. 37.

5 Robinson, "The Role of Media and Public Opinion", pp. 138-142.

6 Ibid, p. 145.

7 Dietram A. Scheufele and David Tewksbury, "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models", *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 57, 2007, p. 11.

8 Gilboa, "Media-Broker Diplomacy: When Journalists Became Mediators", p.37; John E. Richardson, *Analyzing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

international crises? Is framing more event-oriented, focusing specifically on military matters (e.g. military technology, the progress of a war), or thematic, dealing with broader diplomatic issues and matters related to the rationale and justification for a war?

The media's direct influence on decision-makers is considerably under-researched. However, as recognized by various scholars, this line of research faces a major obstacle, namely the difficulty of accurately measuring media influence. Specifically, "researchers cannot directly observe influence occurring within the minds of policy makers and the multitude of factors influencing any given decision complicates efforts to measure the precise impact media has".⁹ In addition, such an analysis requires the assessment of many factors involved in the actual decision-making process, but these are often not accessible for reasons of national security. Furthermore, technological advances mean there is now a wide array of media types (newspapers, television, internet, etc.), which adds to the difficulties of ascertaining the specific effect on decision-makers of particular media forms.

In order to overcome such methodological difficulties, Robinson proposes distinguishing media impacts at two different levels: substantive and procedural. At the substantive level, media influence is related to the initial phases of the foreign policy decision-making process, in terms of media evaluations of the justifications and rationale of foreign policy decisions. In contrast, the procedural level is related to media influence on the actual implementation of any foreign policy decision. The literature provides evidence that the media are more influential at the procedural than substantive level,¹⁰ although media influence on foreign policy decision-makers is also possible at the substantive level. Robinson, for example, argues that media influence is more likely in cases of humanitarian crises, as long as this does not go against well-established government policy.¹¹

In short, the elitist model rejects the idea of a media independent from the political elites shaping public opinion and/or pressuring

9 Gilboa, "Media-Broker Diplomacy: When Journalists Became Mediators", p. 39; Robinson, "The Role of Media and Public Opinion", p. 146.

10 Robinson, "The Role of Media and Public Opinion", p. 146.

11 Robinson, *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 25-35.

policy makers, while the pluralist model accepts the media's influence on foreign policy, but makes two important distinctions. First, it distinguishes between the media in democratic societies and authoritarian regimes, where the media are strictly controlled. Second, it differentiates between two levels of media influence, substantive and procedural, and between the various mechanisms through which the media exert their influence.

Based on the literature, it might be expected that the media would have some degree of influence over foreign policy decision makers in Turkey, assuming that it is a democratic country, particularly in cases which require the involvement of the armed forces. However, it is particularly difficult to examine the media's impact in Turkey as the Turkish foreign policy-making process remains 'a black-box' for analysts. For this reason, this study is limited to revealing the media's priming and framing effects on the government's foreign policy by focusing on the case of Libya.

To do this, it first identifies the news media framings concerning the Libyan crisis. Then, it investigates how the media in Turkey were able to prepare and direct public opinion regarding the issues on which AKP foreign policy was to be judged. Such data are useful for testing the elitist model in order to demonstrate whether or not the role of Turkish media is in fact limited to transmitting information from policy makers to the public. As for the pluralist model, there may be various effects of the media on decision-makers as this perspective assumes that media having an independent position from policy makers in democracies. Among these multiple effects in this case, priming and framing effects are analyzed because independence is a necessary but not sufficient condition for media influence, it also requires in-depth analysis of decision-making process. Thus, future studies can build on the findings of this study by measuring the media's influence on the foreign policy decision-makers in Turkey and can demonstrate whether it limits the policy alternatives available to decision-makers or has stronger influences, such as forcing a certain policy on political leaders.

2011 Libya Crisis and the Attitude of the Turkish Government

Turkey's relations with modern Libya have been fluctuated since 1969, when Colonel Qaddafi took power. Despite deep-rooted

historical relations and socio-cultural affinities,¹² bilateral relations were quite unstable, sometimes leading to serious crises.¹³ There are various factors that might account for these unstable relations, such as Turkey's alliance with Western countries, particularly its close relations with the USA, Libyans' resentments regarding the Ottoman past, and the personal traits of Qaddafi. Nevertheless, economic cooperation was fruitful during periods of rapprochement, and Turkey's conservative politicians in particular sought to improve political and economic relations by referring to common religious values.¹⁴

Similarly to the concerns of the Turgut Özal governments of the 1980s, economic considerations once again became the driving force of Turkish foreign policy in the aftermath of the severe crisis in 2001.¹⁵ As economic ambitions dominated the AKP's foreign policy after it took power in 2002, the countries in the Middle East were regarded as an alternative destination to Western markets, particularly by the conservative business community, which formed the voting base of the AKP.¹⁶ However, there were political and cultural components as well, particularly after Ahmet Davutoğlu became the Minister of Foreign Affairs. As Kahraman notes, there are similarities between AKP's current activism and engagement in the Middle East region with the foreign policy of the 1990s, in that AKP has a strategic vision with "a long-term regional (hegemonic) project".¹⁷

12 The Ottoman Empire ruled Libya from 1551 to 1911, although this was not always direct rule. For a detailed historical account of bilateral relations between Turkey and Libya, see Orhan Koloğlu, *500 Years in Turkish-Libyan Relations*, (Ankara: Center for Strategic Research, 2007).

13 For instance, Qaddafi apparently insulted Turkey in 1996 during an official visit by the then Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan. Stephen Kinzer "Tirade by Qaddafi Stuns Turkey's Premier", *New York Times*, 9 October 1996. <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/10/09/world/tirade-by-qaddafi-stuns-turkey-s-premier.html> (accessed 15 May 2013).

14 Official visits were paid by political parties with conservative and/or Islamist roots. Turkish Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-political-relationships-with-libya.en.mfa (accessed 17 May 2013).

15 Kemal Kirişçi explains this process with the concept of 'trading state' and argues that Turkey's process of becoming a trading state started in the 1980s, but was interrupted by prevalence of traditional factors, such as military-political and territorial ones. Kemal Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 40, 2009, pp: 29-57.

16 Özlem Tür, "Economic Relations with the Middle East under the AKP—Trade, Business Community and Reintegration with Neighbouring Zones", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2011, pp. 591-595.

17 Sevilay Kahraman, "Turkey and the European Union in the Middle East: Reconciling or Competing with Each Other?", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 12, No.4, 2011, p. 701.

In line with these changes to Turkey's traditional foreign policy in the Middle East that had an imprint of its Western alliance¹⁸, the AKP government also adopted an economically-oriented policy that envisaged stronger ties with Qaddafi's Libya when it first came to power in 2002. This friendly relationship peaked during the third EU-Africa Summit in 2010, when Turkey's Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received the Qaddafi Human Rights Award as the guest of honor.¹⁹ Altunışık and Martin argue that AKP's attempts to change Turkish foreign policy had to be tested in order to "see whether Turkey under the AKP has acquired the power to influence the direction of developments in the [Middle East] region".²⁰ The Libya crisis and the NATO military intervention have provided such test and it proved that Turkey is not ready to meet the challenges stemming from the region and to control the course of events.

When the popular unrest of the Arab Spring shook the existing authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa, Turkish foreign policy-makers were slow to support the protesters demanding the overthrow of their governments.²¹ Such a hesitant reaction was clearly evident following the outbreak of protests and subsequent violence in Libya. Probably dictated by political and economic concerns, the Turkish government not only was hesitant to support the uprisings but also strongly opposed military operations urged by NATO allies, most of all by France.

These operations were carried out under the authority of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1973,²² dated 17 March, 2011, in reference to Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. This justified the authorization of enforcement measures and imposing a no-fly zone over Libya. Explaining the reasons for NATO military action in Libya, the Secretary General of NATO, Anders Fogh Rasmus-

18 Altunışık and Martin argue that the alterations that the AKP government made in Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle Eastern countries were largely products of domestic factors. Meliha B. Altunışık and Lenore G. Martin, "Making Sense of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East under AKP", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2011, pp. 569-587.

19 İbrahim Varlık, "Erdoğan receives Gaddafi Human Rights Award", *Today's Zaman*, 1 December 2010 http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=228386 (accessed 17 May 2013).

20 Altunışık and Martin, "Making Sense of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East under AKP", p.584.

21 Ibid, pp. 583-584.

22 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, 17 March 2011, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1973%282011%29 (accessed 30 March 2013).

sen, stated that “We took action in Libya because we have a strong mandate from the Security Council and solid support from countries in the region. That is a unique combination which we have not seen elsewhere”.²³ However, this statement was at odds with Turkey’s position during the earlier phases of the crisis in Libya when some NATO members first brought the Alliance’s involvement on to the agenda. Turkey, in contrast to some of the allies, argued against the necessity of military operations towards Libya in general, or a possible role for NATO in particular.

The AKP opposed an international military intervention in Libya from the beginning of the uprisings until the mid-March 2011. Erdoğan boldly declared his opposition to any military involvement in the Libyan crisis, emphasizing the difference of opinion with other NATO member leaders. As he argued,

(...) what has NATO to do with Libya? NATO’s intervention in Libya is out of the question. NATO can bring such a thing to the agenda in case of an intervention against one of its members. Apart from this, how can there be intervention against Libya? (...) As Turkey, we are against this; such a thing cannot be discussed, cannot be considered.²⁴

The Turkish government stated its concerns that a military intervention would exacerbate the situation in Libya and would generate negative reactions in the Middle East and North Africa. However, in the subsequent phases of the crisis, Turkey was forced to shift its position and to change its opposition to military intervention, later even deciding to take part in NATO-led humanitarian operations in mid-March 2011. It has been argued that Turkish government was compelled ‘to shift its priorities from ties with the existing regimes to popular demands and expectations’.²⁵ Two factors may account for this shift in position. Although UNSC Resolution 1973 was given as the official reason, it was also claimed that a ‘French *fait accompli*’

23 Anders Fogh Rasmussen, “NATO and the Arab Spring”, *New York Times*, 31 May 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/01/opinion/01iht-edrasmussen01.html?_r=0 (accessed 02 May 2013).

24 Benitez, Jorge, “Turkey rules out NATO intervention in Libya”, 28 February 2011, <http://www.acus.org/natosource/turkey-rules-out-nato-intervention-libya> (accessed 21 June 2012).

25 Kahraman, “Turkey and the European Union in the Middle East: Reconciling or Competing with Each Other?”, p. 712.

had caused tensions within NATO²⁶ that had had to be overcome by other members, in particular the United States, who had convinced the Turkish government to change its position.

Regardless of the causes of such policy changes, the decision to intervene in the Libyan crisis provides a valuable opportunity to understand the role played by the media in the foreign policy decision-making process in Turkey. This study makes use of the opportunity presented by the shifting positions of the AKP government on Turkey's participation in the NATO-led intervention in Libya and analyses media framings in order to reveal whether the Turkish media maintained an independent perspective from the government. To do this, the following section identifies the positions of various columnists in the most widely distributed newspapers before and after the change in the government's Libya policy. The analysis focuses on four alternative policy options: active support for Qaddafi, non-involvement, mediation between the opposition and Qaddafi, and support for the insurgents.

Media Framings Regarding NATO-led Military Operations in Libya

On the substantive level, the AKP government had the four policy alternatives mentioned above. Active involvement included arms supplies to the insurgents, training, or the direct use of force in military operations against Qaddafi forces. Although it was never overtly expressed and considered morally unacceptable, supporting Qaddafi was another possible policy preference. The AKP government could have chosen to provide military assistance to help Qaddafi suppress the rebels. On the procedural level, the alternatives relate to the technical aspects of military operations: whether they should be restricted to a no-fly zone, or extended to include bombing the military headquarters of Qaddafi's forces or even a full-scale intervention.

²⁶ Immediately after the French efforts to carry out air strikes against Libya, Egemen Bağış, Minister and Chief Negotiator for EU Talks, criticized French President Nicolas Sarkozy for exploiting Libya for political gains. Referring to the air strikes on Libya, Bağış stated that 'a European leader began his election campaign by organizing a meeting that led to a process of air strikes against Libya. He has acted before a NATO decision and his act was based on his subjective evaluation of a United Nations resolution'. Egemen Bağış, 22 March 2011, <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/news/30711--a-leader-of-an-eu-country-tries-to-begin-a-process-that-is-against-international-laws--bagis> (accessed 21 June 2012).

This section analyzes media framings regarding these policy alternatives at both levels. First, it focuses on how the Libyan crisis was framed: one contrast is between framing the crisis as Libya's internal affairs, meaning that Turkey's role should be either non-involvement or mediation, versus invoking the responsibility of the international community (including Turkey), meaning Turkey should take part in any military intervention. Second, it focuses on the extent to which the media implied that, if Turkey's involvement is supported, it should engage in full-scale or restricted military operations. These media framings are also evaluated in relation to the sources' ideological positions, whether Islamist or secular, in terms of their likelihood to support Turkey's involvement in Libya. After identifying the media framings on these issues, the priming role of the media is analyzed to identify the kinds of criticism directed against AKP policy on the crisis, and the criteria that the media offered for the Turkish public to judge the government's foreign policy.

In order to determine the positions of the columnists, all articles related to the Libya crisis were analyzed, before and after the dramatic change in the Turkish government's position. All relevant articles between 1 February and 31 March 2011 were analyzed for the following daily papers: *Radikal*, *Milliyet*, *Hürriyet*, *Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak*. Regarding the secular-Islamist division, the first three newspapers are secular and maintained initially antagonistic, or at least a distanced, position suspicious of a hidden Islamist agenda of the AKP, while *Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* are known as strong supporters of the AKP government.²⁷ At least one foreign policy columnist was identified for each newspaper: Cengiz Çandar from *Radikal*, Sami Kohen and Kadri Gürsel from *Milliyet*, Ferai Tınç from *Hürriyet*, Abdülhamit Bilici from *Zaman*, and İbrahim Karagül from *Yeni Şafak*.

Overall, the selected columnists agreed that the Qaddafi regime was a brutal dictatorship that ought to be ended; and they all sup-

27 The Turkish media reflects the main political polarization between secular and Islamist actors. While the secular media were strong opponents of the AKP foreign policy in the first period of AKP rule (2002-2007), this opposition was suppressed in the second and third periods. There have been unprecedented heavy fines on oppositional media conglomerate (Doğan Media Group) on alleged tax dodging. http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/domestic/11336001_p.asp (accessed 21 June 2012) There has been massive self-censorship as well as firing of anchormen and women, mainly critical of the AKP policies. Certainly, such claims of government censorship cannot be verified, however, there are domestic and international concerns. For instance, European Commission in its annual Progress Report in 2012 states that '(...) freedom of media continued to be further restricted in practice. The increasing tendency to imprison journalists, media workers and distributors fuelled these concerns.' European Commission, Turkey 2012 Progress Report, 10.10.2012, pp.21-22.

ported the popular uprisings to topple his regime. However, they disagreed on both the legitimacy of intervention and on the AKP government's performance in dealing with the crisis. If the following analysis shows that the Turkish media's position changed in line with shifts in the AKP government's position, then this will indicate that it played a role consistent with the elitist model, i.e. transmitting information from the officials to the masses rather than the pluralist model, i.e. acting as an influence to change government policy.

Non-involvement versus military intervention

The Turkish media was divided on both the form and context of Turkey's involvement in the Libyan crisis. On the one side were columnists who framed it as a humanitarian issue that the international community had a responsibility to respond to, and praised the UNSC resolution on humanitarian grounds.²⁸ In their view, this resolution was analogous to earlier decisions on Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo more than Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus, they equated opposition to military operations as taking sides with Qaddafi because ending operations would provide an opportunity for him to strengthen his position. They also argued that non-involvement and non-participation in NATO's operations would work against Turkey's national interest as they considered its strength to stem from its membership of the Western alliance.²⁹

At the same time, however, such positive arguments were also accompanied by caution over idealistic expectations. One columnist, for example, distinguished between the humanitarian and political motives of military intervention, in terms of preventing catastrophic civilian losses versus over throwing Qaddafi. For this columnist, the legitimacy of the operations would become doubtful in case of prolonged resistance by Qaddafi.³⁰ Other columnists contrasted the Libyan case to the West's general indifference to previous humanitarian crises in order to suggest that the Western countries' interest

28 Ferai Tınç, "Libya'da kuru kabadayılığın anlamı yok", *Hürriyet*, 28 February 2011; Sami Kohen, "Yaptırımlar neye yarar?", *Milliyet*, 28 February 2011, "Çelişkiler dünyası", *Milliyet*, 22 March 2011; Kadri Gürsel, "Bu savaş başladığı gibi bitmeyebilir", *Milliyet*, 21 March 2011.

29 Cengiz Çandar, "Türkiye, Kaddafi'nin 'utanç müttefiki' mi?", *Radikal*, 22 March 2011, "Türkiyeve Bölgede 'özgürlük alevleri'...", 26 March 2011.

30 Kadri Gürsel, "Bu savaş başladığı gibi bitmeyebilir", 21 March 2011.

in Libya could be explained in terms of their oil-related economic interests.³¹

However, not all writers supported intervention by the international community. Some rejected international intervention under the UN umbrella on the grounds that it would be an abuse of the UN that would lead to a Western invasion of Libya. Those columnists who perceived the Arab Spring as a means for realizing what they viewed as Western imperialist designs in the Middle East and North Africa praised the Turkish government's initial position of non-involvement in military operations. They argued that any intervention, including an economic embargo, would solely serve the interests of the United States, Israel and other Western states. In strong support of the government's position, they reformulated Erdoğan's question asking what business NATO has in Libya as 'what business the United States and Europe have in Libya'. They considered that, based on the previous experience of Iraq, the decision to create a no-fly zone over Libya merely represented an excuse to mask the West's objective of occupation.³² For example, Karagül suggested that Libya would become another Iraq, arguing that the United States, the United Kingdom and France were exploiting the need for humanitarian assistance as a pretext to implement imperialist policies to control Libya's energy resources, claiming that UN decisions could not provide legitimacy in this case.³³ He therefore opposed Turkey's participation in the NATO-led operations.³⁴ Another columnist opposed to military operations, Bilici, argued that France had undermined the legitimacy of the UNSC resolution, and claimed that the West's "one-sided and unprepared" operations had put at risk the lives of millions of people.³⁵

The choice between limited or full-scale involvement received the least attention among Turkish foreign policy columnists. Some of

31 Sami Kohen, "Dünya Libya için ne yapabilir?", *Milliyet*, 26 February 2011, "Çelişkiler dünyası", 22 March 2011.

32 İbrahim Karagül, "Petro-dolarlar ve silahlar sizi nasıl kurtarsın şimdi!", *Yeni Şafak*, 24 February 2011, "Akdeniz'de aç kurtlar dolaşiyor, dikkat!..", 25 February 2011, "Libya'yı işgal: Öfke Avrupa'yı vuracak!", 2 March 2011, "Libya'yı işgal: Yeni bir Ömer Muhtar çıkacak..", 3 March 2011.

33 İbrahim Karagül, "Çekiç Güç: Libya Irak mı olacak?", *Yeni Şafak*, 10 March 2011; "Bizi aptal mı sandınız siz?", 22 March 2011.

34 İbrahim Karagül, "Bu öfke Fransa'yı çok kötü çarpacak!", *Yeni Şafak*, 23 March 2011, "Yüzyıllık hesap bu, farkında mısınız?", 24 March 2011, "Türkiye, çok acil bir müdahale gücü kursun!", 29 March 2011, "Aynı utancı bir kez daha yaşamayalım", 5 April 2011.

35 Abdülhamit Bilici, "Sarkozy'nin Şovu, Türkiye'nin Kaygısı?", *Zaman*, 22 March 2011.

those in favor of military intervention discussed the technical aspects of this option, arguing that the UNSC's decision to impose a no-fly zone over Libya had been invalidated because Qaddafi's forces were also targeted. The failure of the no-fly zone policy also raised the issue of assisting the rebels, which would also be against the UNSC decision.³⁶ Finally, there were also criticisms regarding civilian losses during the international air operations.³⁷

Priming

The priming role of the media in this case is related to their criticisms of AKP's foreign policy in Libya crisis. In addition to the above framings, columnists evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of the AKP government's policy towards Libya. These indicate the benchmarks presented by the media to evaluate the government's foreign policy performance.

Media reporting on the Libyan crisis provided both justifications and criticisms of government decisions, employing two basic performance criteria. The first was its success in defending Turkish nationals and investments in Libya, while the second was strengthening Turkey's regional leadership role. The government was generally praised for its successful evacuation of Turkish citizens from Libya.³⁸ The only exception to this was Kadri Gürsel, who claimed that the successful evacuation could not be attributed to the government itself, but was rather the success of the bureaucracy.³⁹ Regarding other aspects of the government's Libya policy, however, there were diverging perceptions. One of the main differences concerned the implications of the Turkish government's inconsistent stance.

Contradictions in government policy towards Libya were noted by the majority of columnists, with three different contradictions being

36 Sami Kohen, "Libya'da ucu açık belirsizlik dönemi", *Milliyet*, 21 March 2011; "Libya ikilemi", 1 April 2011.

37 Sami Kohen, "Libya'da ucu açık belirsizlik dönemi", *Milliyet*, 21 March 2011; "Çelişkiler dünyası", 22 March 2011.

38 Ferai Tinç, "Libya'da kuru kabadayılığın anlamı yok", *Hürriyet*, 28 February 2011; İbrahim Karagül, "Petro-dolarlar ve silahlar sizi nasıl kurtarsın şimdi!", *Yeni Şafak*, 24 February 2011; Sami Kohen, "Libyalı çocukların sesi...", *Milliyet*, 10 March 2011; "Ortadoğu'daki değişim Türkiye için fırsat mı sıkıntı mı?", 28 March 2011; Abdülhamit Bilici, "Türkiye Kaddafi'nin Yanında mı?", *Zaman*, 05 March 2011.

39 Kadri Gürsel, "Sahiden, sizin Libya'da ne işiniz var?", *Milliyet*, 23 March 2011.

highlighted in particular. The first concerned contradictory statements by different cabinet members: ‘In his speech in Ankara yesterday, the Prime Minister argued that this position [the unified international position on the UN Resolution] and the Security Council resolution was scathing. However, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu has said that Turkey will take part in the implementation of the Council’s decision, which also reveals a contradiction in the government’s attitude on this issue’.⁴⁰ Secondly, the government was criticized for following an inconsistent policy towards Libya and other Arab countries in that, although Turkey was taking a pro-change position on the Arab Spring in general, this was contradicted by its Libya policy.⁴¹ The final criticism concerned the inconsistency of policy over time, which became a media prime for judging government policy. For instance, Gürsel claimed that the Libya policy contained contradictions despite government statements about following a principled foreign policy. He also argued that a principled foreign policy required condemnation of Qaddafi before the international operation decision was taken in order to be consistent and influential.⁴² “However, by opposing the intervention initially, the AKP government sided with the status quo.”⁴³ Gürsel noted that the Turkish government took a strong moral position against Israeli suppression of Palestinians, but apparently forgot this regarding the repressive policies of Arab regimes towards their own citizens.⁴⁴

Although the columnists agreed that government policy was inconsistent, there were differences of opinion on the causes and implications of this inconsistency. On the one hand, a minority of columnists offered rationalizations for this. First, there was an attempt to explain that the cautious stance in Libya had been motivated by a wish to protect Turkish workers and investments.⁴⁵ However, it

40 Sami Kohen, “Yaptırımlar neye yarar?”, *Milliyet*, 28 February 2011.

41 Ferai Tinç, “Libya’da kuru kabadayılığın anlamı yok”, *Hürriyet*, 28 February 2011; Sami Kohen, “Libyalı çocukların sesi...”, *Milliyet*, 10 March 2011, “Ortadoğu’daki değişim Türkiye için fırsat mı sıkıntı mı?”, 28 March 2011; Kadri Gürsel, “Sahiden, sizin Libya’da ne işiniz var?”, *Milliyet*, 23 March 2011.

42 Kadri Gürsel, “Bu savaş başladığı gibi bitmeyebilir”, *Milliyet*, 21 March 2011.

43 Kadri Gürsel, “Boşluktaki Türk dış politikası”, *Milliyet*, 30 March 2011.

44 Kadri Gürsel, “Sahiden, sizin Libya’da ne işiniz var?”, *Milliyet*, 23 March 2011.

45 Cengiz Çandar, “Libya: Osmanlı dominosu...”, *Radikal*, 22 February 2011, “Kaddafi’yi dinlerken, Türkiye’yi (ve İran’ı) izlerken...”, 23 February 2011; Ferai Tinç, “Libya’da kuru kabadayılığın anlamı yok”, *Hürriyet*, 28 February 2011; Sami Kohen, “Libyalı çocukların sesi...”, *Milliyet*, 10 March 2011, “Ortadoğu’daki değişim Türkiye için fırsat mı sıkıntı mı?”, 28 March 2011; Abdülhamit Bilici, “Sarkozy’nin Şovu, Türkiye’nin Kaygısı?”, *Zaman*, 22 March 2011.

was also argued that this inconsistent or cautious policy was only justifiable until the evacuation of Turkish nationals from Libya had been completed in order to avoid possible retaliation against them by Qaddafi.⁴⁶ Another argument was that the inconsistent policy was natural as part of a case-by-case approach. While the government opposed an embargo because it predicted that it would have a negative impact on Libya's population, it also opposed military operations because of the insurgents' opposition, Western interest in Libyan oil, and lessons learnt from previous cases like Afghanistan.⁴⁷

On the other hand, the majority of columnists criticized such inconsistencies. However, they did not comment much on the impact of this, whether as the necessary result of a case-by-case approach or as a factor that could undermine Turkish foreign policy in general. Overall, the government's inconsistency was mainly criticized for its own sake rather than for its perceived negative implications for Turkish national interests.

Columnists also criticized AKP's inconsistent policy for undermining Turkey's moral leadership aspirations,⁴⁸ arguing that the Arab Spring provided an opportunity for Turkey to play a more active role in the Middle East and North Africa. They claimed that the government's inconsistent policies were making it difficult for Turkey to play that desired role of regional leadership.⁴⁹ For example, Tınç argued that AKP's inconsistent policies were undermining Turkey's potential role in post-Qaddafi Libya as the AKP government was opposing international operations even while Libyan insurgents were demanding external assistance.⁵⁰

Some columnists criticized the government's Libya policy from a humanitarian perspective. For instance, Kohen stated that government had been too pragmatic in Libya, rather than conforming to

46 Ferai Tınç, "Ne isyancılara ne Kaddafi'ye yaranabildik", *Hürriyet*, 25 March 2011; Sami Kohen, "Libyalı çocukların sesi...", *Milliyet*, 10 March 2011, "Ortadoğu'daki değişim Türkiye için fırsat mı sıkıntı mı?", 28 March 2011.

47 Abdülhamit Bilici, "Türkiye Kaddafi'nin Yanında mı?", *Zaman*, 5 March 2011; "Ortadoğu'nun BOP'u?" 26 March 2011.

48 Cengiz Çandar, "Türkiye, Kaddafi'nin 'utanç müttefiki' mi?", *Radikal*, 22 March 2011.

49 Sami Kohen, "Ortadoğu'daki değişim Türkiye için fırsat mı sıkıntı mı?", *Milliyet*, 28 March 2011.

50 Ferai Tınç, "Ne isyancılara ne Kaddafi'ye yaranabildik", *Hürriyet*, 25 March 2011.

the principle of supporting all popular uprisings against dictators. Writing as one favoring involvement in the crisis, Kohen criticized Erdoğan's opposition to an embargo.⁵¹ Commenting on Erdoğan's opposition to international intervention, Kohen conceded that the best regime change happens through domestic dynamics, but added that, in countries like Libya, the aim of foreign intervention should not be regime change, but rather humanitarian aid to protect the local population against the atrocities of dictators. Kohen noted the change in international perceptions regarding the traditional concept of national sovereignty,⁵² suggesting that delaying humanitarian intervention once the Turkish workers had been rescued was unjustifiable.⁵³

A further objection was raised against the Prime Minister's criticism of Western countries' supposed indifference by noting that both the UN's embargo decision and NATO's no-fly zone plan had both been rejected by Turkey.⁵⁴ According to Kohen, for example, the West's decision to intervene militarily and its willingness to take action despite the risks were further proof of the international collective conscience. Kohen also noted that the Turkish government had changed from its cautious position following the UN decision to authorize military operations.⁵⁵

A final inconsistency primed by the media concerned Syria. The fact that Assad had begun to act in a similar way to Qaddafi was seen as having negative implications for Turkey.⁵⁶ At the same time, critical media voices argued that Turkey's Libya policy might also damage Turkey's recent good relations with Syria.⁵⁷ Gürsel, correctly predicted that Syria would become Turkey's next critical foreign policy issue, arguing that, due to Syria's proximity to Turkey and its important role in regional affairs, it would represent a serious challenge.⁵⁸

51 Sami Kohen, "Yaptırımlar neye yarar?", *Milliyet*, 28 February 2011.

52 Sami Kohen, "Karışmalı mı, karışmamalı mı?", *Milliyet*, 24 March 2011.

53 Sami Kohen, "Libyalı çocukların sesi...", *Milliyet*, 10 March 2011.

54 Sami Kohen, "Ülkeye göre politika", *Milliyet*, 17 March 2011.

55 Sami Kohen, "Kaddafi şimdi pes edecek mi?", *Milliyet*, 18 March 2011.

56 Cengiz Çandar, "Türkiyeve Bölgede 'özgürlük alevleri'...", *Radikal*, 26 March 2011, "Ortadoğu'nun özgürlük şafağında (Türkiye-Suriye)", 27 March 2011.

57 Sami Kohen, "Ortadoğu'daki değişim Türkiye için fırsat mı sıkıntı mı?", *Milliyet*, 28 March 2011.

58 Kadri Gürsel, "Boşluktaki Türk dış politikası", *Milliyet*, 30 March 2011.

Conclusion

It can be argued that, although there is an extensive literature on Turkish foreign policy, there has been insufficient research on the actors who play a role in the foreign policy decision-making process. Among many reasons for such a lack of analysis is the opaque nature of the decision-making processes in Turkey, in that there is little available data regarding the factors and actors influencing foreign policy decisions and decision-makers. For these reasons, this article focused on media framings and their potential impact on the decision-making process.

In this context, this study determined the differing interpretations of selected commentators within the Turkish print media regarding the AKP government's contradictory and shifting policies towards the crisis in Libya. The analysis focused on the positions taken by key foreign policy columnists on two issues. The first was whether Turkey should intervene in Libyan crisis on humanitarian grounds. The second concerned the success (or not) of the AKP government's foreign policy.

The columnists framed the Libyan crisis in sharply contrasting ways in the period from 1 February to 31 March 2011, when the case became one of the top items on Turkey's foreign policy agenda. Regarding the secular-Islamist spectrum, there were clear differences in judgments of the success of the government regarding the crisis. The columnists in the secular mainstream media supported an international responsibility to intervene and prevent mass killings by Qaddafi forces on humanitarian grounds, while the Islamist media strongly opposed any intervention, on the basis that Western states were motivated by self-interested imperialist goals.

The above analysis provides some insights regarding media impacts on government in the foreign policy decision-making process. Identifying the positions of the media is the first step to understand whether they have any influence on foreign policy decision makers in Turkey. The analysis shows that the elite model was not supported in that the media didn't change position following shifts in the government position, thus it can be concluded that certain segments of the Turkish media preserved their independent position from the government in the case of Libya. Given that the government subsequently changed its position, this suggests that the

media may have had an impact on the decision-makers, although the reality of such an impact cannot be verified at this stage. The next step would be to analyze the decision-making process and explore the media's effects on foreign policy makers. For now, it is possible to conclude that the critical stances of the secular Turkish media may have had only a limited influence on Turkish foreign policy making led by Islamist-rooted AKP.

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