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## CONTENTS / İÇİNDEKİLER

### Editorial / Editörden

About the 65th issue <b>Ayşen AKKOR GÜL</b> .....	VII
Some remarks from A. A. Berger <b>Prof. Arthur ASA BERGER</b> .....	VIII
Unveiling the Nexus of conflict, communication and media <b>Prof. M.Nurdan TAŞKIRAN</b> .....	IX

### Research Articles / Araştırma Makaleleri

Conflict and polarisation on social media caused by the Russia-Ukraine War: The case of Ekşi Sözlük <i>Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı'nın sosyal medyada yol açtığı çatışma ve kutuplaşma: Ekşi Sözlük örneği</i> <b>Tolga GÜROCAK</b> .....	1
Manipulative mechanisms and reasons behind sharing fake news during Russo-Ukrainian War: A three-fold study <i>Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı sırasında sahte haber paylaşımının arkasındaki manipülatif mekanizmalar ve nedenleri: Üç aşamalı bir çalışma</i> <b>Liana MARKARIANI, Maia TORADZE</b> .....	33
The rapid diffusion of fake news: An analysis of content on migration, refugees, and conflict on international fact-checking platforms <i>Sahte haberin hızlı yayılımı: Uluslararası teyit platformlarında göç, mülteci ve çatışma eksenli paylaşımların içerik analizi</i> <b>Gabriela Oana OLARU</b> .....	61
The role of the media following the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War: The cases of AzadlıqRadiosu and MeydanTV news sites in Azerbaijan <i>İkinci Dağlık Karabağ Savaşı sonrası dönemde medyanın rolü: Azerbaycan'daki AzadlıqRadiosu ve MeydanTV haber siteleri örnekleri</i> <b>İlgar SEYİDOV</b> .....	89
An analysis of anti-Syrian's signature campaign in Türkiye: The cases from Change.org <i>Türkiye'de Suriyeli karşıtı imza kampanyasının analizi: Change.org örneği</i> <b>Şükür ŞİMDİ</b> .....	109

### Short Note/ Değerlendirme Yazısı

Looking at the Russian-Ukrainian War from Lithuanian point of view: Ideology, media and the 'Russian world' <i>Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşına Litvanya'nın bakış açısından bakmak: İdeoloji, medya ve 'Rus dünyası'</i> <b>Tomas KACERAUSKAS</b> .....	135
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About the 65<sup>th</sup> issue,

The ConnectIST team is pleased to present the 65th issue of the Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences, which contains five original research articles and one short note. Before introducing the studies, I thank our issue editors, Professor Emeritus Arthur Asa Berger from the San Francisco State University and Prof. M. Nurdan Taşkıran from the Istanbul Medipol University. With our guest editors, we set the theme as “Conflicts, Communication & the Media” held our second virtual conference with the abstract senders. Going on wars, migrations, polarization in societies, and clash of ideologies were the themes that connected our authors. While dealing with these issues, each of our authors gave examples of conventional or social media practices in his/her country in their articles. It was interesting to notice that we all experience more or less the same things in different settings!

In this issue, we present the following articles: Tolga Güroca revealed the forms of polarisation caused by the Russia-Ukraine War among *Ekşi Sözlük* writers in “Conflict and polarization caused by the Russia-Ukraine War on social media: The case of *Ekşi Sözlük*.” The conflict between the defenders of the two sides in one of the largest internet communities in Türkiye ranged from “bashing opposing views” to “insulting other authors.” In the short note titled “Looking at Russian-Ukrainian War from a Lithuanian point of view: Ideology, media, and the Russian world,” Tomas Kačerauskas drew the readers’ attention to the ongoing war, media and the clash of ideologies by referring to global and local phenomena. Liana Markariani and Maia Toradze, in “Manipulative mechanisms and reasons behind sharing fake news during Russo-Ukrainian War: A three-fold study,” analyzed the impact of fake news, the reasons behind sharing pseudo-positive false information and their influence on social media users’ behavior. The researchers concluded that Russian propaganda in Georgia during the analysis was intense. Georgians displayed an inclination for positive information about Ukraine, a preference rooted in a perceived common enemy and a shared sense of camaraderie with Ukrainians.

In the research article titled “The rapid diffusion of fake news: An analysis of content on migration, refugees, and conflict on international fact-checking platforms,” Gabriela Oana Olaru examined fact-checking efforts by the International Fact-Checking Network member organizations across ten countries between January and November 2023. The author identified four recurring issues in most countries analyzed: disinformation about protests in France, fake news related to conflicts, and information about financial aid, opportunities, and refugee accommodation facilities. Ilgar Seyidov, in “The role of the media following the second Nagorno-Karabakh War: The Cases of *AzadliqRadiosu* and *MeydanTV* in Azerbaijan,” made a topic-oriented framing analysis to determine how the Azerbaijani media reflect the post-conflict situation. The author’s main finding was that construction/negative peace was the central theme of the news for a year, which is quite thought-provoking. Finally, in “An analysis of anti-Syrian’s signature campaign in Türkiye: The cases from Change.org,” Şükrü Şimdi examined the individual actions taken against Syrian immigrants through 154 online signature campaigns launched on *Change.org* in Türkiye. The findings indicated that the campaigns frequently employed discriminatory stereotypical categories, portraying Syrians as an economic burden, potential/imaginary enemies, not willing to integrate, betrayers of their homeland, fleers from the war, and even terrorists.

Before bringing this introduction to a close, let me remind everyone that our journal can continue to publish academic studies in communications sciences through your most valued support and participation. We look forward to appearing before you once again with our 66th issue.

**Prof. Ayşen AKKOR GÜL**

**Editor- in-Chief**

### Some remarks from A. A. Berger

This issue of Media, Communication and Conflict appears at a time when conflicts have become more and more common and terrible. After many years of peace in Europe, thanks to a decision made by one man it would seem, Vladimir Putin, Russia invaded Ukraine and a terrible war has broken out which involves, directly and indirectly, many other countries namely with some countries supporting Russia and many supporting Ukraine. And in November, Hamas terrorists invaded Israel and killed 1400 people there and took more than 200 hostages back to Gaza. In return, Israel has declared war on Hamas and has attacked Gaza with terrible consequences for Gaza and Israel.

All of these conflicts and wars are, of course, covered in detail by the media, which explains why the subject of this issue is relevant now, and given the human propensity for conflict, will continue to be important.

Freud wrote “Homo Homini Lupus” which means “man is a wolf to man.” Suggesting that aggression lies within the human as a part of his nature. History can be written as a series of discussions of wars and other forms of conflict, and these wars and conflicts are now shown, in graphic detail, in the media and communicated to millions of people. Conflicts and wars are now mass mediated events, which make them more present in the lives of the millions of people who ‘follow’ the events in the wars.

We can understand better why there is so much conflict by considering the set of binary oppositions that shape much of our behavior:

#### Oppositional Binaries and Conflicts

Us	Them
We	They
Right	Wrong
Innocent	Guilty
Deserving Love	Deserving Hate
Rightfully Attack Enemies	Correctly Chosen for Being Attacked

The poet W.H.Auden wrote a poem, “In Memory of W.B.Yeats” that reads, in part, as follows:

In the nightmare of the dark  
All the dogs of Europe bark  
And the living nations wait  
Each sequestered in its hate;  
Intellectual disgrace  
Stares from every human face,  
And the seas of pity lie  
Locked and frozen in each eye.

His poem dealt with a different war, but unfortunately, his comments are still relevant. Many nations seem to be full of hate and with large numbers of people also ‘sequestered’ in their hate, and while that situation exists, editions of journals such as this which focus on conflicts, communication and the media will continue to be relevant.

*Prof. Arthur ASA BERGER*  
Guest Editor  
San Francisco State University



## Unveiling the Nexus of conflict, communication and media

As I begin this foreword that I wrote for the ‘media, communication and conflict’ contents we have chosen for the 2023 December special issue of ConnectST Journal, I note that digitalization, which arises from the association of media with digital technology and becomes increasingly dangerous, is alarming and disruptive to world peace within the framework of manipulative news and misinformation spread.

Especially in uncertain, tense and risky periods, which we can call ‘chaos,’ especially if there is a war situation, media manipulations, news distortions such as agent provocation, propaganda, disinformation, fake news, misinformation, reconstructed and manipulated news and ways of producing news within the framework of conflicts of interest. The increase in all types of media is known to all of us. However, it is the product of the human mind that people get confused in the ‘information pollution’ in media environments. The manipulations created by media tools that cannot keep up with the pace, especially social media platforms, clearly reveal the comprehensive impact of the media as the 5th power on geopolitical landscapes and conflicts related.

The rapid dissemination of reconstructed information or fake news provided by the internet and social media platforms such as *Instagram*, *X* (previously *Twitter*), *Facebook*, and *YouTube*, provide a multimedia environment. Significantly, it gives an obstructive nature to the ‘right to get information and access accurate information’ in a ‘global context.’

It is known to everyone that the emergence of social media has added new dimensions to the manipulation games of the media, allowing the instant global spread of fake, manipulated news or images, information and ideologies.

In this special issue of our journal, the studies addressed as ‘communication, media and conflict’ tried to academically reveal the communication and media problems on these issues within the framework of their causes, and ideological and geographical impact factors. Additionally, there are pure facts that are merely observed from afar, without even trying to be a mediator or conciliator, to intervene in line with geopolitical, ideological, historical or racial interests, or to provide an environment to eliminate conflict. In war situations that occur under the shadow of conflicts of interest, we have mentioned, innocent civilians, and even worse, babies, children and young people lose their lives! Civilians also lose their lives under the bombed buildings such as hospitals and schools that should not have been targeted at all; For a ‘universal superior power,’ these inhumane and immoral actions are ignored by both the perpetrators and other spectator countries. Unfortunately, no leader says ‘stop!’ to these injustices in these environments of multiple conflicts of interest, as in the examples we see many times in the Russia-Ukraine, Palestine-Israel, and Azerbaijan-Armenia wars!

In addition to these physical realities, conflict environments naturally lead to social media environments being considered as the production centres of ‘news manipulation, fake news, reconstructed realities and misinformation, disinformation’ due to their strategic secrecy and essentiality.

As we navigate this complex terrain, it becomes inevitable to grasp the broader impacts of media manipulations on the conduct and outcomes of wars. It is a fact that the blurred lines between truth and lies, reality and perception, pose serious challenges not only to the accuracy of reporting but also to the foundations of democratic societies. The consequences, unfortunately, continue to negatively affect not only innocent civilians but also diplomatic relations, international interventions and peace expectations going beyond the conflict areas.

As we move forward in this field, it seems essential to approach the issue with critical thinking. It is also remarkable to remind ourselves of the ethical responsibilities that media practitioners, representatives, politicians, and citizens should carry. Through these analyses, the main target of us here is that media communicators should create ‘a well-informed media literate’ and ‘media-competent public’ equipped with the knowledge to distinguish the manipulations constructed in the media environments, especially in times of conflict.

*“An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.” Mahatma Gandhi*

With the hope of having war-free days and happy children in 2024 all around the world.

***Prof. M.Nurdan TAŞKIRAN***

**Guest Editor**

**Istanbul Medipol University**

# Conflict and polarisation on social media caused by the Russia-Ukraine War: The case of *Ekşi Sözlük*

## *Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı'nın sosyal medyada yol açtığı çatışma ve kutuplaşma: Ekşi Sözlük örneği*

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### Abstract

There has been an increase in ideological and political polarisation in Türkiye. Society is divided into dichotomies such as modern-traditional, religious-secular, right-left, Turkish-Kurdish, and Sunni-Alawi; the distinction is not limited to these. The polarisation in Türkiye is similarly increasing on *Ekşi Sözlük*<sup>1</sup>, one of the largest internet communities according to visit and interaction rates in Türkiye. This study aims to reveal the reasons and forms of polarisation caused by the Russia-Ukraine War among *Ekşi Sözlük* writers who were not party to the war, and it is significant in revealing the severity of polarisation in Türkiye. For this purpose, 8.144 entries on the thread were analysed using qualitative content analysis under nine headings. It was found that the parties were shaped on the axis of Russia and Ukraine/ the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)/the United States of America (USA) dualism. The majority of these entries increase polarisation by affirming the actions of the side they consider close to themselves. The conflict between the defenders of the two sides ranges from insulting opposing views to insulting other authors. The proportion of polarising entries in the headline was close to that found in other similar studies on polarisation in recent years.

**Keywords:** Conflict, polarisation, qualitative content analysis, *Ekşi Sözlük*, Russia-Ukraine War

### Öz

Türkiye'de son yıllarda ideolojik ve siyasal anlamda kutuplaşmanın arttığı görülmektedir. Toplum modern-geleneksel, dindar-laik, sağ-sol, Türk-Kürt, Sünni-Alevi gibi konularda bölünmektedir. Türkiye'de artan kutuplaşma, ziyaret edilme ve etkileşim alma oranlarında Türkiye'nin en büyük internet topluluklarından biri olan *Ekşi Sözlük*'te de benzer şekilde artmaktadır. Rusya'nın Ukrayna'yı işgali, diğer birçok toplumsal olgu gibi *Ekşi Sözlük*'te de yer bulmuş ve kutuplaşmanın örneklerinden biri haline gelmiştir. Bu çalışma, Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı'nın savaşın tarafı olmayan *Ekşi Sözlük* yazarları arasında yol açtığı

kutuplaşmanın nedenlerini ve biçimlerini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda çalışma, Türkiye'deki kutuplaşmanın şiddetini ortaya çıkarması bakımından önem taşımaktadır. Bu amaçla öncelikle başlıkta yer alan 8.144 girdi tespit edilmiştir. Daha sonra girdiler nitel içerik analizi kullanılarak araştırılmış ve yazarların hangi bağlamlarda ikiye bölündüğü ortaya konmuştur. Bulgulara göre, başlıktaki taraflar Rusya ve Ukrayna/NATO/Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (ABD) ikiliği ekseninde şekillenmektedir. *Ekşi Sözlük* kullanıcıları tarafından yazılan metinlerin bir

kısmı Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı hakkında olabildiğince tarafsız bilgi vermeyi amaçlarken, çoğunluğu kendilerine yakın gördükleri tarafın eylemlerini olumlamaya çalışmaktadır. İki tarafın savunucuları arasındaki çatışmanın, karşıt görüşlere hakaretten diğer yazarları aşağılamaya kadar uzandığı ve başlıktaki kutuplaştırıcı girdiler oranının, son yıllarda kutuplaşma üzerine yapılan diğer benzer çalışmalardakine yakın oranlara sahip olduğu saptanmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Çatışma, kutuplaşma, nitel içerik analizi, *Ekşi Sözlük*, Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı

## Introduction

The Russia-Ukraine tension, which rose after Russia invaded Crimea in 2014 (Mankoff, 2014), turned into a war when Russia launched an operation in Ukraine on February 24, 2023 (Kirby, 2022). The invasion launched by the Russian government negatively affected Russia, Ukraine and all countries, especially in Europe. Unlike in previous wars where the conventional media was at the forefront, it was a secondary news source this time. During the war between Russia and Ukraine, new communication methods have manifested themselves, and new communication technologies and applications frequently used in daily life have become the primary news sources in this war (Hanley et al., 2023a, 2023b). Soldiers and civilians engaged in the combats shared the videos and photos they took with their mobile phones or action cameras through live broadcasts on YouTube and Twitch, through applications such as *Twitter (now X)*, *TikTok*, *Facebook*, *Instagram* or through *Telegram* groups. Thus, similar to the Gulf War of 1990 being "the first real-time television war," (Gerbner, 1992, p. 260) the invasion of Russia took the form of the first real-time social media war.

In addition to these sources, participatory websites such as *Ekşi Sözlük* are also used to gather information. In such sites, readers can also become content producers. One of the main problems encountered by participants in the production of content is that the published texts are exempt from editorial processes, thus making it possible to distort the truth. The inhabitants of Türkiye, who have pursued a policy of neutrality as much as possible since the beginning of the war, have become a part of the conflict and polarisation. These polarisations are shaped around opposition to NATO (imperialism/fascism) and opposition to Russia (dictatorship/fascism). Some of these texts written by *Ekşi Sözlük* users aim to provide as neutral information as possible about the Russia-

Ukraine War. Still, for different reasons, most try to affirm the actions of the side they feel close to. Sometimes, this affirmation is based on factual data, focusing only on the positive actions of one side. Still, it is often propagandistic, focusing only on the war crimes of the other side. The conflict between the two sides' supporters ranges from denigrating opposing views to insulting other authors.

This study used qualitative content analysis to reveal how the content produced on the website *Ekşi Sözlük* serves conflict and polarisation among users. For this purpose, 8.144 entries published in the first six months between February 24, 2022, and August 23, 2022, under the heading 'Russia-Ukraine War' on the site, were analysed.

### **The concept of conflict and its outcomes**

Being a social being by nature (Aristoteles, 2001) and predisposed to live with other people (Aristoteles, 1997), humankind maintains its existence by communicating and interacting with those outside of it. Conflict arises when two or more social organisms, such as individuals, groups, organisations, communities or nations, are unable to achieve their goals due to co-existence (Rahim, 2023). However, income inequality has traditionally been seen as the leading potential cause of conflict (Dalton, 2006; Esteban & Mayoral, 2011); any conflict based on personal interests, ambitions, aspirations or identities is intrinsically linked to the will to power (Nemlioğlu, 2021). Conflict, which continues to exist between nations or various cultural groups, in bilateral relations and between individuals, even within oneself (Wynn et al., 2010), is based on a series of actions and reactions to these actions, strategic actions and counter-strategies developed, communication strategies, reception and ways in which messages are received (Putnam & Fogler, 1988). Although conflict can occur in any situation and any environment, it brings constructive and destructive consequences for individuals, groups or societies. Despite its positive aspects, conflicts based on interests, values and beliefs can lead to arguments and separation (Ramsbotham et al., 2011). Conflicts between opposing groups for ideological, economic or religious reasons are among the most significant obstacles to social and political progress (Esteban & Schneider, 2008).

### **An overview of polarisation in Türkiye**

Polarisation, which refers to the concentration of individuals in a community in two opposing groups regarding thoughts, opinions, and social and political positions and

attitudes (Türk Dil Kurumu), occurs due to the disappearance of social consensus and the abandonment of negotiation. As a result, individuals move towards ideological edges and concentrate on extreme views, compromises are eliminated, and a segregated society is shaped (Epstein & Graham, 2007). In a polarised society, differences are aligned in one dimension, and the similarity of differences is consolidated. This leads to a process in which people construct society and politics through “us” and “them” (Göksun, 2022; McCoy et al., 2018). In other words, polarisation can be defined as dividing society into ‘us’ and ‘others’. In polarisation, there is a process in which social boundaries are created or crystallised, and in this process, the common ground between the two camps disappears (Bilgiç et al., 2014; LeBas, 2018).

In cases where extreme polarisation spreads throughout society, the negotiation environment regresses, and central tendencies lose their importance and influence (Epstein & Graham, 2007). This leads to the defunctionalisation of social and political life and prevents social reconciliation. It also prevents the permeability that will ensure reconciliation by creating sharp borders. In a polarised environment, people become partisan to prejudices and ignore ideas that they would generally consider to have strong foundations (Epstein & Graham, 2007), tolerance gradually disappears, and parties become hostile towards each other. In cases where prejudices influence decisions, it becomes increasingly difficult to claim impartiality, and these individuals are even subjected to pressure that pushes them towards the poles. Forcing individuals to extremes also reduces the importance of alternative identities (Donsbach & Mothes, 2016; Iyengar et al., 2012; LeBas, 2018).

In modern societies, regardless of the level of development, polarisation is widely encountered. In addition to material issues, non-material issues such as environmental problems, gender equality and lifestyle choices also lead to new conflicts (Inglehart, 1990). The polarising discourses and populist policies of governments lead to an atmosphere in which societies are increasingly divided on every issue.

Rather than using constructive language, governments in many countries have a discourse that criticises, marginalises and thus polarises (BilgiMag, 2022; Iwaniuk et al., 2018). In Hungary (Vegetti, 2019) and many European countries (Pausch, 2021), factors such as divisive policies, social and sociocultural conflicts, and migration movements have led to large masses of people who lack tolerance for any issue, cannot tolerate the other side, and are always looking for an opportunity to clash with the other side.

66% of Europeans think that their countries are much more polarised, and 47% think that society is much more intolerant than it was ten years ago (Perasso, 2018). In research conducted by McCoy and others (2022), a rapid increase in polarisation was observed in almost all European countries, especially after 2000. Similarly, people in the USA are also polarised (Bail et al., 2018; Levendusky & Stecula, 2021; Whitaker, 2022). Polarisation is not limited to European states and the USA. In countries such as Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, South Africa, and Kenya (Bértoa & Rama, 2021; Boxell et al., 2021; Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019; Dalton, 2006, 2008; Fischer & Hawkins, 2023; Rao, 2023), polarisation is causing disagreements and separation in society and among people.

The global wave of polarisation also has reflections in Türkiye. The roots of polarisation in Türkiye go back to the Ottoman Empire (Ertugay, 2022). The bourgeoisie-proletariat or right-left polarisation that emerged after the French Revolution did not find its counterpart in the classless Ottoman society; instead, a separation was made through the centre-periphery dichotomy (Gülener, 2007; Kasalak & Uçar, 2014). After the Tanzimat and Constitutional Edicts, this polarisation metamorphosed into an elite-public dichotomy and continued to exist within a binary framework after the proclamation of the Republic (Ertugay, 2022). After 1950, the liberal economy and the statist economy led to a divide in society. Although Şerif Mardin's centre-periphery dichotomy theory (Mardin, 1973; Shils, 1961) is valid in Türkiye, over time, the centre-periphery distinction has been replaced by a cultural struggle (Aydın Düzgüt, 2023), leading to the emergence of a polarisation based on the secular-conservative/religious distinction.

Erdoğan and Semerci (2022) state that different polarisations were frequently encountered in Türkiye in the past, and many of these polarisations continue to exist today, affecting contemporary politics and social relations. According to them, axes of polarisation, such as right-left, centre-periphery, secular-religious, Turkish-Kurdish, etc., have shaped political and social life in Türkiye in different periods. A survey shows that around 65% of the public in Türkiye say that the country is polarised, with around 50% saying that this has increased compared to 10 years ago (Ipsos, 2018). According to several polarisation measures, Türkiye is now considered one of the most polarised countries in the world (Aydın Düzgüt, 2023). Another study shows that 83% do not want their daughters to marry someone who votes for a party they disagree with; 78% reject the idea of doing business with someone who votes for the opposing party; and 74% do not like the idea of their children playing with the children of someone who votes

for the opposing party (Erdoğan, 2016). Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that Türkiye has become polarised in ideological, political and social terms. Türkiye is becoming segregated on cultural, class, profession, education, and geography (Kentel, 2022; Somer, 2019). Traumas from the past and social injustices cause the congregation of different cultural groups and profound differentiation and polarisation in politics (Özçolak, 2022). This situation makes individuals feel obliged to choose a side to belong to in a polarised social atmosphere.

### **Polarisation on social media**

Polarisation is not a problem specific to the present or unique to Türkiye. The improvement of communication technologies and social media and the increase in interaction between individuals have accelerated polarisation and made it more visible (Ünlühisarcıklı, 2022). In Türkiye, polarisation has sharpened through both traditional and new media and that political loyalties and the view of the other have sharpened with the effect of this environment regarding political views (Akyüz, 2017). The effect of media on polarisation did not start with the internet and social media sites/applications. Settle (2018) rejects the idea that divergence and polarisation in societies are current and states that eighteenth and nineteenth-century American newspapers were extremely partisan and sarcastic. There have been debates on the polarising effect of the media in the times of television and even radio (Whitaker, 2022). There are two approaches to the polarising effect of media outlets: the view that people prefer sources close to their own opinions when consuming any media product; and that contrasting broadcasts increase the likelihood of being exposed to different views (Levy, 2021; Prior, 2013). While fulfilling their functions, media networks go beyond these functions and reflect their broadcasts by taking sides according to their ideologies or the views they are close to because the media is a propaganda tool, and the broadcasts are shaped in a polarising direction in line with the interests of power centres (Herman & Chomsky, 2008). In the broadcasts, people or organisations with rival views are presented in a partisan discourse by attributing negative adjectives to them. This paves the way for polarisation by causing the sides to tighten among the viewers.

Social media, which emerged as a way to interact with friends and family members, has evolved into various forms, such as blogs, social networks, photo and video sharing sites, instant messaging applications, podcasts, and even games and virtual worlds. Social media encourages activism and political participation in settled democracies

and facilitates protest and resistance in autocratic countries (Allcott et al., 2020). During the USA invasion of Iraq in 2003, war blogs attracted enough readers to rival mainstream political journals (Reynolds, 2004) and became the primary communication medium for organising social movements during the Arab Spring (Smidi & Shahin, 2017; Wolfsfeld et al., 2013) and Gezi Park protests (Bayhan, 2014; Kurt, 2015; Tufan Yeniçıktı, 2014).

The Internet and social media now have readership/listening/viewing rates on par with traditional media and sometimes even higher. As the importance of social media in society and the frequency of its use in communication increases, many people use it as the primary channel for news consumption (Coscia & Rossi, 2022). This suggests that developments such as the emergence of internet broadcasting as an alternative to mainstream media and the widespread use of social media have an impact on polarisation (Barrett et al., 2021; Erdoğan & Uyan Semerci, 2018; Lelkes et al., 2017). In a study on the relationship between *Facebook* and polarisation (Allcott et al., 2020), it was found that participants who did not use *Facebook* for four weeks were less marginalised, less segregated and had less polarised views. Divisive content spreads widely and quickly on social media networks (Yu et al., 2021). Since polemics fuel such posts and are mostly sensationalised, they receive much interaction and spread rapidly. Social and political polarisation is also reflected on social networks.

In research on Kurds and Syrian refugees, it has been found that discriminatory attitudes and polarisation towards Syrian refugees increased (KONDA, 2016); as a result, polarisation towards Kurds eased, and the main polarising axis has shifted towards Syrians (Çakın, 2020). A study on the gypsy population in Türkiye based on the entries on *Ekşi Sözlük* revealed that the polarisation caused by prejudices and hate language brought about the exclusion of gypsies from social and business life (Alp, 2016). In research conducted on the entries about the Chinese on *Ekşi Sözlük*, it was observed that hate speech was used, negative stereotypes and prejudices were in circulation, and a rhetoric of persuasion fed by conspiracy theories and nationalist/religious references was used by examining which themes were used and how the Chinese were discriminated and defined (Tunçer, 2020). In a study on the discrimination of Armenians on *Ekşi Sözlük* (Akkılıç, 2018), it was found that the entries had polarising content in the contexts of demonisation, lynching, hate speech, oppression/victimisation, Armenian betrayal and conspiracy theories. In another study (Yalçın, 2015), in which symbolic violence on social media was examined, entries had polarising content in which the information given was belittled, opposing views were found, and the person mentioned



was belittled. In Şirvanlı's (2021) study on the political polarisation in coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) news, it was revealed that while the pro-government supporters characterised citizens as irresponsible, the opposition groups thought that the state did not take enough responsibility and showed weakness in governance.

In addition to polarisation, many studies in Türkiye have analysed the Russian-Ukrainian War. Some of these studies have analysed the war through international relations (Öztürk, 2023) or hegemony and technology companies (Öztemel, 2022). As well as studies that examine the propaganda activities in the process within the scope of the official news agencies of the two countries (Köksoy & Kavoğlu, 2023) or the X accounts of the Turkish embassies (Durmuş, 2023), some studies investigate the ideology of the language used in internet journalism (Kılıçaslan, 2022) or disinformation and fake news (Babacan & Tam, 2022; Akyüz & Özkan, 2022; Sığırıcı, 2023). Among the studies evaluating the war in terms of user comments on social media, Çiçekdağı's (2022) study examines the reflections of the war on tourism in Türkiye through X comments, while Tam and Kurtuluş's (2022) study focuses on audience reactions to YouTube videos. Studies on the Russian-Ukrainian War mainly focus on professional media content, and very little attention is paid to users' comments. Therefore, this study is significant as it is the first to focus on *Ekşi Sözlük* about the war.

## Aim and methodology

This study analyses the increasing polarisation between supporters of Russia and Ukraine in Türkiye due to Russia's simultaneous military operation in many regions of Ukraine. The conflict and polarisation that emerged from taking sides even though one was not involved in the war were analysed. In this aspect, among the participatory dictionaries as a social media platform, *Ekşi Sözlük*, which receives the most interaction in Türkiye (Similarweb.com, 2023a), was analysed in the context of the content produced. The title 'Russia-Ukraine War' was selected among the titles opened on *Ekşi Sözlük* regarding the Russia-Ukraine War, and the entries written under this title were analysed through qualitative content analysis.

### Aim

Mass communication has changed with the rapid development of Internet technology in the late 20th century. The uni-directionality of traditional mass media has been transformed from being one-sided as a result of Web 2.0 to a dimension where recipients

can also intervene in the content. Thus, ordinary people have become content producers rather than passive recipients in the communication process. This situation has paved the way for all segments of society to communicate their ideas about every event in daily life to others via the Internet. Unlike traditional communication tools, the structural characteristics of social media tools and unlike traditional communication tools, they are open to interaction, enabling social media to be easily directed, provoked and diverted (Menteşe & İli, 2016).

In *Ekşi Sözlük*, one of the most visited internet communities after *Youtube*, *X*, *Instagram* and *Facebook* in Türkiye (Similarweb.com, 2023b), examples of increasing polarisation can be observed under every heading. One of these is the 'Russia-Ukraine War'. The title 'Russia-Ukraine War' contains polarising discourses in the context of different dichotomies such as Russia-Ukraine, Russia-NATO, Russia-USA or democracy-tyranny. Based on all these, this study aims to reveal how Russia's invasion of Ukraine for various reasons leads to polarisation among people who are not party to the incident. Answers to the study questions determined in line with this purpose were sought:

**RQ1.** What is the rate of polarising and non-polarising discourse in the entries under the title Russia-Ukraine War on *Ekşi Sözlük*?

**RQ2.** Under which headings are non-polarising entries categorised?

**RQ3.** How is the discourse in polarising entries classified?

**RQ4.** How do the people using polarising discourse in the title classify each other?

**RQ5.** In which direction is the polarisation caused by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine moving in the context of dynamics within Türkiye?

## Methodology

In the direction of these questions, the entries in the sample were analysed by the content analysis method. Developed initially to analyse texts such as magazine articles, newspapers, books, responses to questionnaires and transcribed interviews, content analysis is a research method with a long history of use in journalism and mass communication and systematically and objectively examines the characteristics of messages (Spurgin & Wildemuth, 2017). This method of analysis is based on the assumption that texts are a rich source of data with great potential for revealing valuable

information about specific phenomena (Kondracki et al., 2002) and seeks to uncover truths that may be hidden in data by describing the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). It considers the participant and context when classifying the text into relevant category groups to identify surface and implied similarities and differences, patterns and relationships (Graneheim et al., 2017). In content analysis, which is based on two fundamental distinctions, quantitative and qualitative, the quantitative method aims to produce a numerical value to indicate prevalence or to use in statistical analyses; and the qualitative method aims to identify a structure or concept within the text using specific words or phrases for substantiation or to provide a more organised structure to the text described (Kleinheksel et al., 2020). Qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be explicit or hidden in a given text, enabling researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific way (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2017). It focuses on the meaning in the content of the text and aims to explore the relationships between concepts. In revealing the meaning, it uses patterns, codes and themes and describes the social reality created by themes/categories. Therefore, in this study, which examines the polarisation caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 on *Ekşi Sözlük*, qualitative content analysis is used to identify concepts and relationships that can explain the data collected.

## Sampling

Although there are many titles about the conflict between Russia and Ukraine on *Ekşi Sözlük*, the reason for selecting the title 'Russia-Ukraine War' is that it is the most preferred title by *Ekşi Sözlük* members. The title was opened on March 1, 2014; as of August 24, 2023, it had 19.849 entries on 1.984 pages. Therefore, topics such as 'Russia's Invasion of Ukraine' (8 entries) or 'The Start of the Russia-Ukraine War on February 24, 2022' (2.253 entries) were excluded because they had fewer entries than the 'Russia-Ukraine War' topic.

The universe of the study consists of 19.849 entries written in 18 months. The study sample includes 8.162 entries written between February 24, 2022, when Russia launched a military operation against Ukraine, and August 23, 2022, when the war reached its sixth month. The problem is that the entries under the title can be deleted or removed for various reasons. To avoid this problem, all of the title pages were saved individually as a Portable Document Format (PDF) file using the Opera internet browser, thus

preventing the possibility of being unable to access the deleted entries. In addition, since a court order blocked the domain name eksisozluk.com at the time of the process and other domain names had not yet been put into service, the site was accessed using Opera's built-in Virtual Private Network (VPN) service.

### **Data collection tool and operation**

To conduct qualitative content analysis, firstly, the researcher analysed the first five hundred entries to determine the categories, and then a coding guideline was prepared. At the stage of analysing the entries in the sample, coders were determined. Two coders analysed 8.162 entries in the sample according to the coding scheme. The data obtained by coders were compared, and the conflicting items were analysed again by the researcher. At the end of this review, the researcher's interpretation was finalised. Accordingly, 18 records whose placement in the study was disputed were excluded from the study sample. The remaining 8.144 entries were analysed in the findings.

## **Findings**

In this study, which examines the polarisation in social media with the title of Russia-Ukraine War on *Ekşi Sözlük*, the entries in the sample were first categorised according to whether they contain polarising or non-polarising language. Accordingly, no polarising content was found in 2.809 of the 8.144 entries (34.49%) in the sample. However, the remaining 5.335 entries (65.51%) were found to be polarising, and such content was categorised under nine different headings: the entries that are one-sided, the entries containing democracy vs. totalitarianism/neo-Nazism, the entries accusing parties of propaganda, the entries imposing their ideas while criticizing polarisation, the entries referring to other entries, the entries marginalising/insulting authors with opposing views, the entries accusing opponents of ignorance, sexist or racist entries about refugees, and the entries interpreting the war through the domestic politics of Türkiye.

### **Entries without polarising content**

When the sample was analysed, it was found that the rate of entries that did not contain polarising content was 34.49%. It is possible to mention three types of content in these entries: providing neutral information about the war (n=2.241, 79.78%), such as "Mobile networks completely collapsed in Donetsk region," criticising *Ekşi Sözlük* for polarisation

(n=439, 15.63%) entries like “From the comments, I see that the situation divided into camps continues here. Everyone is a supporter of this or that,” and advocating Türkiye’s neutrality (n=129, 4.59%) such as “We must not fall into the trap and remain neutral. For us, joining the war would have disastrous consequences.”

### **Entries providing neutral information about the war**

The first category of non-polarising entries was categorised as those providing as neutral information as possible on the Russia-Ukraine War. The ratio of the entries providing neutral information to the total was 27.52%, and to the non-polarising entries was 79.78%. In such entries, the authors only provide information about the war’s course and avoid making personal comments as much as possible. By linking to the news source, they sometimes report the information obtained from this source from an equal distance to both sides. Although they make predictions for the future, these predictions do not favour either Russia or Ukraine but are merely assessments of the situation.

Some entries discuss the war’s evil and negative consequences, criticising both sides’ leaders, policies and rhetoric and mentioning its effects on the global economy and the armament of countries. Some entries express hopeful expectations for the future and offer good wishes to the people affected by the war, regardless of side.

### **Entries criticising *Ekşi Sözlük* for polarisation**

The second group of entries that do not contain polarising content is against polarisation and consists of those who write that the writers on *Ekşi Sözlük* have posted entries that marginalise each other and increase the conflict environment on the website. These entries constitute 15.63% of the non-polarising entries. Many authors complain about the positioning of website users against each other in an environment where Türkiye is not openly taking sides, pursuing a balanced policy, and expressing discomfort with this situation.

### **Entries advocating Türkiye’s neutrality**

The last group of non-polarising entries, with a rate of 4.59%, consists of the entries written by writers who advocate that Türkiye should remain neutral. Although defending Türkiye’s neutrality means taking sides in a sense, the fact that the entries under this

heading do not contain opinions advocating that Türkiye should go to war with Russia or Ukraine or that Türkiye should apply the sanctions imposed by other countries makes it possible to evaluate the entries in this group under the non-polarising heading.

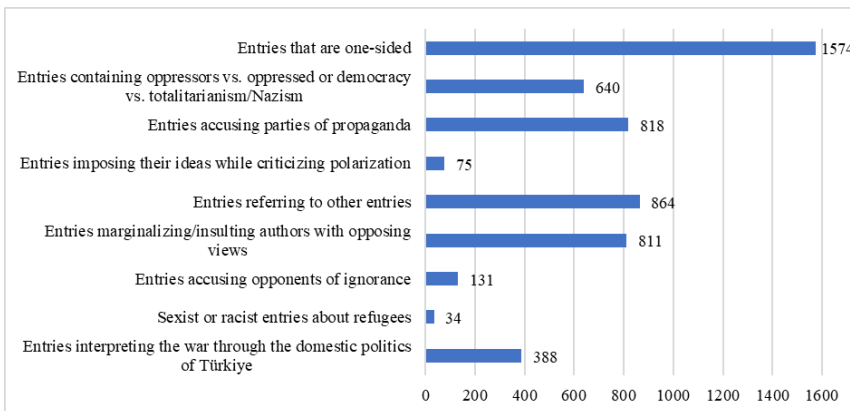
Some entries emphasise the importance of neutrality and mention the importance of Türkiye turning this situation into an opportunity due to the sanctions imposed by other countries. However, some entries suggest that Ukraine is trying to draw Türkiye into the war with the pretext of Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAV) produced by Turkish companies, but this situation should not fool Türkiye.

As a result, in general, non-polarising entries are very few. This situation reveals that users are divided in two on the Russia-Ukraine War, as in almost everything else on *Eksi Sözlük*.

### Entries containing polarising content

When the sample was analysed, 5.335 entries containing polarising content were found, 65.51% of the total entries. These entries were grouped under nine different headings according to their discourse.

**Table 1:** Entries with polarising content



### Entries that are one-sided

When the entries are analysed, it is seen that some of them provide information about the war but take sides. The analysis calculated the number of entries with a one-sided

approach as 1.574, with the highest percentage (29.5) among polarising entries. Although these entries, in which the authors defend their opinions, are one-sided, they do not attack opposing views and evaluate the situation from only one perspective. Although the individual comments of the authors do not attack or provoke other views, their one-sidedness gives other authors the right to have their say, which in turn leads to conflict between authors.

One-sided comments were found to take two different forms. First, some entries justify one side and defend the side they support. Countries on the other side or their supporters are not included in the comments but are left out as much as possible, and the focus is on the side that is considered to be correct. The fact that the written texts generally do not contain criticism does not mean any discourse in the background. For this reason, such entries are included in the polarising category since the texts only mention one side, but the discourse blames the other side. One-sided entries differ according to the country they support. Some support Ukraine, while others side with Russia.

Some entries supporting Ukraine do not mention Russia, but the reader knows Russia is the enemy. In some entries, the sanctity of the defence of the motherland is mentioned. It is stated that Ukraine's struggle is legitimate as it fights with all its might against a stronger enemy. In many of these entries, the authors address Ukraine with phrases such as "May God help them," "Resist Ukraine!", "Slava Ukraini! Heroyam Slava!" and similar expressions of good wishes.

The entries supporting Russia generally state that Russia is standing up for what is right. There are also entries expressing support for the Zapatista Army of National Liberation or communist parties in different countries.

In addition to the entries that justify Ukraine and Russia, some justify NATO in the conflict that led to the war. These authors state that NATO does not force anyone to join the organisation, that states themselves decide whether or not to join the alliance, and that NATO is exonerated of any blame in the Russia-Ukraine War.

Some entries consist of criticism of the other side, with a one-sided approach to the incident. These criticisms against Russia and Ukraine are sometimes explicit and sometimes made through irony. Sometimes, the authors make accusatory statements

against the Polish government through Zelensky; sometimes, they criticise ironically based on entries such as “Putin thought of this.”

In addition to criticising Russia and Ukraine, which are the direct parties of the war, there are also questioning comments against Ukraine’s supporters, such as NATO, the European Union (EU) and the USA, claiming that they caused the war to break out. At the same time, there are entries stating that Western countries do not intervene in wars in other parts of the world just because they are far away from them. In contrast, they intervene in the war with Ukraine because they are border neighbours and see a threatening situation. According to these writers, Europe, the EU, and the USA are being hypocritical on this issue. Their concern is not human rights or democracy but their interests.

Another criticism is directed at Ramzan Kadyrov, the Islamist leader of Chechnya, fighting on Russia’s side. Among the one-sided comments are those that mock Kadyrov for being dependent on Russia and that Moscow finances the militias that keep him in charge of Chechnya.

### **Entries containing oppressors vs. oppressed or democracy vs. totalitarianism/ neo-Nazism**

Another grouping of polarising contents consists of entries in which the authors accuse the side they support of defending democracy and the other side of succumbing to forms of governance that are not welcome in modern Western democracies, such as totalitarianism or neo-Nazism. The 640 entries in this group account for 12% of all polarising entries.

The accusations against the other side are mostly incriminating towards Ukraine and Russia. Most of the entries directed against Russia state that Putin is a dictator and that Russia is unjustly occupying a sovereign state. Russia’s claims that its genocide of its compatriots or that Ukraine is in the hands of the neo-Nazis are untrue and that these are Russian public relations operations. Some entries draw attention to the similarities between Russia and Nazi Germany, revealing the fascist attitude of Russia. Some entries argue that Putin is a dictator, does not care about his people, and that the people, who are already in a dire economic situation, will suffer even more in the long run due to the sanctions imposed. In addition, they argue that NATO is perhaps



the only obstacle to Russia's expansionist policies and that NATO protected Türkiye from becoming a part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in the past, suggesting that Russia continues to pursue the same imperialist policies.

In addition to Russia and Ukraine, critical entries about other European countries, mainly NATO, also occupy an essential place in this group. It draws attention to the fact that the sanctions against Russia initiated by almost all NATO and European countries after the invasion deviated from their purpose and turned into a witch hunt against ordinary, innocent and even Putin-opposing Russian citizens, which resulted in the maltreatment of the Russian people.

### **Entries accusing parties of propaganda**

The third group of polarising entries includes criticism of propagandist discourse. According to the authors, Ukraine, Russia, the USA and the EU are engaged in disinformation-based propaganda about the war. While it is customary for the parties to engage in propaganda during a war, they criticise the practices of their adversaries. In particular, the accuracy of government data on the number of soldiers killed, civilian casualties, civilians massacred or military targets destroyed is debated. Some authors label the data or news published by the other side as propaganda and try to refute them as if they were Russian or Ukrainian government employees and engage in counter-propaganda. For example, the authors claim that the faulty operations of one side are portrayed as the crime of the other side; they try to label the other side as neo-Nazi sympathisers or fascists; and they even claim that the other side has created scenes where people are lying dead to make the other side look like war criminals. Ukraine's defenders interpret the information provided by Russian news sources as propaganda. However, Russia's defenders claim that Western media agencies are distorting the truth and trying to justify Ukraine.

### **Entries imposing their ideas while criticising polarisation**

Some of the polarising entries in the heading consist of those who express their discomfort with this polarisation and then try to impose their ideas by defending the side they support or criticising the other side. A relatively small number (n=75) of such entries pretend to be neutral and accuse Russia of being an invader, Putin of being a dictator, or portray Ukraine as a country that collaborates with fascists, whose heads

of state are buffoons, a lackey of the USA, and naive enough to trust the West. Such entries consist of "I am against polarisation on *Ekşi Sözlük*, but..." or "I am not for war, but...", which always begin with but and contain the second and main context. Criticism of the USA and NATO is expressed in the form of neutrality and, as before, that NATO is provoking Ukraine and pushing Russia into a corner, forcing it to attack. Under the guise of neutrality, others bring up the issue of Türkiye's troop presence in northern Syria and criticise Türkiye's actions.

### **Entries referring to other entries**

One of the essential elements of polarising content on *Ekşi Sözlük* is the references made by the authors to each other. Sometimes, apart from providing information or conveying their opinions, authors criticise and sometimes support other authors' previous entries. The category ranks second among polarising entries after one-sided comments, with 864 entries containing references. The sine qua non-condition for these entries is that they are written in response to entries written by other authors under the same heading. Some entries criticise authors for taking sides, manipulation or propaganda in general without targeting any specific entry. Some entries, however, are written directly to refute the argument made by a single entry. By embedding all or part of the entry to which they are responding within their text or linking to the entry or screenshot, the authors allow users to see what was written in the previous entry. The referencing entries may contain information about the war, but since they target another author, this content becomes inconsequential and a discourse that directly causes polarisation.

In the referenced entries, the authors always focus on the Russia-Ukraine dichotomy and the USA/EU/NATO. The authors bicker with each other on many issues, such as the relationship between Zelensky's being Jewish and neo-Nazism, whether Ukraine is making a strategic retreat in the territories it has lost or fleeing the field, whether it was the West that caused the war to break out; the validity of Russia's justifications; who is making propaganda and who is trying to convey the truth. Sometimes, these exchanges take place within the bounds of decency. In some instances, however, there are contents containing insults, swearing and marginalisation, in which the writers are almost angry with each other. This situation makes categorisation difficult and ensures that referring to previous entries is at the forefront of the categories of entries that cause polarisation.

### **Entries marginalizing/insulting authors with opposing views**

On *Ekşi Sözlük*, another grouping for entries defined as polarising is those that marginalise authors with opposing views. Again, three classifications stand out in the content included in this group. The first one is those who characterise the supporters of Russia with adjectives such as "Russianist," "Russo worshipper," "Putinist," "Kremlin lackey," "Politburoist," "Russian troll," "Russian dog," "Russian sucker." However, supporters of Ukraine are marginalised with epithets such as "Ukrotroll," "Ukrainian shill," "Azov remnants," and "fake neo-Nazis." In addition to the countries on both sides of the war, those who defend the USA, EU and NATO countries are labelled as "American dog," "American lover," "American lackey," "NATOist," "NATO lover" or "EU sympathiser." An analysis of polarising entries on *Ekşi Sözlük* reveals more anti-Russian entries than anti-Ukrainian or anti-Western entries combined. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the marginalising epithets applied to pro-Russians are much more diverse.

In addition, when the entries in the sample were analysed, many entries containing insults and swearing were found against the parties to the war and the writers on *Ekşi Sözlük*. Swearing, which people often use as an emotional response, offers relief in situations such as disappointment, surprise or anger. Therefore, the authors on *Ekşi Sözlük* swear more than the reactions they use for humiliation and marginalisation towards the war in which they do not have the opportunity to intervene. Swearing at opponents also tightens ranks and creates unity among like-minded people.

### **Entries accusing opponents of ignorance**

Another polarising element among the analysed entries is those who accuse the supporters of the opposing front of ignorance, regardless of the side. Russia's supporters criticise Ukraine's supporters for believing that Ukraine will defeat Russia. In their view, Russia is the other superpower in the bipolar world, the leading actor in the bipolar world, and the one that has stopped American and NATO expansionism. Therefore, Ukraine, as a relatively new state, has no chance against Russia. Volodymyr Zelensky was elected to the presidency in 2014 due to the Revolution of Dignity, supported by the USA, and is seen as a lackey of the USA. He is, therefore, only a pawn in the Western game against Russia, and NATO will stop supporting Ukraine once they are done with him. The followings are examples of such entries:

“War is bad. I am neither a supporter of Russia nor a fan of Putin, but Russia is right in its cause. Let me explain this with an example. If I explain it to that ignorant person, maybe your brain cells will start working. (...);”

“It showed ignoramuses who think that Ukraine will defeat Russia. Some seriously believe this. (...)”

“another said under my nickname that Russia and Ukraine are enemies, not brothers, and accused me of ignorance. Governments can be enemies, but peoples are not enemies;”

For the anti-Russians, Russia is a corrupt dictatorship that has benefited from the might of the USSR. It is a paper tiger, and its technologies, which the world has feared for years, are an illusion. For these reasons, it is ignorant to think Russia can invade Ukraine with Western backing. It will be weakened by the economic sanctions imposed and forced to withdraw from all the territories it occupies in due course. Russian technology cannot compete with the West, so Russia is doomed to lose this war. It is also a sign of ignorance to believe in the trump card of nuclear weapons, which Russian officials sometimes invoke because Russia can't intervene in a neighbouring country with nuclear weapons. That the neo-Nazis ruled Ukraine is another fabrication that should not be believed. These types of entries appear with examples such as “A war started by a mad dictator in which no one will intervene. It's a pity;” “Putin is a dictator. Like his predecessors. If Europe, the USA, and the NATO are not stupid, they should build material and moral barriers against Russia in this war that has started for no reason. Otherwise, Russia will not stop and will haunt the Caucasus;” “I am very sad that Ukraine is left alone. It hurts me that Putin, a Hitler-like dictator, can attack an innocent country and win a war.”

### **Sexist or racist entries about refugees**

After the turmoil in the Middle East, especially after the Syrian Civil War, Türkiye has been receiving many refugees from the Middle East. According to official figures, more than five million refugees live in Türkiye as a result of this wave of migration (Gözcü, 2023). The problems brought by the growing number of refugees led to increased concerns about refugees, and even fear turned into hatred (Kıraç, 2023). The Russia-Ukraine War has started a new wave of migration. Those who had fled the war in Ukraine

or were anti-war in Russia and wanted to escape oppression started settling in Türkiye. Some writers on *Ekşi Sözlük* brought this situation to the agenda.

Some authors state that refugees from Ukraine and Russia should be preferred to Middle Eastern refugees because these writers see Slavic women as sexual objects. This discourse, based on the beauty/ugliness distinction and containing hate speech, is discriminatory hate speech based on geography, focusing on Slavic immigrants from Europe. In contrast, others come from the Middle East. This is followed by the distinction that Middle Eastern refugees are illiterate while European refugees are educated. Some authors react to this discourse and link it to fascism. Furthermore, Middle Easterners are denigrated by saying that 'dark-skinned' people from the Middle East who defected to Ukraine were the first to flee after the Russian aggression.

Some writers, however, question the morality of Ukrainian migrants by claiming that they vacation in other European countries on refugee benefits based on unsubstantiated news reports. Other writers have posted hate speech entries claiming that Ukrainian women stayed in their country and joined the army instead of fleeing the war and that they are braver than Middle Eastern men.

### **Entries interpreting the war through the domestic politics of Türkiye**

The number of entries interpreting the 'Russia-Ukraine War' in terms of the actors of domestic politics in Türkiye is as low as 3.3%. Nevertheless, in terms of showing social dynamics, the polarisation caused by domestic politics is reflected in the entries under the 'Russia-Ukraine War' heading. There are many authors with different views and emotional approaches to the issue, such as those who declare American supporters as Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) members just because Fethullah Gülen resides in the USA, those who blaspheme those who support Russia despite the death of 33 Turkish soldiers in Idlib as a result of a Russian airstrike; and those who criticise the hostility towards the West and admiration for Russia in the Turkish public opinion.

More rational or pragmatist authors, however, argue that Russia has been one of the biggest enemies of the Turkish states for centuries. Some authors argue that Stalin demanded territory from Türkiye after World War II and that Türkiye would have been a former Eastern bloc country had it not become closer to the West. Türkiye is a member of NATO, an organisation established against the threat of the USSR. Therefore, according

to these authors, the anti-NATO sentiment in Türkiye stems from the Justice and Development Party (JDP) government's inept behaviour under the guise of foreign powers and its attempts to cosy up to Russia. For this reason, anti-NATO sentiment is primarily promoted by JDP trolls. Some writers argue that Russia's victory in Ukraine would put Türkiye in a dangerous situation because Russia and Türkiye's interests clash in the Black Sea, Armenia, Syria, and Libya, making Türkiye the next target.

Another reason for the polarisation of the headline towards domestic actors is Ukraine's use of military technology produced in Türkiye. The use of UCAV produced by Baykar, a company owned by the family of President Erdoğan's son-in-law, by Ukraine against Russia has led JDP supporters to praise these weapons and overestimate their effectiveness, while the opposition has denigrated them. Therefore, the JDP supporters/opponents divide, and polarisation is reflected under this heading.

## Discussion and conclusion

In this research, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been followed through *Ekşi Sözlük* rather than traditional mass media such as television or newspapers, due to evolving technology and social habits that have transformed in parallel with technology. The world could follow the course of the war first-hand by following visual broadcasts from the battlefield and literary texts. In this context, the war, which is not sufficiently covered in the traditional media in Türkiye, is followed through social media. On this *Ekşi Sözlük*, where all users may produce content, thousands write under the heading 'Russia-Ukraine War'. In this medium where ideas and opinions can be discussed most democratically, people, unfortunately, feel obliged to choose between the sides of the war and support one side or the other as if they were rooting for a team. This contribution, in turn, shapes what is written, leading to a conflict between the authors about a war they are not involved in and polarising attitudes towards each other. From this point of view, this study aims to reveal how Russia's invasion of the sovereign state of Ukraine leads to polarisation among people not involved in the incident for various reasons. The entries on *Ekşi Sözlük* under the title 'Russia-Ukraine War' were analysed, and the elements of polarising content were revealed.

Conflict, which arises as a result of the inability to satisfy the needs of individuals (Yelkikalan, 2006), can be based on various reasons such as personal interests, ambitions, desires or identities (Nemlioğlu, 2021; Sweeney & Carruthers, 1996). In sociological terms, conflict is the struggle of individuals or groups over the overlap and divergence

of their economic and political goals, value judgments and norms (Şahin, 2013), and situations in which they disagree, whether or not they act on different, incompatible needs, interests, opinions, values or goals (Johnson & Johnson, 2002; Tillett & French, 2006). As a result of conflict, the differentiation of the existing common culture based on two opposed interpretations leads to polarisation (Bauman, 2012). As a result of polarisation, social consensus disappears, and negotiation is abandoned. As individuals move towards the ideological extremes and concentrate on these extreme views, compromise disappears, mental separation deepens, and a segregated society emerges (Epstein & Graham, 2007). During polarisation, the differences in a society settle on a single level, leading to a process in which people construct society and politics through understandings of us and them (Göksun, 2022; McCoy et al., 2018). In other words, polarisation can be defined as dividing society into us and them.

According to the findings obtained via qualitative content analysis of 8.144 entries published in the first six months following the start of the war, 2.809 entries do not contain polarising discourse, and 5.335 entries contain polarising elements in different contexts. Non-polarizing entries are grouped under three headings: those that provide neutral information about the war, those that criticise the website for polarisation and those that defend Türkiye's neutrality. Those with polarising language were analysed under nine categories. The ratio of entries that do not contain polarising language to all entries is 34.49%, which shows that the authors use a polarising discourse in almost two out of every three entries. These data are consistent with other studies conducted in Türkiye. For example, according to Ipsos (2018), the polarisation rate in Türkiye is approximately 65%. Therefore, it would not be erroneous to say that the ideological and political polarisation in Türkiye is also reflected on *Ekşi Sözlük* writers.

In this respect, the results align with the previous studies (Akkılıç, 2018; Şirvanlı, 2021; Yalçın, 2015) on polarisation in the other studies in the literature. In the context of the Russia-Ukraine War, the categorisation of polarising entries was more comprehensive than other studies, as there were more than nineteen thousand entries under the heading, and more than eight thousand were analysed.

When the findings and the dynamics of the polarisation of the parties in the 'Russia-Ukraine War' heading on *Ekşi Sözlük* are evaluated in the axis of the research questions, it is observed that the parties are polarised primarily on the dichotomy of Russia and Ukraine. The authors supporting Russia argue that Ukraine oppresses the Russian

minority in the east of the country and that Ukraine is rapprochement with the Western bloc despite Russia's protests. However, writers supporting Ukraine argue that the alleged events in eastern Ukraine are just Russian propaganda and that Ukraine, as a sovereign state, has the right to join any organisation it wants. In some entries, both sides accuse each other of fascism. Based on the argument that Ukraine is a pawn, another polarisation is constructed on the NATO/EU/USA-Russia, specifically the USA-Russia conflict. According to the Russian proponents, the USA, to provoke Russia, instigated the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine, which brought Westernist governments to power. The opposing view is that Putin is a dictator and that his actions and arguments for war are the same as those used by the neo-Nazis to invade Poland. Each side blames the other for its expansionist policies.

These antagonisms are the main conflicts that create the polarisation in the title, but other polarisations arise from the criticism of the authors against each other. First, the fact that the entries have a one-sided point of view leads to the need to respond to the other side by putting them under suspicion. Entries referring to other entries often criticise and sometimes support the previous entries of other authors. Some of these entries raise objections on a general issue, others on a specific entry. In the polarisation shaped by the propaganda of the warring countries and war-related state organisations, as well as the authors on *Ekşi Sözlük*, each side accuses the other of twisting the facts and disinformation.

In their entries, a group of writers marginalise or insult writers with opposing views. As a result of this action, which is carried out by insulting and swearing, the possibility of reconciliation between the parties is wholly eliminated, and an extreme polarisation emerges because the other side tightens its ranks in the face of these attacks. The group integrates by ignoring the differences within it. Accusing the opposing side of ignorance causes a similar reaction and increases polarisation. When the entries are analysed in the context of oppressors vs oppressed or democracy vs totalitarianism/ neo-Nazism, it can be seen that the authors accuse their side of being a defender of democracy and the other side of succumbing to totalitarianism or neo-Nazism, forms of government that are not welcome in modern Western democracies. In this polarisation that developed based on Russia, Ukraine and Western countries, perhaps the only point the majority can agree on is that Western countries overreacted to the Russian people after the war and did injustice to them. Although some entries seem to criticise the polarisation in *Ekşi Sözlük*, they have subtexts reflecting the author's opinions. Some authors declared



refugees from Ukraine and Russia as sexual objects, whereas others committed hate crimes against Middle Eastern refugees. As a result, although some authors entered entries supporting these views, these views were generally opposed, and polarisation was relatively less polarised.

The general opinion in the entries interpreting the war through the domestic politics of Türkiye is that one of the USA or Russia is Türkiye's enemy. In this sense, Ukraine remained in the background despite being a party to the war. Considering the internal dynamics, it was observed that those who supported Russia were mainly composed of individuals with political views close to the JDP, the ruling party in Türkiye. This may be related to the JDP government's recent efforts to rapprochement with Russia and the East instead of the West. The supporters of Ukraine and the West, on the contrary, are those who are politically objectors of the Turkish government. Regarding Turkish arms production, the polarisation goes in a different direction. People loyal to the JDP have praised the UCAVs produced by Baykar, a company owned by the family of President Erdoğan's son-in-law, and have endorsed Ukrainian initiatives in this direction; however, there has been much criticism of the weapons from the objectors.

As a result, the study reveals that the polarisation in Türkiye is also reflected on *Ekşi Sözlük* and that people can be polarised even on a subject that does not directly concern them. Polarisation is not the same as disagreement on solving problems, which is healthy and natural in a democracy. Polarisation is more than having a different opinion than others on specific issues. In extreme polarisation, people feel isolated and suspicious of the 'other' camp. At the same time, they feel loyal to and trust their camp without examining their prejudices or the factual basis of their knowledge. Polarisation is likely to be persistent and harmful. Therefore, this study reveals the unhealthy situation in Turkish society, as many previous studies have already demonstrated (Aydın Düzgüt, 2023; Erdoğan, 2016; Erdoğan and Semerci, 2022; Ipsos, 2018; Kentel, 2022; Özçolak, 2022; Somer, 2019).

The research analysed the entries entered under the title 'Russia-Ukraine War' on *Ekşi Sözlük*. Therefore, some inferences and conclusions have been reached only through the data obtained from the website. The main problem with such an approach is that the authors, who are called trolls and aim to interact and make a name for themselves, cannot be identified. It is undeniable that there are trolls on *Ekşi Sözlük*, both on the Russian and Ukrainian sides, who try to sow seeds or manipulate and provoke other

people to upset them or start a quarrel. Trolls who deliberately write inflammatory, digressive or irrelevant entries to provoke others into emotional responses or to distract from the topic of a thread write many posts under this heading, provoke and polarise people, and then delete their entries and disappear. Since troll entries have very sharp discourses, they encourage the opposing writers to sharpen their language. This may cause polarisation to appear more widespread than it is.

In addition, although the entries contain information about the motivations of the authors, reaching these authors in future studies will provide more accurate information about their motivations. Since the study was conducted on a website for Turkish-speaking people, it was only possible to analyse the views of a specific community on the war. A study on worldwide sites such as *X*, *Quora* or *Reddit* would enable more universal results. A comparative analysis of a site from Türkiye and a site with users worldwide would enable comparisons between Türkiye's views and those worldwide.

## Endnotes

- 1 *Ekşi Sözlük* is an interactive, participatory website containing authors' definitions and comments, information about words, terms, concepts, events and people, experiences, observations, anecdotes, surveys, links, and resources

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# Manipulative mechanisms and reasons behind sharing fake news during Russo-Ukrainian War: A three-fold study

## *Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı sırasında sahte haber paylaşımının arkasındaki manipülatif mekanizmalar ve nedenleri: Üç aşamalı bir çalışma*

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### Abstract

In a crisis, an individual's critical thinking is incapacitated, as the extreme circumstances put them in distress. Consequently, to overcome the panic and create an optimistic environment, any information that is apprehensible under these conditions becomes effortlessly shareable. The Russo-Ukrainian War of the 21st century has proved to be such a crisis and a trigger for disinformation. The study led to significant results concerning the characteristics of pseudo-positive false information during war and the psychology of its sharing. By analyzing the sources of fake news published on *Facebook*, integrated with a survey of 300 Georgians and two focus groups, research concludes that Russian propaganda in Georgia during the Russo-Ukrainian War was strong. Despite this, Georgian social media users display an inclination for positive information about Ukraine, a preference rooted in a perceived common enemy and a shared sense of camaraderie with Ukrainians. By scrutinizing the influences of pseudo-positive fake news, research also identifies the main and most effective manipulators and triggers operating during the war. A noteworthy discovery is the active dissemination of anti-Ukrainian and pro-Russian fake news by the Russian propaganda and disinformation machine in Georgian social media, fueling a Infodemic.

**Keywords:** Disinformation, pseudo-positivity, social media, Russo-Ukrainian War, manipulation

### Öz

Bir kriz anında, ekstrem koşullar bireyi sıkıntı içerisine soktuğundan, bireyin eleştirel düşünme yetisi devre dışı kalır. Dolayısıyla, paniği aşmak ve iyimser bir ortam yaratmak için bu koşullar altında anlaşılabilir olan her türlü bilgi rahatlıkla paylaşılabılır hale gelir. 21. yüzyılın Rusya Ukrayna Savaşı ise böyle bir kriz ve dezenformasyon için tetikleyici bir olgu olduğunu kanıtlamıştır. Bu çalışma, savaş

sirasında ortaya çıkan sahte enformasyonun özellikleri ve bunların paylaşılmasındaki psikolojiye ilişkin oldukça önemli sonuçlar ortaya koymuştur. *Facebook*'ta yayınlanan sahte haberlerin kaynaklarını analiz ederek, 300 Gürcü ile yapılan bir anket ve iki odak grubu ile entegre edilen araştırma, Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı sırasında Gürcistan'da, Rus propagandasının güçlü olduğu sonucuna varmıştır. Buna rağmen, Gürcü sosyal medya kullanıcılarının Ukrayna hakkında olumlu bilgilere eğilim gösterdiği ve bu tercihin temelinde ortak düşman algısı ve Ukraynalılarla paylaşılan

yoldaşlık duygusu yattığı görülmüştür. Sahte haberlerin etkilerini inceleyen araştırma, savaş sırasında faaliyet gösteren ana ve en etkili manipulatörleri ve tetikleyicileri de belirlemiştir. Rus propaganda ve dezenformasyon makinesinin Gürcistan sosyal medyasında Ukrayna karşıtı ve Rusya yanlısı sahte haberleri aktif bir şekilde yayması ve dezenfodemiye körüklemesi ise araştırmanın saptadığı diğer bir kayda değer bulgudur.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Dezenformasyon, sözde olumluluk, sosyal medya, Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı, manipülasyon

## Introduction

The history of fake news, misinformation and manipulation spans centuries and has existed in almost every stage of human evolution in varying doses - even in ancient Rome (MacDonald, 2017). For example, during the World Wars, this type of concept was known as "disinformation," and "freak journalism," or "yellow journalism" in the Spanish War, which dates back to 1896 (Pauly & Campbell, 2002). It is definite that, in the course of every war, there is a discernible escalation in the prevalence of misinformation and propaganda.

Some researchers assert that the taxonomy and definition of fake news extend beyond the general concept of news. Based on the analysis of scientists' opinions, the paper states that fake news is a type of misinformation (Aïmeur et al., 2023; Allen et al. 2020). International researchers also note that fake news has already reached other levels. A guide issued by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2018 states that fake news includes disinformation (harmful information that contains manipulative content) and misinformation (information that is false but not intended to cause harm). There is also a third form - malinformation, which is rooted in reality but strategically deployed to harm individuals, social groups, organizations, or countries (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2018, p. 46).

Disinformation seems to be an ancient art, but technology has taken it to another level (Chesney & Citron, 2018). Nevertheless, scientists argue that we still need to study fake news in depth and understand what it is (Watson, 2018). Recent studies show that

“social media has played an active role in the spread of the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) infodemic” (Oğuz & Öztürk, 2022, p. 83), as nowadays social media is often neutral towards verifying information (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Information changes/repeats itself so quickly and reaches the consumer that its critical analysis seems impossible (Fazio et al., 2015). Social networks and online media have taken the speed of information sharing to another level. The influence the media possesses on the public and the formation of their opinion has increased considerably. People believe the information shared by their acquaintances, friends and/or liked/subscribed platforms (Murphy, 2017). The susceptibility of individuals to believe in disinformation highlights a growing and concerning form of manipulation.

Scholars have approached the definition of manipulation from various perspectives, considering it as a social influence tactic, a form of psychological control, or a strategic communication tool. Notably, Cialdini (2009) identifies six principles of influence, including reciprocity, commitment, and authority, shedding light on the nuanced nature of manipulative strategies.

Watson (2018) also argues that a story/post shared by friends/relatives has a significant impact, although another group of scholars note that even when information is shared by friends, the users still choose the story that they need. The information resource demand and supply model assumes that the typical news consumers have two main characteristics: First, they want to receive reliable information and understand the objective truth about the world; Second, the consumers have a demand for news that fits their worldviews and desires (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006). The latter is closely related to the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) (Giles, 2010) and the Rational Choice Theory (RCT).

Some illiterate social media users write, create and disseminate information through online media. According to studies, they even use traditional media, and sources for confirmation (Molina et al., 2019). This is troubling and dangerous given that people are more likely to trust information that matches their beliefs and knowledge, which in turn exacerbates the impact as misinformation matches opinion and experience (Bode & Vraga, 2015).

As early as 1977, scientists at Stanford University discovered the “truth effect,” according to which a message that a user has already heard or read is more credible

than new information (Hasher et al., 1977). Recent studies in the field of psychology have shown that people perceive the true story as what they most often understand or see (Fazio et al., 2015). All of this indicates to some degree that the users are dependent on visual manipulators and trust the information or platform that they see the most and is shared by their friends (Silverman, 2016). The reliance on manipulators remains evident when examining today's media landscape in the context of war. Crises often induce a high level of uncertainty, leading people to share fake news as a way to make sense of the situation or fill information gaps, even if the information is inaccurate (Starbird et al., 2014). As Geissler et al. stated (2023), Russian propaganda campaigns and specific manipulators are used to shape the narrative around the war. On the one hand, the Russian government enforced new legislation to exert power over traditional media outlets, compelling citizens to support the war. As a result, domestic media outlets are coerced into adopting the official narrative.

During times of war, conflicting parties may engage in information warfare, using propaganda to manipulate public opinion. Fake news becomes a tool to disseminate misleading narratives, influence perceptions, and weaken the morale of opponents (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). The Russo-Ukrainian War, which began in 2014, has had profound geopolitical implications for Eastern Europe and the wider international community. One of the more insidious consequences of this conflict has been the propagation of fake news and disinformation, which have not only influenced the course of the war but have also spread to neighboring countries, including Georgia.

War has showcased the weaponization of information and disinformation by both Russian and Ukrainian actors. Russian state-sponsored media outlets, such as *Russia Today* and *Sputnik*, have been instrumental in disseminating propaganda and false narratives to advance Moscow's interests. On the Ukrainian side, social media and online platforms have been utilized to counteract Russian disinformation (Rid, 2019).

On the other hand, Russian propaganda is suspected of influencing countries beyond its borders, particularly through the use of social media to foster hostility against the West. Instances of Russian propaganda have been documented in several Western countries during past conflicts as well (Alieva et al., 2022; Geissler et al., 2023).

The rise of social media platforms and their potential for spreading disinformation have been central to the information war in Ukraine. The authors examined the use of

social media by various actors, including Russian troll farms and Ukrainian activists, to disseminate fake news and shape public opinion. Social media's role in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian War has relevance to understanding the spread of fake news in Georgia (Babacan & Tam, 2022).

Georgia, a country near the conflict zone, has not been immune to the spread of disinformation related to the Russo-Ukrainian War. Russian state-sponsored media outlets, as well as websites linked to the Kremlin, have actively targeted the Georgian population with disinformation campaigns (Sirbiladze, 2019). Georgia's vulnerabilities to disinformation campaigns are linked to its complex geopolitical situation. The country's ongoing territorial conflicts, including the situations in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, have made it particularly susceptible to information warfare tactics. Moreover, the lack of media literacy and critical thinking skills in Georgia's population has further exacerbated the issue (Media Development Foundation, 2022).

It is crucial to understand that spreading false information may lead to a new wave of conflict. A good example of this is the Rwandan genocide (Odergon, 2008). Also, misinformation easily leads to racist and intolerant actions in society and instills hate speech and xenophobia (Cerase & Santoro, 2018).

But why is fake news still shareable and what positive benefits can social media users gain from sharing them during the crisis? War-induced stress has led to psychological distress, generalized anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Rajkumar, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). In emergencies, positive information is very important and often necessary to maintain an optimistic mood and gain hope (Fredrickson, 2009; Seligman, 2012). This fact is automatically linked to our theories - people choose certain information at a specific moment according to their needs. Researchers explore concepts such as persuasion, deception, and emotional intelligence to understand how individuals are susceptible to manipulation (Tucker et al., 2018).

Sharing 'useful' or 'positive' content proves to social network users that they are valuable. Accordingly, they get motivated as they get pleasure and satisfaction from positive feedback and comments. *The New York Times* conducted an extensive study that is rather relevant today, which examined the psychology of online sharing. As a result of the research, they formulated five main motivators for sharing:

1. People want to improve someone else's life (94%)
2. People want the content to reflect their identity (68%)
3. People want to grow their relationships and communicate (80%)
4. People share content as they like the feeling they manifest when others write comments under their posts or when a certain post has high engagement (81%)
5. People want to spread information about what they believe (84%) (The New York Times, 2019).

In emergencies, such as the Russo-Ukrainian War, critical circumstances arise that induce distress among social media users, leading them to inadvertently propagate misinformation they perceive as positive.

Given the escalated Russian propaganda that the underlying circumstances have activated, the significance of Georgian social media research has amplified. Furthermore, if one considers the historical context - Russia's occupation of 20% of Georgia's territories - it becomes indubitably vital to study this issue in the Georgian core. 2022 Meta transparency reports show that Georgia is one of the top 15 countries targeted by the Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior networks. In addition, Georgia is a multi-ethnic country - over 13% of the population (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2014) is represented by ethnic minorities, who often become targets of new waves of disinformation. Thus, to protect their rights and reduce ethnic or religious strife, it is critical to research these types of false information.

Today, amid the Russo-Ukrainian War, the concerned parties are actively utilizing manipulative tactics to create positive/negative images, establish heroic identities, or propagate xenophobic views. Therefore, examining the structure of the false information by which the Georgian social media environment is saturated is crucial in demonstrating the employed manipulation mechanisms, the rationale for sharing these topics, and the ramifications that the fake news brings.

## Aim and methodology

The study aims to discern the aforementioned details concerning the spread of misinformation. The primary focus of the article lies in analyzing the impact of fake news, the reasons behind sharing pseudo-positive false information and their influence on social media users' behavior.

Considering that we examine false information consisting of positive context, we use the term 'pseudo-positive false information,' which refers to information saturated with false positives. For example, the following information is pseudo-positive for the population of Georgia: "Ukraine has already won the war, and next will be Georgia," "Russia has retreated and is giving the territories back to Georgia." We explained the term to the media experts, psychologists, and other specialists involved in the study, and they concurred with and endorsed the term- 'pseudo-positive.' Therefore, our research will adopt the term 'pseudo-positive,' as it most accurately encapsulates the essence and content of false information in such cases.

Depending on the assumption that Georgians shared pseudo-positive information about Ukraine, following research questions were developed:

1. What types of manipulations were utilized in Georgian social media during the course of the war?
2. What types of manipulators are most influential among social media users (photos, titles, stereotypes, historical context)?
3. What kinds of false information are shared by Georgian social media users (negative news about Russia and positive news about Ukraine or vice-versa)?
4. Why do social media users share misinformation about the war?
5. What impact does fake news have on social media users?

Social media, in particular, *Facebook* and the sources of false information published on this platform were selected as research subjects. The study took place over eight months - from February 24 to September 24.



In order to get the best results for social media research with aspects of media psychology, the authors have adopted topic-based methods, which are recommended in the book "*Media Psychology*" by field expert Giles (2010). To accomplish our goals and address the research questions, we employed a comprehensive research methodology, encompassing quantitative research in the form of a survey involving 300 Georgian social media users, as well as qualitative and quantitative content analysis of 106 fake publications. Additionally, after receiving the ethical permissions the authors conducted two focus groups.

The study investigates the manipulative mechanisms behind 106 instances of misinformation shared on *Facebook*, identified through a dedicated section on Ukraine within a Georgian fact-check organization's webpage (FactCheck). The engagement of this information was tracked and verified using the CrowdTangle application, which identified these publications as having the highest engagement during the war. An acceptable level of inter-coder reliability was found among assessors. Additionally, to understand the type of information actively shared by Georgian social media users, we devised a specialized survey consisting of 20 questions to identify user behavior during a crisis. To gather responses, an online survey was administered by distributing questionnaires to 300 respondents in Georgia through various online communication platforms.

Research shows that conducting experiments within a focus group is highly effective in media psychology, allowing the researcher to directly observe participants' reactions, facial expressions and actions (Giles, 2010). Accordingly, we organized two focus groups, each with 10 participants, to visually assess the impact. Focus groups were conducted on the same day - June 24, 2022 - with a 1-hour interval, lasting 65 minutes for the first group and 95 minutes for the second group. Participants in the groups were chosen to reflect age diversity and maintain gender balance, as determined by a preliminary survey. The key criterion was that participants should not have a background in the media. Consequently, 20 individuals were selected through a *Facebook* poll, with 10 participants in each group.

Alongside the researcher, a psychologist<sup>1</sup> also participated, observing the participants' behavior. This unique method provided insights into the effects of fake news and manipulations on social media users and, when combined with relevant theories, contributed to comprehensive answers and findings.

Scientists point out (Talwar et al, 2019) and the scientific papers we have analyzed also confirm that the study of false information requires a complex use of theories and research methods of media psychology and mass communication. Thus the research was based on several relevant theories that scientists use to study social media and user behaviour. These are: UGT, the RCT, and the Self-Determination Theory (SDT).

UGT based on traditional psychological theory, but is also widely used in mass communication research. Under this approach, the viewers (or media users in general) control the information that they receive. Accordingly, UGT researchers observe the motives for selecting and using specific content by the user (Giles, 2010). According to Berger, "Researchers focus on how the audience uses the media, not how the media affects the audience" (Berger, 1995).

Consequently, in the imperative task of overcoming a depressive state with positive information during a crisis such as war, consumers, as posited by UGT, actively seek and discover information that aids them in coping with stress.

SDT studies human motivation (Deci et al, 2012). By general observation, it resembles UGT, however, it is more suited to the positioning of the user on social media. In the context of our research, users' competence and image are elevated both in the eyes of their friends and on social media when they share information that garners positive feedback. The war can be perceived as a challenge, and the solution may involve social media users regarding the act of sharing 'useful' information with their friends, aiming to assist them while emphasizing their importance in the process.

According to RCT people make choices based on what maximizes their gain (Becker, 1976). The path that an individual chooses should bring them maximum satisfaction (which is also a benefit) (Center of Social Sciences, 2004). It is also argued that RCT is manifested in the use of social media where the user is consciously active on the network in anticipation of positive results (Logan et al., 2018). This phenomenon becomes particularly pronounced during the war, as individuals actively navigate social media with the expectation of positive outcomes, demonstrating the applicability of RCT in this context.

## Findings

Building upon an analysis of thematic scientific literature, relevant theories and false publications, the primary outcomes of the research were systematically organized under relevant subheadings. This categorization facilitated the identification of clear and concise answers to the research questions. The results were methodically grouped in alignment with the respective research inquiries, enhancing the overall coherence and structure of the findings.

Throughout the research period, leveraging the *FactCheck* platform in Georgia, we meticulously identified and selected 106 instances of misinformation. These were scrutinized for engagement using the *CrowdTangle* application, focusing on their popularity during the period and dissemination through the social network *Facebook*. All 106 publications underwent thorough analysis and were categorized by topic; however, a subset comprising 36 publications, representing every third publication among the 106, was specifically chosen for in-depth title analysis.

### Topics and headlines of fake information

Following the examination of 106 instances of false information, it became apparent that during the Russo-Ukrainian War, falsification on Georgian social media primarily occurred in four directions: anti-Ukrainian, pro-Russian, anti-Western, and anti-Georgian. Notably, there are several instances of pro-Ukrainian fake news (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Number of fabricated publications by topic

Subject of fabrication	Number
anti-Ukraine *Actions, attitudes, or statements that are opposed to or hostile toward Ukraine, its people, culture or interests. This can manifest in various ways, including political, social, cultural or economic dimensions. Ex. "Ukrainians are orchestrating a genocide in Donbas"	45 (42%)
pro-Russian *Actions and information that express support for or align with the interests of Russia. Ex. "Russia does not start Wars"	34 (32%)
anti-Western * Content, narratives or communication that portrays a negative or critical view of Western countries, their values, policies, institutions or culture. This term is often used in the context of geopolitical discussions, information warfare or propaganda. Ex. "The United States of America (USA) started the Russo-Ukraine War"	5 (5%)
anti-Georgian *Same as anti-Western but in context of Georgia. Ex. "Georgian fighters aligned on the side of Ukrainian Nazis"	6 (6%)
pro-Ukrainian * Information that supports Ukraine Ex. "The war has begun, Mariupol is being bombed"	3 (3%)
Other Ex. "Germany has admitted that Ukraine and Georgia will not be accepted into North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union.	13 (12%)

The data (Table 1) indicates the active involvement of Russian propaganda in Georgia. Throughout the research period (February 24/2022, to September 24/2022), out of the 106 widely circulated fake publications, 45 were found to be anti-Ukrainian, while 34 were identified as pro-Russian. The percentage breakdown (Table 1) reveals that only 3% of the misinformation flow is pro-Ukrainian, whereas a substantial 84% aligns with Russian propaganda, which in total can be considered pro-Russian, as content perceived as detrimental to Ukraine or the Western side is inherently regarded as favorable to Russia.

The analysis of the headlines is particularly noteworthy when considering this percentage distribution, as it indicates that the content of the information is mostly hidden in this context. Anti-Ukraine messages in the headlines can be given as follows: "The Kharkiv government building was bombed by Ukrainian rockets," "Ukrainian soldiers employ civilians as human shields," "A residential building in Kyiv was damaged by a rocket fired by Ukraine," "Zelensky and his entourage left Kyiv on February 25," "Zelensky and his entourage left Kyiv on February 25," "The military operation in Ukraine is aimed at fighting Nazism and Facism," "The military operation in Ukraine is aimed at fighting Nazism and Fascism," "Ukrainians are orchestrating a genocide in Donbas," "President Zelensky did not visit the wounded soldiers," "Disinformation: The BBC admitted that the attack on Kramatorsk was carried out by Ukraine," "The purpose of the French investigative expert group is to cover up war crimes committed by Ukraine," "Ukraine was orchestrating a genocide in Donbas for 8 years," "In the first days of Russia's 'special military operation'" [in Ukraine], all of Ukraine's air defense systems were out of order," "Ukrainians assaulted Oleksiy Goncharenko," "Zelensky is a drug addict," "Many European countries refused to accept Ukrainian refugees due to venereal diseases."

Through content analysis of 45 publications, 15 titles were selected. The analysis unveiled that anti-Ukrainian messages predominantly spread in two directions:

1. Portraying the Ukrainian side (including the president) as weak (n=5)

Frequently, false information emerges with a central message that "the armed forces of Ukraine surrendered their weapons," "Zelensky has left Kyiv," "all of Ukraine's air defense systems were out of order," "Zelensky is a drug addict."

These narrative attempts to shape the perception of the Ukrainian side as weak, with the mentioned phraseology diminishing hope and positive impulses on psychological and subconscious levels.

## 2. Depicting the Ukrainian side as 'criminal and terrorist' (n=10)

Information about the creation of the mentioned 'enemy icon' predominates, frequently featuring phrases such as "Ukraine carried out," "Ukraine was orchestrating a genocide," "Nazis and Fascists" and "Ukrainians bombed."

The evident trend in the second dominant part of the misinformation flow is directed towards depicting the Ukrainian side as the 'culprit' in the war, casting it as the aggressor and crafting a narrative that positions Russia as a victim. Similar patterns emerge in the anti-Western and anti-Georgian examples, where efforts are made to identify the party responsible for the conflict and paint the Georgian side as the 'aggressor.'

As previously noted, anti-Western false publications share a common narrative in their titles, claiming that the USA initiated the War, thereby framing the West as culpable, for example, "The USA started the Russo-Ukraine War." Conversely, Anti-Georgian publications showcase a broader range of narratives, including depictions of Georgian fighters aligning with Ukrainian Nazis, placing them on the perceived 'wrong' side. We can see those narratives in titles like - "Georgian fighters aligned on the side of Ukrainian Nazis." Additionally, they portray Russians facing mistreatment at the Russo-Georgian border, where they are pressured to recognize the Russian Federation as the aggressor. Furthermore, exploring pro-Russian messages is intriguing, as they depict Russia as a hero, emphasizing themes of heroism and humanism in their content.

Pro-Russian messages in the headlines can given as follows: "Russia tried to negotiate with Ukraine for months, but Zelensky threatened to raise hell," "Russian army liberates Ukrainian cities," "Russia does not start wars," "Western countries are surprised by the level of Russian training and the combat efficiency of their army," "Photographs depicting the capture of Kharkiv by Russia," "Russia does not kill civilians in Ukraine and 70% of Georgian population wants Russia," "No air attack was carried out by the Russian army on the Mariupol hospital," "Russia does not bomb civilian structures," "Russians treat Ukrainian prisoners of war in the most humane way," and "Russians 'referendums' were recognized by international observers."

Pro-Russian fake content mainly spreads with one aim - Russia as a symbol of peace. We actively encounter such phrases as "Russia does not start wars," "liberates cities," "does not kill civilians," "does not bomb," and "Russians exhibit humane behavior."

During the research period, the sole identified pro-Ukraine video hoax - "The war has begun, Mariupol is being bombed" - actually includes footage of a lightning strike instead of the purported bombing. However, the comments and public reaction to this publication exhibit starkly different reactions, as discerned in the survey and focus group.

### **Manipulative mechanisms**

The analysis of publications indicates that the primary manipulative mechanisms employed by the Russian propaganda machine involve the construction of 'hero' and 'enemy' icons, essentially engaging in a process of demonization. Edward Bernays (2004) frequently discussed this manipulation mechanism. The demonization of individuals or groups is indeed a manipulation tactic that has been employed throughout history for various purposes. This tactic was often used in the Soviet period as well. During the Cold War Soviet media regularly portrayed the capitalist West, particularly the USA, as a hostile and aggressive force seeking to undermine the achievements of the Soviet Union. Western countries were depicted as imperialistic and warmongering, while the virtues of communism were emphasized (Beloff, 1951).

Each Russian propaganda publication is replete with disinformation narratives, as other sources confirm. Russian propaganda often spreads false or misleading information to create confusion and shape public opinion.

Hence, upon comparing Russian propaganda with its Soviet predecessor, it becomes apparent that similar manipulative mechanisms persist to this day. Among these manipulative tactics are the distortion of historical context and the instigation of fear, as exemplified in the statement from Georgia: "70% of the population of Georgia wants Russia," "On the Russo-Georgian border, Russian citizens are asked to recognize the Russian Federation as the aggressor," "Evelyn Farkas calls on Georgia to start a war against Russia."

It is known that Russia provides energy resources to Georgia. Hence, the manipulation claiming that "Russia no longer supplies Europe with energy resources" is designed to instill fear, possibly influencing other countries' decisions based on this misinformation. Simultaneously, the assertion that "Many European countries refused to accept Ukrainian refugees due to venereal diseases" also sows fear. This suggests a potential spread of disease in Georgia, where aggression may emerge against Ukrainian refugees and they may no longer be allowed to cross the border due to perceived 'disease.'

To conclude, we can say that the content analysis identified the following manipulative mechanisms: demonization, fear manipulation, anti-Western and, in this case, anti-Ukrainian propaganda and gaslighting.

The percentage distribution indicates that Russian propaganda in Georgia is strong, as evident in the topic and nature of fabricated publications. The second inquiry delves into the influence of this information on society and the purpose behind sharing news of similar content. The response to this question emerged through the survey and focus groups.

### **Facebook users' preferences in sharing information**

To specify social media users' preferences in sharing information, a special questionnaire was developed consisting of 20 questions. 300 social media users took part in the survey. Gender balance is more or less preserved, 55.9% of the participants are female and 44.1% are male. Moreover, there are representatives of different age groups: (34.8% - 15-24); (36.8% - 25-40); (24% - 41-60); (4.4% - 60+ ).

In order to make the survey accessible to many, including the regions of Georgia, a *Facebook* advertising function - boost - was used. Therefore, if we take into account the percentage of answers and the possibility of error, which is 2-3% by the calculations, we can say that we have obtained reliable and satisfactory results, which can be utilized for reaching appropriate conclusions.

During the survey, participants were given the opportunity to choose which information to share in a crisis. They also had to explain why they made that choice. 74% (n=222) of the participants expressed a preference for pseudo-positive information about Ukraine. In this case, individuals who shared pseudo-positive information explained that, in this particular circumstance, it is more beneficial to disseminate

positive information about Ukraine and avoid sharing any information about Russia. Those 23% (n=69) of participants who shared negative news emphasized that Russia is the enemy, expressing a desire to share this with everyone. It is notable, that only 3% (n=9) shared pseudo-positive information about Russia.

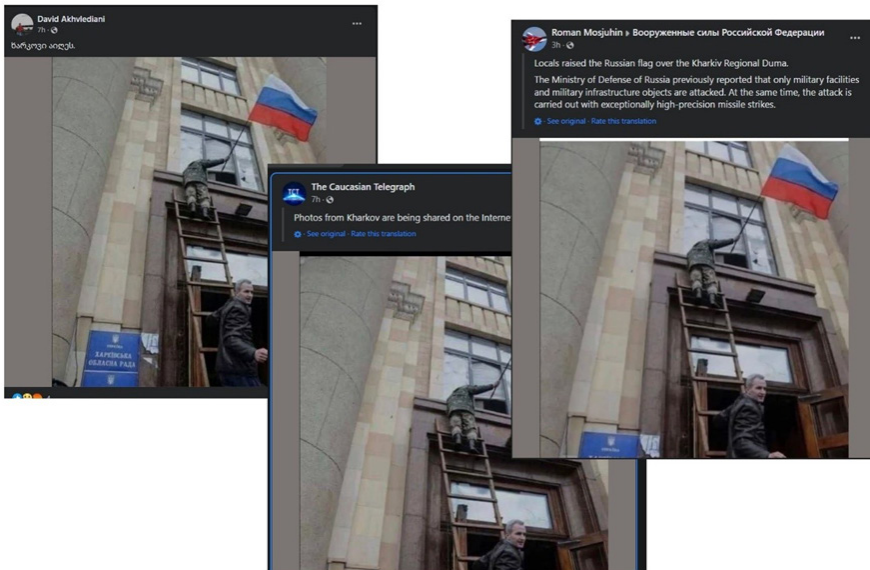
As a second case respondents were given two types of falsifications - pseudo-positive information about Ukraine and negative about Russia and were asked what they would do after seeing this information on social media.

In the case of pseudo-positive information about Ukraine, 54% of respondents answered that they would not react, 22% said they would like it and 20% would share it. In the instance of pseudo-positive information about Russia, 78% of the participants choose the answer - "I would not react," 12% say that they would comment and only 8% would share. Upon analyzing the comments of the 12%, it is notable that they commonly express sentiments such as "This is misinformation," or "Of course, this is false information, so I would write that it is fake." By examining the answers it becomes evident that a larger number of participants tend to share and like pseudo-positive information about Ukraine.

To ascertain whether negative information about Russia is highly associated with falsification or not, we provide two post to participant: Real information about Russian military and fake information about Ukraine facing losses. In this case, participants were asked to discern real information. Even when accurate information is presented about the Russian military, Georgian media users (29%, n=87) exhibit skepticism or a reluctance to believe. Instead, the 71% (n=213) of participants promptly opt for pseudo-positive information about Ukraine.

Respondents also had the opportunity to identify the main provoking/enticing factor that led them to focus on a particular publication and share it. 23% of the respondents (n=69) state that only the title is attractive and intriguing to them. The majority of social media users (66.2%, n=198) report that the combination of the title and the photo attracts their attention. The majority of social media users (66.2%, n=192) report that the combination of the title and the photo attracts their attention.

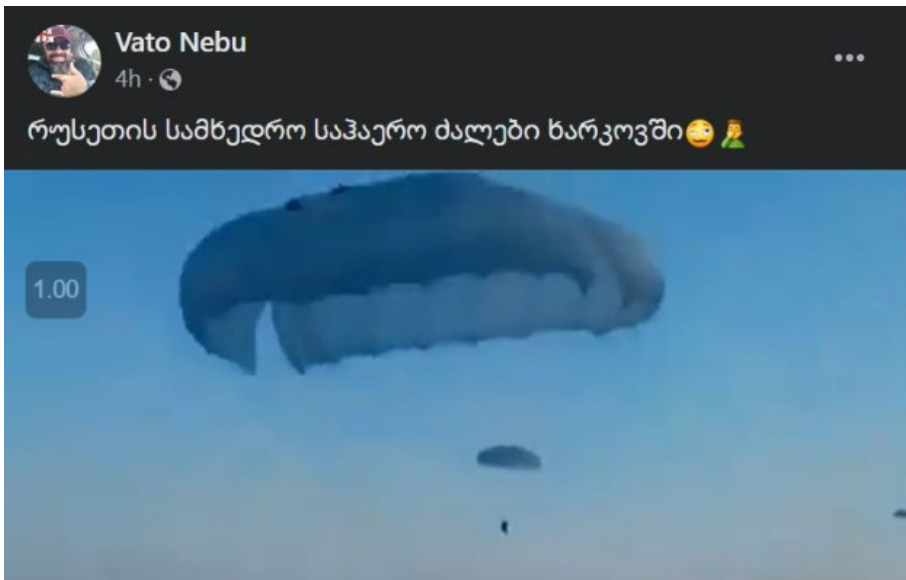




**Figure 1:** The photo which seems to depict the capture of Kharkov by Russia was taken in 2014

In the falsified post (Figure 1), circulated during the Russo-Ukrainian War in 2022, the Georgian title “Capture of Kharkov” accompanies the image, suggesting the victorious act of raising the Russian flag by military personnel. A closer inspection reveals that the photograph supposedly depicts the capture of Kharkov by Russia in 2014 and manipulated in the present to convey ‘positive’ information about Russia. The explicit correlation between the title and the outdated image is apparent.

Content analysis made it evident that the pseudo-positive false information is characterized by a close relation and logical connection between the headline and the accompanying photograph. This strategic manipulation was chosen by the majority of respondents, as validated by the findings presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** The photo was taken in 2016 when Russian forces landed in the Russian city of Rostov

The fake image (Figure 2), paired with the Georgian inscription “Russian military air forces in Kharkov,” originated in Rostov in 2016. This act of manipulation involves presenting an older image with a new title, suggesting a current occurrence, strategically designed to highlight Russia’s military prowess and evoke a sense of threat among the audience. It is crucial to emphasize that the image lacks the potential to impact social media users significantly without the accompanying appropriate title.



**Figure 3:** The photos show President Volodymyr Zelensky wearing a helmet with a picture of US President Joseph Biden hanging above his chair taking cocaine.

Frequently, the headlines are paired with photographs that negatively portray the president. It was subsequently determined that the photos were screenshots from an AI-generated video, once again underscoring the impact of technological advancements on the proliferation of fake news. Another instance of falsification featuring identical content (Figure 4) further emphasizes the concerning implications of such manipulations.



**Figure 4:** Fake photo of president Zelenskyy

If we deduce the results of content analysis, we can conclude that this type of falsification has more influence, as the manner and the tone are exhibited in the title itself, which is caused by the relevant words and photo. And since the title and the photo together carry a clear message, there is no need to follow the link - the user shares the information based on the 'idea' perceived by combining these two components. It is crucial to emphasize that, for Georgian social media users, the key manipulation tool and driving force behind their information choices is the 'historical context' and past events. This subconscious influence becomes apparent through the choices made by respondents and other social media users. It can be inferred that, due to the Russo-Georgian conflict and Russia's occupation of 20% of Georgia, the Georgian public tends to find every form of anti-Russian information acceptable.

To explain the emotional effects and reasons for sharing pseudo-positive information, we conducted focus groups with constructed small experiments.

## Attractiveness of positive news in times of war

To explain the act of sharing pseudo-positive false information by social media users in the time of war, we conducted two focus groups (10-10 participants) that included a small experiment. The process was observed by a psychologist, who assessed the reactions of the participants.

Focus group participants became presumed *Facebook* users and others - their '*Facebook* friends'. Participants had the opportunity to share and comment on each others' posts. Three types of false information were fabricated for the experiment: Pro-Russian: Russia tried to negotiate with Ukraine for months, but Zelensky threatened to raise hell; Anti-Ukraine: Ukraine was orchestrating a genocide in Donbas for 8 years; Anti-Russian: Russia gives up its positions.

The task involved deciding which information to share. Lastly, participants were required to articulate the primary reason that compelled them to click on the share button. Seven participants of the first group shared positive news about Ukraine and three participants shared negative news about Russia. According to them, the main reason for sharing the positive information was the desire to share the 'good' news with others, thus giving everyone the opportunity to experience the positive developments. For these participants pro-Ukrainian information, even if it is fake, is considered to be positive. In the case of negative information, participants highlighted that they would share it only to warn others.

The key is that those who shared positive information received positive feedback from their 'friends' such as "thank you," "good," "I'm glad" and more. The psychologist noted that while receiving these comments, the author of the post was smiling and nodding in agreement.

In the instance of the negative post, the second author received the following comments: "False," "I'm not interested in so much negativity," "We are tired," etc. While reading these comments, the author received no benefit - sitting in silence, facial expressions and gestures remained unchanged. One of the participants explained their choice to share the pseudo-positive information by stating that the news could give readers a moment of relief and create an optimistic atmosphere/positive state of mind. The main finding is that Georgian participants explain how positive news about Ukraine

is automatically perceived as positive information about Georgia, given the historical context of the Russian occupation of Georgian territories.

Authors, examining dispositional and situational optimism's impact on mood, assert that optimism correlates with positive mood, immune changes, and stress management (Segerstrom et al, 1998). This view finds support in various studies and researches (Fredrickson, 2009). Some argue that positivity "worked best in helping human ancestors survive life-or-death situations" (Tooby & Cosmides, 1990). It is noteworthy that individuals require positive news, even fabricated ones, especially in a crisis.

Thus, participants' inclination to share positive news about Ukraine is rooted in their wish to disseminate positivity. This desire stems from the belief that positive information, even if fabricated, contributes to creating an optimistic atmosphere and fostering a positive state of mind, as noted during the study's focus groups and experiments.

The results differed in the second group: Five participants shared positive information about Ukraine, five of them - negative about Russia. The same trend can be observed in this case. The participants who 'shared positivity' received the same kind of positive feedback and conveyed happiness with their facial expressions and gestures. One of the participants expressed an interesting opinion that if they received positive feedback, including likes, they would share this type of information again.

Another key insight emerged from the participants' comments during the discussion: If social media users find out that the 'positive' information that they shared is false, it will lead to disappointment and potentially induce feelings of panic and stress. However, they state that refuting the negative false information is a kind of relief, as the negative news is no longer true.

Upon learning that all the provided information was false, participants remarked that if their primary objective was to boost social media activity and garner more subscribers, they would refrain from deleting the fake post. Instead, they would leverage the engagement metrics—likes, shares, and comments. However, a relevant caption would be added to increase comments.

Social media users need to be active and visibly informed on the platform (in this case *Facebook*), as their friends also use it. The reactions they receive from the said

online friends are very important. This has an obvious connection to the SDT, as it reveals the motives behind user activity and information sharing.

Focus group discussion also clarified that historical background significantly influences people's choices in selecting media sources or sharing information. As per the focus group analysis, it was revealed that sharing positive information during a crisis about Ukraine and the Ukrainian people is a priority for most of the participants.

## Discussion and conclusion

By combining suitable methods and selected theories, all research questions were thoroughly answered. The chosen theory serves as a solid basis for answering each question. Content analysis proved instrumental in providing a crucial answer to the first question (RQ1: What types of manipulations were utilized on Georgian social media during the course of the war?). Interestingly, the manipulative mechanisms employed by Russian propaganda align with established patterns of recognized manipulative tactics. The propaganda machine mainly and intensively uses demonization, fear manipulation, anti-Western and, in this case, anti-Ukrainian propaganda and gaslighting principles. The latter is one of the most dangerous methods of psychological manipulation, wherein the abuser forces the victim to doubt their sanity and reality perception through consistent distortion and lies. Observation easily shows that today gaslighting as a psychological manipulation can be equated with disinformation flow or censorship.

The survey provided an opportunity to understand what types of manipulators are most influential among social media users (RQ2). As per respondents' answers, the majority of social media users (66.2%, n=199) report that the combination of the title and the photo captures their attention - emphasizing the logical connection between the two elements. Content analysis showed that the pseudo-positive false information is characterized by excessively long titles that encapsulate the main message. Also 23% (n=69) of the respondents state that only the title is attractive and intriguing to them. Intriguingly, that 65% (n=195) of respondents refrain from clicking the link, obtaining information solely through title reading. Hence, the primary and most impactful tool of manipulation are photo and title together.

It is essential to delve into the phenomenon of visual manipulation. As mentioned in the literature review, users tend to rely heavily on visual manipulations and place

greater trust in them, primarily due to the persuasive impact of visualization (Silverman, 2016). The capabilities of Photoshop and the advancements in artificial intelligence have elevated photo manipulation to unprecedented levels. Consequently, the influence of photo manipulations remains potent. However, research indicates that strategically separating the headline from the accompanying photo significantly diminishes the impact of fake news on social media users. This separation is crucial, as combining the headline and the photo into a unified manipulative entity amplifies their collective effect.

However, the main question (RQ3) revolves around the types of false information disseminated by Georgian social media users—whether it leans towards negative news about Russia and positive news about Ukraine or vice versa. All - the CrowdTangle application, polls and focus groups have shown that most users prefer pro-Ukrainian pseudo-positive information, which they actively share on social networks. Most of the respondents (71%, n=213) indicate that they do not want to spread any information about Russia. Here, another influential manipulator also emerges - the historical context, which guides the social media user on an emotional level. Consequently, during the crisis, users tend to share positive news about Ukraine. This inclination is related to both - relieving stress and maintaining an optimistic mood, aligning with our selected theories.

The user is guided by UGT and, thus, selects stories to satisfy the desire to defeat Russia, largely influenced by history, to navigate through crisis, and to infuse positivity [in this case, positive impulses for Georgians manifest through pro-Ukraine news]. In alignment with the principles of SDT, the user exhibits a distinct motivation, a reason why they behave this way. In our case, this motivation stems from the emotions evoked by the historical context, which forms the basis for choosing pro-Ukrainian news. This theory studies human motivation (Deci et al, 2012). By general observation, it resembles the UGT, however, it is more suited to the positioning of the user on social media. The latter is directly tied to RCT, as users make choices based on emotions, historical context and the existence of a common enemy, which is a rational choice within their perspective.

Herein lies the answer to the RQ4: Why do social media users share misinformation about the war? The primary motivator is navigating through the crisis and alleviating stress. For Georgian social media users, pro-Ukrainian news, even if fabricated, is more acceptable, as they consider it a common victory. The survey indicates a user's favorable

disposition towards the fabricated pro-Ukrainian narrative. Interestingly, when compared with the genuine pro-Russian story, the user tends to believe the fake Ukrainian story to be true. Hence, positive impulses at the subconscious level take precedence for social media users.

Finally, as an open question for discussion, it is possible to pose another inquiry: What impact does fake news have on social media users? There may be various answers to this question. Research, to a certain extent, suggests that faking in a specific positive way during a crisis can cultivate a positive and optimistic mood - an established method in positive psychology (Lambert et al., 2012; Trevors & Kendeou, 2020; Fredrickson, 2009; Seligman, 2012). However, manipulative deceptions characteristic of Russian propaganda entail numerous negative consequences, warranting a separate study. Among the most significant is the creation of a disinformation vacuum, fostering misconceptions within society.

Therefore, based on the analysis of news, it is apparent that Russian propaganda in Georgia amid the Russo-Ukrainian War is potent, as 83% of the selected 106 widely circulated fake publications lean towards a pro-Russian stance. However, the survey indicates that Georgian social media users have a preference for positive information about Ukraine, influenced by the historical context. This preference is grounded in the emotional connection of most social media users who express support for Ukraine, sharing pro-Ukrainian information due to a shared sense of camaraderie and a perceived common enemy.

## Appendix-1

### • Experiment Details

Focus group participants were presented with fabricated news headlines and they were tasked with explaining their choices regarding which ones they would share and the reasoning behind their decisions.



Examples of fabricated news presented to the groups:

1. Pro-Russian: Russia tried to negotiate with Ukraine for months, but Zelensky threatened to raise hell;
2. Anti-Ukraine: Ukraine was orchestrating a genocide in Donbas for 8 years;
3. Anti-Russian: Russia gives up its positions.

Questions given to the participants after showing to them fabricated information:

Which information do you prefer?

Which post would you share?

Which post would you like?

On which post would you write a comment and what would you write?

Why did you write this particular comment?

In this case, do you prefer positive or negative information?

In this context, what is negative information for you?

In your opinion, which of the given posts is fake - which is true?

why do you think so?

## Endnote

1 Gina Shogiradze, a Master's in Psychology from Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

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# The rapid diffusion of fake news: An analysis of content on migration, refugees, and conflict on international fact-checking platforms

## *Sahte haberin hızlı yayılımı: Uluslararası teyit platformlarında göç, mülteci ve çatışma eksenli paylaşımların içerik analizi*

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### Abstract

After the 2016 election campaign of the former United States President Donald Trump in 2016, the concepts of post-truth, disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation gain popularity. This study examines fact-checking efforts by International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) member organizations across ten countries between January to November 2023 focusing on disinformation disseminated on social media platforms. The study was designed as a case study and the content was analyzed with the content analysis approach. The research questions were determined as follows: 'Which media platforms are more commonly used to disseminate refugee-focused fake news or content?', 'Which content types are commonly used to spread fake news/content?', 'What are the common topics employed in fake content in these countries between January to November 2023?' The findings revealed that social media platforms *Facebook* and *X* were frequently used to disseminate disinformation and various types of fake news and content. Titles and text-supported video content were the most employed typology in these posts. Across the researched countries, four recurring issues were identified: disinformation about protests in France, fake news related to conflicts, and information about financial aid, opportunities, and accommodation facilities for refugees. Notably, false information on mass protests rapidly spreads alongside fake news in multiple countries.

**Keywords:** Fake news, fact checking platform, social media, migration, refugee

### Öz

2016 yılında eski Amerika Birleşik Devletleri Başkanı Donald Trump'ın seçim kampanyasının ardından, hakikat ötesi, dezenformasyon, yanlış bilgi ve kötü bilgi kavramları popülerlik kazanmıştır. Bu çalışma, Uluslararası Teyit Ağı (UTA) üye kuruluşları tarafından Ocak-Kasım 2023 tarihleri arasında on ülkede gerçekleştirilen teyit çalışmalarını inceleyerek, özellikle sosyal medya platformlarında iletilen dezenformasyona odaklanmaktadır. Araştırma bir durum tespit çalışması olarak

tasarlanmış olup içerik analizi yaklaşımı kullanılarak bulgulara ulaşılmıştır. Araştırma soruları şu şekilde belirlenmiştir: 'Mültecileri konu alan sahte haber veya içerikleri yaymak için hangi medya platformları daha yaygın olarak kullanılmaktadır?', 'Sahte haber/içerik yaymak için hangi içerik türleri yaygın olarak kullanılmaktadır?', 'Bu ülkelerde incelenen dönemde yaygın olarak kullanılan ortak başlıklar neler olmuştur?' Bulgular, *Facebook* ve *X* gibi sosyal medya platformlarının dezenformasyon ve çeşitli sahte haber ve içerik türlerini yaymak için sıkça

kullanıldığını ortaya koymuştur. Başlık ve metin destekli video içerikler en çok kullanılan tipoloji olarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırılan ülkelerde dört tekrarlayan konu tespit edilmiştir: Fransa'daki protestolara dair dezenformasyon, çatışmalarla ilgili sahte haberler ve mültecilere yönelik finansal yardım, olanak ve konaklama imkanları hakkındaki yalan içerikler. Özellikle kitlesel protestolara ilişkin yanlış bilgilerin birçok ülkede sahte haberlerle birlikte hızla yayılması öne çıkmıştır. **Anahtar kelimeler:** Sahte haber, teyit platformları, sosyal medya, göç, göçmen

## Introduction

Time and space-independent communication was normalized by the popularization of internet access and social media platforms. The popularization of the internet has led to the concept of a "global village" as introduced by McLuhan (2020) and introduced a hybrid human lifestyle that included virtual and physical domains. The development, spread, and impact of social phenomena that affect life in the physical domain have often been determined by real or fake truths that are propagated in the virtual domain. In addition to facilitating the flow of information, the virtual domain, a domain of information creation, unfortunately, did not only lead to positive outcomes. The analysis of the boundless opportunities provided by the internet and related social consequences should include the significant issue of false content that could induce social conflict, and this concept. For this reason, the subject is widely researched by academics.

Social media, which has become a part of daily life, is not currently only a medium where users search for information or events of interest, but the medium has also been internalized by users. Furthermore, users share the information they collect on these platforms and post it to other users, serving as a unit of publication (Kılıç & İspir, 2020, p. 267; Segado-Boj et al., 2019, p. 92). With the increase in the popularity of social media, fake news and content began to be created and spread. Such content did not only disseminate rapidly (Dedeoğlu, 2016, p. 59) but also began to significantly affect society, leading to social conflicts. Negative phenomena such as the spread of racist discourse, hate speech and xenophobia became effective in the development of social conflicts (Cerase & Santoro, 2018). Spread of unconfirmed, unfiltered, or fake content on social media could lead to negative outcomes (Gülmen, 2020). Fake news and content on refugees and immigrants are the particular emphasis of the current study since these have the potential to divide society and lead to social conflict.

The fact that social media that users employ as a news source became a source of fake news distinguishes social media from conventional media. The laws, ethical codes, and principles that bound conventional media do not exist for social media (Lee & Ma, 2012, p. 332). Uncontrolled and unedited social media platforms are anonymous news sources (Chen et al., 2019, p. 3). Thus, false/fake news and content could easily be generated and disseminated on social media and manipulate public opinion.

The circulation of fake news and content that could lead to social conflict and street movements increases the significance of the present study. These movements and their social consequences could lead to collective and individual concerns (Kılıç & İspir, 2020, p. 268). The present study aimed to determine how fake news and content on cross-border compulsory refugee and migrant movements are produced and disseminated on social media platforms, on fact-checking organization reports on fake news context, content, and distribution.

### **Conceptual framework and literature review**

False/fake news and content, which are coined as disinformation in daily language, were described as “information disorder” in the literature (Kermer & Nijmeijer, 2020; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). The lowest layer of information disorder includes ‘disinformation,’ ‘misinformation’ and ‘malinformation.’ Disinformation refers to deliberately created information to cause harm. Misinformation is associated with false information that was not created with malintent, while malinformation spread to cause harm (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Several authors described disinformation in the literature. A general definition emphasized that disinformation deliberately aims to mislead and is based on false information (Kırık & Yılmaz, 2018, p. 121; Tudjman & Mikelic, 2003). Fake information created and spread on social media aims to manipulate public opinion. The content that was designed and spread based on lies, could be dangerous. Misleading content that could affect social life (politics, culture, health, economy, etc.) could damage both individuals and society at different levels and is considered an important problem (Fallis, 2014, Woolley & Howard, 2018)

Videos, photographs, text, audio elements, and artificial intelligence are employed to create misleading content. Fake news and content are published on the internet



and social media platforms with edited and falsified photographs, by alienating the context and the videos, and publishing posts with misleading titles and texts (Erdoğan, 2013; Kırık & Yılmaz, 2018, p. 121; Edson et al., 2018, p.138).

Due to advances in artificial intelligence, fake content, especially deepfake, leads to significant problems in the reliability of news. Voices and faces could be combined with deep learning technology, generating inaccurate speeches as if they were spoken by that person. These items are generated through the training of algorithms using deep learning techniques (Temir, 2020, p. 1012).

Deformation, distortion, and decontextualization of the truth is called the post-truth era. In this era, the truth became insignificant, and the power of social media in the lives of the users and the rapid spread of lies became the most important issues. Today, many people repost information on social media without questioning, and they consider everything they perceive as the truth rather than searching for it, leading to the distortion of the facts (McIntyre, 2022, p. 91-95).

The most significant examples of the post-truth era could be observed in politics. It was determined that Donald Trump told six thousand three hundred and seventy lies during his presidency (McIntyre, 2022, p. 16). Beyond the fact that politicians try to convince the masses of the reality of a make-believe universe, it should also be noted that lies spread six times faster than the truth, the effects of which are unpredictable (McIntyre, 2022, p. 17).

Since lies spread much faster than truth online, they have the potential to cause serious harm. It is important to understand the negative effects of fake news and content with high power of dissemination and impact on society and the factors that motivate individuals to spread and believe this news (Shu et al., 2020a; Cheng et al. 2021). As part of the fight against disinformation, certain websites started to check and verify the facts claimed by such posts. Among these sites, snopes.com is one of the oldest that has been published since 1996, during the early years of the internet (Graves, 2016, p .28). The *FactCheck.org* supports political discourse and is published by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, is a non-profit platform founded in 2003 (Graves, 2016, p .29).

In addition to the independent platforms that fact-check the information available on the internet, IFCN, the subject of the current study, is an association of several fact-

checking platforms around the globe that was founded in 2016. IFCN was established to ensure that fact-checking organizations are accredited as reliable (International Fact Checking Network, 2023). IFCN currently has one hundred twenty-four active members and has specified five main criteria for fact-checking reliability. These include fairness and impartiality, resource transparency, financial and organizational transparency, transparency about the employed method(s), and an open and honest revision policy (İrvan, 2022).

The established fake-checking platforms are far from the desired level of efficacy. The improvement of the digital media literacy levels of internet users, their skills to distinguish fake and real news, and more importantly, raising awareness about fake news are extremely important challenges. Several studies have been conducted based on various perspectives and in several scientific disciplines to address the issue based on multiple dimensions (Akıncı, N., 2008; Alıcı & Gökbulut, 2017; Apuke et al, 2023; Machete & Turpin, 2020; Jost et al., 2020; Hammouchi & Ghogho, 2022).

Studies conducted on refugee/immigrant issues and fake news and content that could lead to social conflict, the main topics of the present study. Due to increasing migration, countries need to consider and plan social harmony in a society that includes individuals of different ethnic origins, with different beliefs, cultural backgrounds, and languages. Social unrest could emerge due to political, economic, social, and legal problems; thus, the establishment and maintenance of social harmony within these different but interrelated structures are an important issue. Furthermore, social adaptation requires time and resources and could be disrupted by the disinformation on social media platforms. However, locals who believe or choose to believe disinformation could complicate progress, lead to hate speech, and refuse to meet on common ground with the “outsiders” (Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Marwick & Lewis, 2017). Currently, individuals can create their friend circles on social media platforms, close themselves within echo chambers that propagate what they like to hear and generate news and content (McIntyre, 2022, p. 69). Any content that meets user expectations, even if it is fake, could be accepted and spread, polarizing the society. It would not be wrong to argue that individuals would act similarly to politicians to create their universes based on lies. This would ultimately provide a basis for the acceptance, propagation, and consumption of the fake content.

The review of the international and domestic literature on the control of disinformation revealed that an increasing number of studies have been conducted based on different dimensions in various disciplines. One of these, *The Hype Machine* (Aral, 2022) is a compilation of fake content published globally, where the current times are described as 'the end of reality.' In the description of the current information ecosystem, Aral argued that digital networks consist of connected individuals with similar views and beliefs (2022, p. 75). This also demonstrated the speed of the dissemination of false content. Aral's study was conducted in 2018 and is among the significant studies that reported the striking nature of fake news. In the study that covered eleven years, Aral reported that one hundred twenty-six thousand *Twitter* (now *X*) threads spread false information to 3 million people (2022, p. 77).

In a study on immigrants/refugees and disinformation, Ruokolainen & Widén (2020) focused on perceived misinformation and normative misinformation. The study focused on the validity and perceptions of the information that was shared with refugees/immigrants and suggested that they should be exposed to only accurate information during adaptation.

There are several studies in Turkish on fake news and content on immigrants and refugees. These studies, mostly conducted on Syrian refugees, employed various approaches, such as thematic analysis, multi-modal text analysis, descriptive content analysis, and in-depth interviews (Çaycı, 2021; Alışık & Aslam, 2022; İris & Kesgin, 2023; Taş, 2018; Göncü & Sim, 2019).

Another research context for fake news has been content typology, which is another topic of the current study. In their study on content typology, Edgerly et al. (2020) investigated the impact of news headlines on the reader's intentions to verify the accuracy of the said news report. Recent studies focused on content to categorize fake news typologies by distinguishing various formats and news content types (e.g., text and/or multimedia) (Bakdash et al. 2018; Fraga-Lamas & Fernández-Caramés 2020; Hasan & Salah 2019; Masciari et al. 2020; Parikh & Atrey 2018).

Undoubtedly, there are further studies in the literature on fake news, disinformation, and immigration. The search of the related keywords on Web of Science (WoS) revealed more than ten hundred articles published since 2019. To quote Aral (2022, p. 77), fake news science is still in its infancy in the clarification of how and why fake news spreads

in the virtual world. Thus, various social science studies would provide a novel focus on the issue in the comprehension of the phenomenon.

The present study was designed to address a single issue in this labyrinth of uncertainty. The literature review revealed no studies where fake news and content, dissemination channels, and content typology were analyzed based on the comparison of fact-checking platforms in several countries during the same period. It could be suggested that the present study would contribute to the field due to this analysis and since it covered an 11-month period.

## Aim and methodology

Gone are the days when the benefits of social media such as democratization, liberation, and collaboration were emphasized with the promise of a better future. Today, individuals know that the content and news spread on social media could be fake and lead to disinformation. However, both confinement in echo chambers and the tendency to trust in the news, even when they are false, allow more rapid dissemination of false content when compared to the truth.

### Aim

The present study was designed to determine disinformation associated with migration and refugee issues. It was envisaged that the present study would contribute to the comprehension of the issue, which could lead to social conflicts, especially due to its impact on the dissemination of hate speech. The study aimed to analyze the issues associated with the control of disinformation prominent in fact-checking sites based on the research questions and sub-questions.

1. Which media platforms are more commonly used to disseminate refugee-focused fake news or content?
2. What is the most common content type?
3. What are the common themes encountered in fake content in the countries of study between January to November 2023?

## Methodology

The study was designed to determine the scope and distribution of fake news and content on social media based on IFCN member fact-checking site reports between January to November 2023. The research was designed as a case study and the study data were analyzed with descriptive content analysis approach and archive review.

## Sample and data collection

One hundred sixty-two fake news were identified on social media and conventional press during the period of analysis. The top ten countries that received the highest number of immigrants/refugees in 2023 were determined based on the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) database. Among the countries listed in Table 1, Iran, Türkiye, Germany, Pakistan, Uganda, Russian Federation, Poland, Bangladesh, Sudan, and Lebanon received the highest number of immigrants.

**Table 1:** Number of refugees in 2023

Country	Number of refugees in 2023
Iran	3.443.522
Türkiye	3.368.976
Germany	2.509.506
Pakistan	2.080.501
Uganda	1.512.681
Russian Federation	1.249.342
Poland	989.877
Bangladesh	961.801
Sudan	926.433
Lebanon	799.175
France	641.626
United Kingdom	365.262
Romania	139.081
Ireland	99.048

The fact-checking platforms operate in the countries listed in the table, which have been reviewed as members of IFCN. It was determined that there were no fact-checking platforms in Iran, Uganda, Russian Federation, and Bangladesh. This was the most significant limitation of the present study.

In addition to the countries that received the highest number of refugees, France, the United Kingdom, and Ireland were also included in the study. Although the United

Kingdom (UK) left the European Union (EU) after Brexit, it was included since it is a European country that still accepts refugees, Ireland was included since it is a similar country and accepts refugees, albeit a small number, and France was included due to its EU membership. Finally, Romania was included in the research since the conditions in Romania were like Poland, it is an EU country, and a high number of Ukrainian refugees live in Romania. These four countries also host IFCN member fact-checking platforms.

The fact-checking websites examined in the study are as follows: *Full Fact*, *Factual*, *Maharat-News*, *Br*, *Soch Fact Check*, *Demagog*, *The Journal*, *Teyit*, *Fact Check Afp* and *211 Check*. After the determination of the scope, confirmed and false reports on the topics of 'refugees, migration, migrants' that were posted in the eleven months were collected with the MAXQDA software.

## Coding

The main theme was determined as 'migration/refugees' in the study, and the authors coded the remaining themes within three rounds. During the first round, the date interval was determined. Thus, all texts were reviewed to achieve mastery of the issue. In the second round, one of the research questions, the theme of dissemination platforms, was addressed, and the media and social media platforms were identified. In the third round, the fake news and content typologies in mass media were determined. To ensure validity and reliability, the codes were revised by experts during the coding process. Expert recommendations were discussed, and the codes were revised accordingly.

## Findings

The list of all countries included in the study and from which data was collected or not collected is presented in Table 2. The list is topped by the Turkish occurrence of fake news and content, marked at (n=45) as determined by fact-checking platforms. The UK ranked second based on frequency (n=35), and the finding was significant since the country received much fewer refugees when compared to the top ten nations. Also, based on Table 1, only four fake news were reported by the fact-checking platforms in Germany. However, it should be noted that significant informative content on refugees, migration, and immigrants was identified in the reports by German that fact-checking organization. It was deemed necessary to mention this since it was noteworthy that the fact-checking site played a role in raising public awareness and presenting related problems, state policies, and future perspectives.

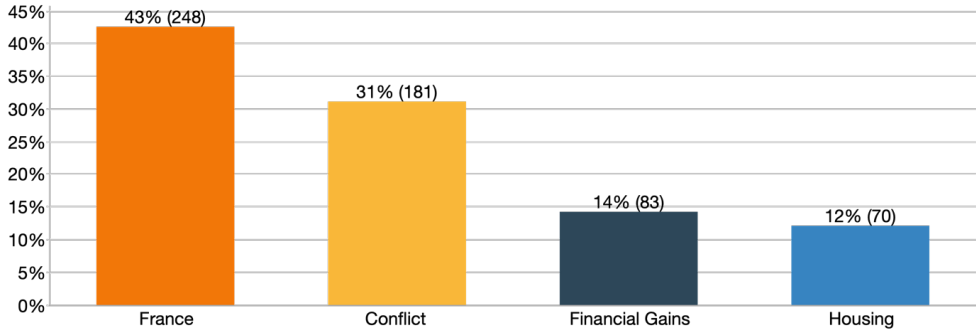
**Table 2:** Identified fake news and content

Country	Number of fake news & content about refugees
Iran	-
Türkiye	45
Germany	4
Pakistan	12
Uganda	-
Russian Federation	-
Poland	18
Bangladesh	-
Sudan	3
Lebanon	1
France	21
United Kingdom of Great Britain	35
Romania	2
Ireland	21

Although they were among the top ten countries that received refugees, the frequencies were three (n=3) and one (n=1) in Sudan and Lebanon, respectively. The topics of the three reports identified by the Sudanese fact-checking site included the bullying of an African child in France, the murder of Ugandan citizens, and protests in France. The Lebanese fact-checking site reported housing assistance problems for Syrian citizens in Lebanon. It was significant that in these two countries, fake news and content that could provoke the public and lead to social conflict about refugee and migration issues were not identified by the fact-checking platforms.

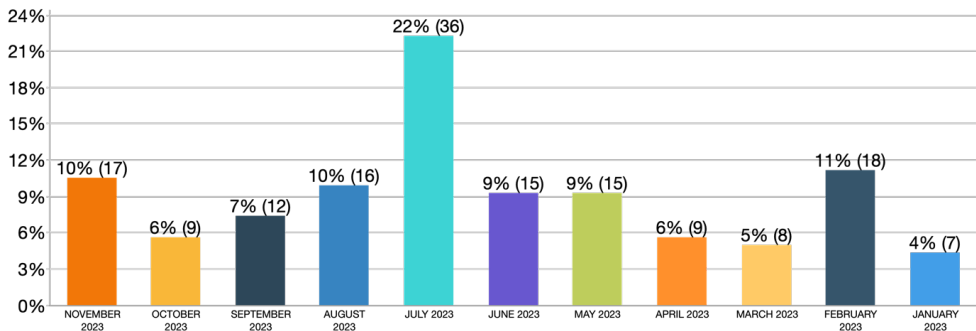
The frequency of reported fake news was two (n=2) on the fact-checking site in Romania with similar economic, cultural, and social properties when compared to Poland. According to official UNHCR data, Poland received 989.877 immigrants as of 2023, while Romania received 139.081. The information verified in Romania is a statement made verbally that contains incorrect information. Apart from this verification, no other verification of fake news has been encountered through the platform included in the research in that country. The difference between the frequency of fake news and content in Poland and Romania was proportional to the number of refugees they received. A significant finding was the frequency of fake news in Ireland (n=21), which ranked last in the table developed with the UNHCR data. It was observed that in Ireland, which received a much lower number of refugees when compared to other countries, the number of fake news and content on the subject was higher than in several countries at the top of the list.

Finally, the frequency of fake news was (n=21) in France. The identified content was associated with the protests in France, isolated events, and developments in other countries.



**Figure 1:** Distribution of sub-themes associated with refugees/migrants

The distribution of the verified fake content about refugees and migrants on fact-checking sites is presented in Figure 1. The global repercussions of the French protests were also observed among the verified content on fact-checking sites. During coding, France emerged as the sub-theme with the most verified content frequency (43%). The Conflict sub-theme, a main topic of the study, ranked second (31%), followed by financial gain (14%), and housing (12%).



**Figure 2:** Chronological distribution of fake content



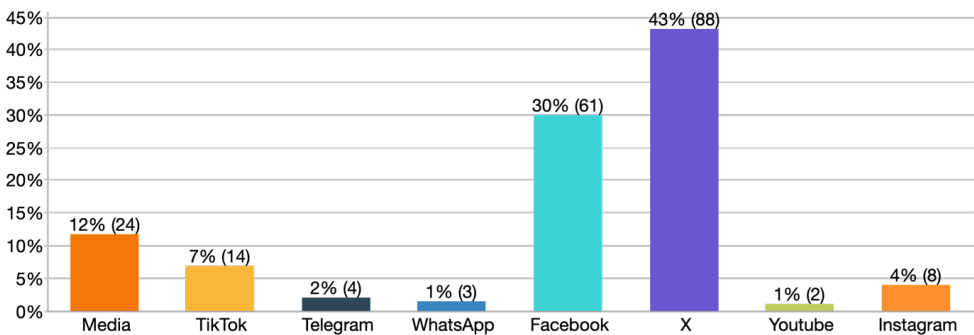
The chronological distribution of fake news and content as reported by national fact-checking sites is presented in Figure 2. The chronological distribution exhibited a similar increase to the distribution of sub-themes presented in Figure 1. Fake news about the events in France, which were at their height in July, rose in that period. In other months, the frequency of fake news on refugees and migration issues varied between 4% and 11%.

In the next paragraphs, the issues associated with particular countries are discussed in detail based on the scope and frequency of the content reported for each country.

### The platforms where fake content was disseminated

The platforms where fake news/content spread were identified based on the reports of national fact-checking sites. These platforms varied; however, the possibility that certain platforms could be excluded by the fact-checking sites could be a limitation of the present study.

The distribution platforms of fake content are presented in Figure 3. *X* ranked first (43%), followed by *Facebook* (30%). Other platforms where fake news/content were disseminated included conventional media (12%), *TikTok* (7%), *Instagram* (4%), *Telegram* (2%), *WhatsApp*, and *YouTube* (1%).



**Figure 3:** The platforms where fake content was disseminated

Significant findings were determined on the national distribution of fake news and content on the platforms (Table 3). For example, the analysis of the countries with the highest frequency on *X* revealed that Türkiye led the bunch (n=35), followed by France

(n=18), Ireland (n=13), Pakistan (n= 8), and Sudan (n=4). The analysis of the countries with the highest frequency on *Facebook* revealed that Poland led the bunch (n=18), Ireland (n=16), France (n=10), United Kingdom (n=9), and Pakistan (n=8).

**Table 3:** Fake news' distribution platforms

COUNTRY	PLATFORM							
	MEDIA	TIKTOK	TELEGRAM	WHATSAPP	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	YOUTUBE	INSTAGRAM
France	1	3			10	18		2
Germany	4							
Ireland		2	4	1	16	13		
Lebanon						1		
Pakistan	1	1		1	8	8	2	4
Poland		3			18	6		
Romania	2							
Sudan				1		4		
Türkiye		5				35		
United Kingdom	18				9	3		

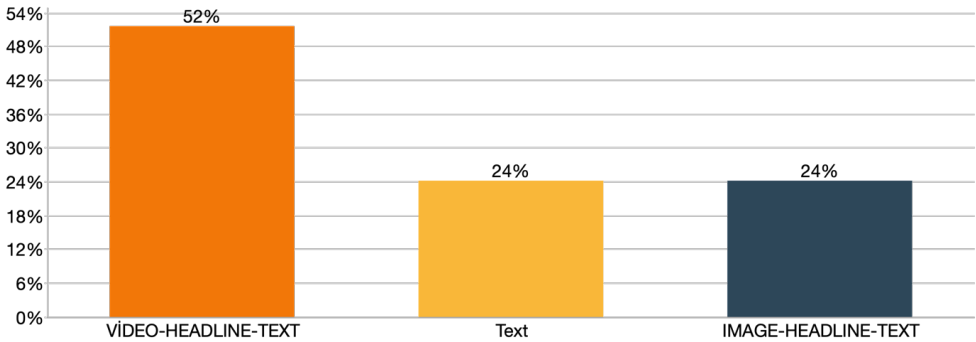
One of the most interesting findings on the platform of fake news distribution was determined with the UK fact-checking site dataset. The analysis revealed that the most common disinformation channel in this country was the press/media (n=18). In the UK, conventional media was followed by *Facebook* (n=9) and *X* (n=3).

It was observed that disinformation generally spread on several new media platforms simultaneously. Especially *Facebook* and *X* were prominent among the platforms where disinformation was spread simultaneously. Content was also disseminated simultaneously on *Instagram* and *X* as well as *Instagram* and *Facebook*. Although *TikTok* is known for entertaining content, it was also used to spread disinformation. The content was spread on this platform simultaneously with *Facebook* and *X*.

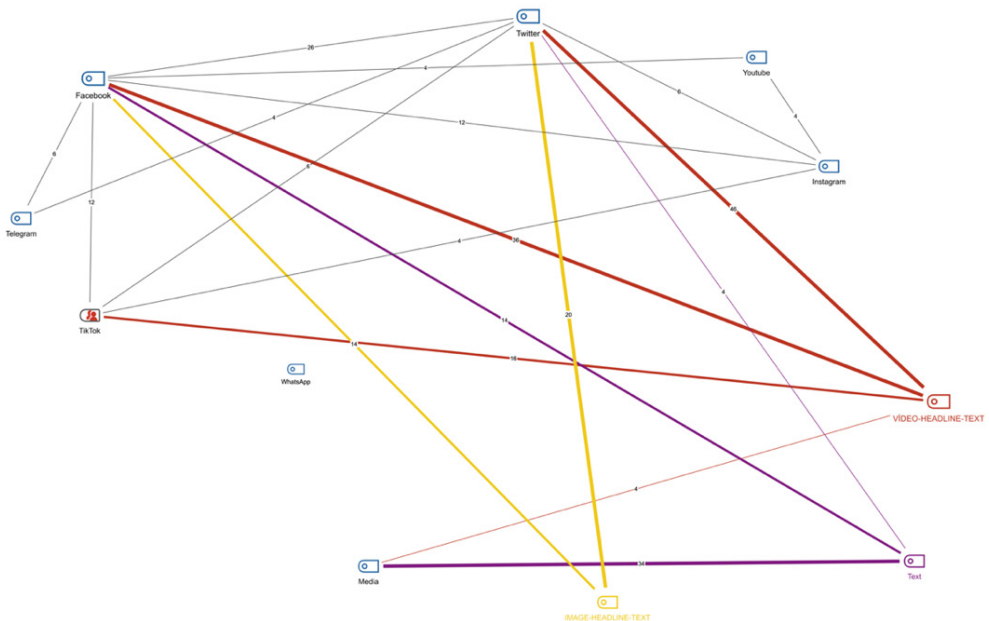
## Content typology

The correlation between content typology and dissemination channels was also analyzed in the study. Aimeur et al. (2023) proposed a typology for the content published on social media platforms. They developed detailed textual and multimedia properties for a content typology. The textual properties included the title, hyperlink, resource, and content. The multimedia properties included images, videos, audio, and gifs/animations. Demuyakor & Opata (2022) indicated that users tend to believe and share video content more.

**Table 4:** Content typology of fake news



The content typology findings of the study are presented in Figure 4. More than half (52%) of disinformation was in the form of videos. The content analysis conducted in the study revealed that 24% of the content was textual and 24% was visual. It has been determined that textual content was prominent in content disseminated by the press/media. The content that included a video, title, and text was most frequent.



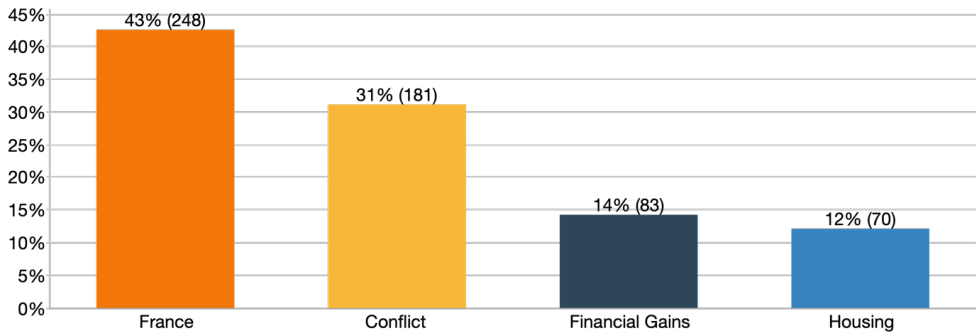
**Figure 5:** Content typology and dissemination channels

The channels employed to disseminate different types of content are presented in Figure 5. It was determined that video content was preferred on *Facebook*, *X*, and *TikTok*. These issues were analyzed comparatively since understanding the content typology based on the dissemination channel would guide the process of the control of fake news.

The analysis of the visual content, another content typology method, revealed that this content was disseminated on *Facebook* and *X*. The final type of content encountered in the study was textual content. It was determined that textual fake news and content was disseminated on the press and *X*.

### Common issues

In content analysis, the topics with the highest frequency were determined. Figure 6 displays the most frequently coded topics.



**Figure 6:** Common issues with the highest frequency

It was determined that the topic with the highest frequency was the events in France, also known as the Nahel Merzouk<sup>1</sup> incident (Euronews, 2023). This theme was identified in most reports in several countries included in the study (n=248). Social media users were informed about fake news on the incidents in France by the fact-checking sites in France, Pakistan, Poland, Türkiye, and Sudan.

ANALİZ

DEMEÇ KONTROLÜ

DOSYA

#teyitpedia

EKIPTEN

Ara

Anasayfa Analizler Otoparktan atılan arabaları gösteren video Fransa'daki protestolardan mı?



## Otoparktan atılan arabaları gösteren video Fransa'daki protestolardan mı?



Dilge Temiz

3 Temmuz 2023 18:30 • 2 dk okuma

Figure 7: Fake news on France reported by fact-checking sites in Türkiye (Source: Teyit)

DEMAGOG



Zgłoś do weryfikacji

Wesprzyj nas



Fake newsy

Skopuj link



Drukuj



Udostępnij



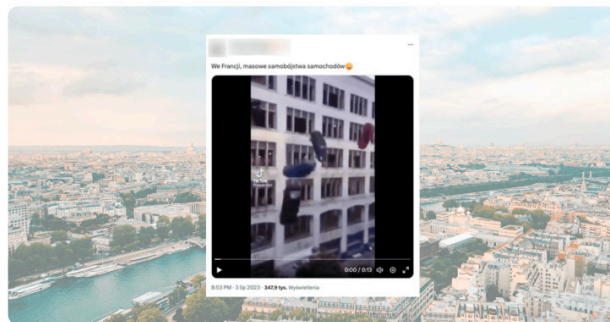
Strona główna > Fake News > Spadające sa...

05.07.2023 godz. 12:48 • 2 min czytania

Fake News ⓘ

## Spadające samochody we Francji? To scena z filmu akcji z USA!

FAKE NEWS FRANCJA



POLE

Analiza E

Nowe paliwo E10?

Cykl autorów

Z kamerą w Mordercze

Podcast

Cz

dzi

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07.

Kontr polity

Patrz władz niezależność

Zostań D

Figure 8: Fake news on France reported by fact-checking sites in Poland (Source: Demagog)

Examples of fake news and content published around the world during the protests in France are presented in Figure 7 and Figure 8. An old video, shot in a different location, was published on social media, and posted by several users, with the title announcing that vehicles were thrown out of the parking lot during the protests in France. Fact-checking sites in various countries analyzed the content and reported that the report was fake.

The issues that could lead to social conflict were analyzed to determine the frequency and it was observed that the theme ranked second (Figure 5). The frequency of the phenomenon of conflict was determined as one hundred eighty-one (n=181), and during coding, the terms "harassment," "attack," "aggression," and "theft" identified in fake news and content were associated with the theme, and the impact of the inclusion of fake reports in the posts on the tensions between immigrants/refugees and locals was analyzed. Fake news associated with conflict was identified by fact-checking sites in the UK, Germany, Pakistan, Poland, Iceland, Türkiye, France, and Sudan.

In frequency analysis, financial opportunities available for immigrants/refugees ranked third eighty-three (n=83). It was determined that this issue was included in fake news and content not only in Türkiye but also in the UK, Pakistan, and Ireland. The local public believed that several privileges were provided for immigrants/refugees by governments. This idea, along with the production and distribution of fake content, resonated with the public, leading to problems in social welfare and peace.



**Figure 9:** The claim that illegal immigrants could benefit from various privileges in the UK.

(Full Fact)

## Not the reason asylum seekers get support

1 AUGUST 2023

### WHAT WAS CLAIMED

Keir Starmer took the government to court in 2003.

### OUR VERDICT

Six asylum seekers took the government to court in 2003. Mr Starmer was the barrister representing five of these people, and did not initiate or bring the legal action himself.

1 of 2 claims

post on Facebook claims that Sir Keir Starmer took the government to court in 2003 to demand that "illegal immigrants" could receive hotel accommodation and benefit support.

he post says: "For those wondering why ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS get benefits - read on." It then includes an image, with the following wording: "In 2003 the Labour party was taken to court by a lefty lawyer who demanded illegal immigrants get benefits

he won the case and this laid the ground for today's scandal of hotel and benefits for illegal migrants

ie lefty lawyer who won the case was

Figure 10: A verification report by a fact-checking site

(Source: Full Fact)

## Fotoğrafın göç idaresi yetkililerinin Suriyeli sığınmacılara yaptığı ziyareti gösterdiği iddiası



Seda Karatabanoğlu  
14 Eylül 2023 14:15 · 2 dk okuma

Bulguları Gör

Paylaş



Abone ol



Sosyal medyada paylaşılan fotoğrafın Amasya İl Göç İdaresi yetkililerinin, kentte yaşayan Suriyeli sığınmacıların evlerinde ziyaret ettiği ve okul çağındaki çocuklarına kırtasiye malzemeleri hediye ettiği anları gösterdiği iddia edildi.



Figure 11: Confirmation of a report on privileges in Türkiye.

(Source: Teyit)

## Debunked: No evidence Ballaghaderreen doctors ‘only see Syrians and Ukrainians’ on Mondays

The National Party candidate who made the claim would not provide verifiable details

17.9K 0 Jan 11th 2023, 5:25 PM



DOCTORS IN BALLAGHADERREEN, Co Roscommon, have refuted a claim spread online by an election candidate for the anti-immigration National Party, that they have special days devoted to only seeing patients from Syria or Ukraine.

The claim was made by Paul McWeeney, who is described on the National Party website as a carpenter from Carrick-on-Shannon Co. Leitrim. Its description continues: “He is a returned emigrant, having spent 10 years in Australia. Paul is recently married and is deeply concerned with the plight of young working families being unable to afford a home.”

On 9 January, McWeeney tweeted: “A work colleague of mine tried to make a GP appointment for his sick baby in #ballaghaderreen this morning only to be told “sorry, we only see syrians and Ukrainians on a Monday” !! Is this common practice around the country? @HSELive #plantation”

**Figure 12:** Confirmation report about the privileges provided for refugees in Ireland (Source: The Journal Fact Check)

The Figure 9, Figure 10, Figure 11, and Figure 12 presented above included verification analyses conducted by fact-checking sites on fake news and content in the UK, Türkiye, and Ireland. The posts included various privileges available in the UK, educational stationery assistance in Türkiye, and health privileges available for refugees in Ireland.

Housing/accommodation facilities were determined as another problem in frequency analysis that could endanger social peace. It was observed that fake news and content on government housing assistance for immigrants/refugees that was not available for the citizens was refuted by fact-checking sites, and the reality was communicated to the public. The frequency of this issue was seventy (n=70).



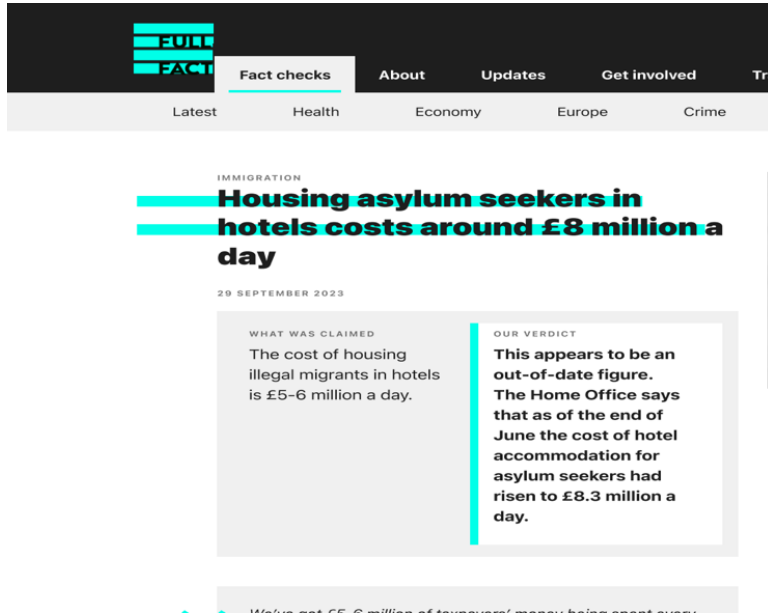


Figure 13: Analysis of fake news on housing in the UK by a fact-checking site (Source: Full Fact)

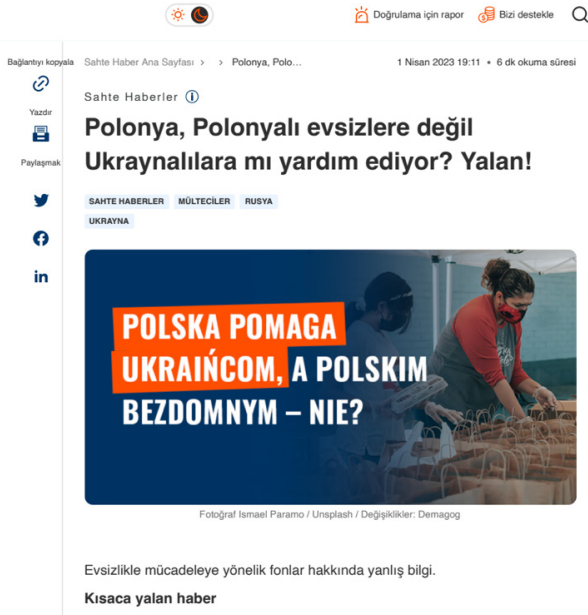


Figure 14: Analysis of fake news on housing in Poland by a fact-checking site (Source: Demagog)

The verification analyses of the fake news circulated on housing in the UK and Poland conducted by fact-checking sites are presented in Figure 13 and Figure 14.

## Discussion and conclusion

In this age where truth has lost its meaning, it has become more difficult to pursue the truth and control disinformation. Based on intended use, technology that could benefit humankind could also be used as a dangerous weapon. As the phenomenon of fake reports becomes common every day via technological tools, the lack of media and digital media literacy hinders the ability of individuals to distinguish between the real and the fake. Access to deep fake technology led to covert lies in videos and images, and people are at greater risk of disinformation.

As mentioned in the introduction, in the current state of global events, where disinformation has become a part of daily life, the masses who were forced to migrate for various reasons face social integration problems in the new society they migrated to. While it is difficult enough to achieve social harmony without disinformation, fake news, and content make it even more difficult for both the citizens and newcomers to live together.

In recent years, the Syrian War and the Ukrainian-Russian War have caused significant migration. In addition to the migration due to economic, political, or social problems, migration associated with war seriously affects the peace in several nations. Disinformation contributes to further deterioration of the disturbed peace, polarization of people, and sharpening the ideologies.

Thus, in the present study designed to determine disinformation associated with migration and conflict in 2023, the research sample included the top ten countries that received the highest number of refugees and four countries in Europe. Iran, Uganda, the Russian Federation, and Bangladesh were excluded from the study due to the lack of IFCN member fact-checking sites in these countries. This was a limitation of our study.

In the study, 162 posts were identified about migration. 43% of the posts that were published and fact-checked were about the protests in France, 31% were about conflict, 14% were about financial opportunities, and 12% were about housing.

The present study attempted to respond to three research questions. The first was about which media platforms were employed more to disseminate fake news/content about refugees. This question was answered in Figure 3. Thus, X was the most employed medium (43%), followed by *Facebook* (30%). These findings demonstrated that these two platforms were used by the users in the dissemination of disinformation. Although the founding purpose of IFCN was to control disinformation, the findings indicated that efforts must be increased. On the other hand, Elon Musk's statement on his account that X was the only reliable platform for honest information contradicted the study findings (Teknolojioku, 2023).

The study also strived to determine the most frequently used content type. Several previous studies were conducted on content typologies employed to disseminate fake news. Fake content could be posted as false texts, hyperlinks or embedded content, and videos (Demuyakor & Opatá 2022), visuals (Masciari et al. 2020; Shen et al. 2019), or auditory elements (Demuyakor & Opatá 2022). Shu et al. (2020b) reported that multimodal content could also be used to disseminate disinformation. The present study demonstrated that videos supported by a title and text were the most frequent content typology (52%). It was also determined that only textual content was employed by the press, images supported by titles and texts were also employed following the videos on social media platforms.

The final research question aimed to identify common themes across the fake content published in the countries included in the study. Protests in France were the leading theme in these posts. Issues such as harassment, attacks, aggression, and theft that could lead to social conflict were the second most frequent issues in the conflict sub-theme. Financial assistance or opportunities that were provided for the refugees were among the issues observed in more than one country in the study. Finally, the housing issue was also employed to disseminate disinformation in several countries.

The findings of the study that covered a period of eleven months demonstrated that social conflict could be fueled by fake news or posts about refugees. Possible alleviation of hate speech, the alienation of the individuals, and sharpened ideologies could increase the intensity and scope of disinformation. It is important to find common ground to ensure social peace. Thus, shortly, disinformation should be controlled, facts and lies should be distinguished, and the speed of the dissemination of the facts should be reversed to allow them to spread faster than fake news. Aral (2022) reported the

speed of the dissemination of fake news and content. The present study findings were consistent with Aral's report. It was observed that fake news and content spread rapidly and globally.

Future studies could analyze the reports by non-IFCN member fact-checking platforms in countries with high refugee populations. Furthermore, Pakistan and Sudan could be of further interest since they have IFCN member fact-checking platforms, which have fact-checked several fake news. It was observed that fake news and content checking were quite limited in certain countries with high refugee populations.

The development of new strategies by *Facebook* and *X*, which are the most powerful social media platforms where fake content is promoted, would assist the holistic quest for the truth. Thus, future multidisciplinary research on the users of these two platforms could help understand user decisions on disinformation and unravel their behavior. Future studies on fake news that would be conducted with individuals instead of the analysis of big data would help understand the phenomenon of disinformation.

## Endnotes

- 1 Nahel Merzouk was a 17-year-old French citizen of Algerian and Moroccan descent who was shot by a police officer at a traffic stop in the Parisian banlieue, or suburban outskirts, of Nanterre. Initial reports by the police stated that Merzouk had driven into police which resulted in officer Florian Menesplier shooting and killing him. However, video footage contradicted this official account and demonstrated that officers at the scene were not in any danger. President Emmanuel Macron denounced Merzouk's killing as 'inexplicable' and 'inexcusable'. While the officer is under investigation, it is yet unclear what or if justice will be rendered. Protests and demonstrations in Nanterre and the rest of France followed for a few days as many ethnoracial minorities mobilised against ongoing and unacknowledged state racism and police violence against them. And not for the first time were national and international media consumed with images of cars and buildings on fire, with armed police officers guarding the streets (Beaman, 2023).

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**Conflict of Interest:** The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

**Grant Support:** The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

**Hakem Değerlendirmesi:** Dış bağımsız.

**Çıkar Çatışması:** Yazar çıkar çatışması bildirmemiştir.

**Finansal Destek:** Yazar bu çalışma için finansal destek almadığını beyan etmiştir.

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# The role of the media following the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War: The cases of *AzadlıqRadiosu* and *MeydanTV* news sites in Azerbaijan

## *İkinci Dağlık Karabağ Savaşı sonrası dönemde medyanın rolü: Azerbaycan'daki AzadlıqRadiosu ve MeydanTV haber siteleri örnekleri*

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### Abstract

As the second Nagorno-Karabakh War, also called the '44-Day War' (between 27.09.2020-10.11.2020) ended, and the ceasefire agreement was signed, the surrounding Armenian-occupied areas were ceded back to Azerbaijan except for the Khankendi-centered area in Nagorno-Karabakh region. This area is predominantly an Armenian-populated region and is internationally recognized as a part of Azerbaijan but is under the control of the so-called de-facto Artsakh Republic. Although the problem is seen as solved in terms of building peace in the Caucasian region and specifically relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the status of the Armenian-populated region, and social cohesion between the communities remain still problematic. In this context, the study aims to find out how the Azerbaijani media reflect this post-conflict situation. In doing so, the most-followed two online media platforms, *MeydanTV* and *Azadlıqradiosu*, were selected for the sampling, and topic-oriented framing analysis was employed to scrutinize the news posted during the one-year post-conflict period (between 10.11.2020-10.11.2021). According to the findings, construction/negative peace was the main theme in both news sites. One of the main differences was about framing of rehabilitation phase. While the stories from both Azerbaijani and Armenian people were mentioned in *AzadlıqRadiosu*, only Azerbaijanis were emphasized on *MeydanTV*.

**Keywords:** Post-conflict, Azerbaijan, the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict, media, framing analysis

### Öz

İkinci Dağlık Karabağ Savaşı ya da diğer adıyla '44 Gün Savaşı' (27.09.2020-10.11.2020 tarihleri arasında) sona erip ateşkes anlaşması imzalandığında, Dağlık Karabağ bölgesindeki Hankendi merkezli bölge hariç, Ermenistan işgali altındaki diğer bölgeler Azerbaycan'a geri verilmiştir. Hankendi merkezli bölgede ağırlıklı

olarak Ermeniler yaşamaktadır ve uluslararası alanda Azerbaycan'ın bir parçası olarak tanınmaktadır. Ancak Artsak Cumhuriyeti isimli bir de-facto yapının kontrolü altındadır. Kafkasya bölgesinde barışın sağlanması ve özellikle iki ülke arasındaki ilişkiler açısından sorun çözülmüş olarak görülse de Ermenilerin yaşadığı bölgenin statüsü ve toplumlar arasındaki sosyal uyum hala sorunlu olmaya devam etmektedir. Temel neden, geçmişteki kötü deneyimler, çatışmalar, savaş ve trajik olaylar sonucunda iki ülke arasında oluşan güven eksikliğidir. Bu bağlamda, çalışma Azerbaycan medyasının bu çatışma sonrası durumu nasıl yansıttığını incelemektedir. Amaçlı örneklem aracılığıyla

daha fazla takipçisi olan iki çevrimiçi popüler haber sitesi (*MeydanTV* ve *Azadliqradiosu*) seçilmiş ve çatışma sonrası bir yıllık dönemde (10.11.2020-10.11.2021 tarihleri arasında) yayınlanan haberler analiz edilmiştir. Bulgulara göre her iki haber sitesinde de yeniden yapılandırma/negatif barış en fazla öne çıkan tema çerçevesi olurken, rehabilitasyon çerçevesi konuları farklılık göstermiştir. Bu anlamda *AzadliqRadiosu*'nda her iki taraftan hikayelere yer verilirken, *MeydanTV*'de sadece Azerbaycan ile ilgili hikayeler bahsedilmiştir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Çatışma sonrası, Azerbaycan, Dağlık Karabağ Savaşı, medya, çerçeveleme analiz

## Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union starting in the late 1980s brought about many conflicts and disjunction. As a result of this process, fifteen countries became independent. Azerbaijan is one of the post-Soviet countries that gained its independence in 1991. However, during this period, the region of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven provinces were exposed to heavy attacks by Russian-Armenian armies, and at the end of it, 20% of Azerbaijan was occupied. Only in 2020, following the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (27.09.2020-10.11.2020), Azerbaijan has taken back its lands excluding some parts of Nagorno-Karabakh (Khankendi and its nearby areas) where predominantly the Armenian population exists. This area is internationally recognized within the official territories of Azerbaijan, however; is under the control of the de-facto structure- the so-called Artsakh Republic. Following the signing of the ceasefire agreement between the sides, the Lachin corridor has remained the only access to Armenia under the control of the Russian peacekeepers. The mentioned Khankendi-centered area is still the main barrier to the peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Most importantly, there is a very deep distrust between the Armenian community in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the Azerbaijani people. In this context, both the future of peace agreements and the problem of social cohesion between those nations have become important in the post-conflict period.

The name of the Karabakh region has been also a controversial issue for both Azerbaijanis and Armenians. In Azerbaijani, it is called 'Qarabağ' which comes to mean 'black garden.' In Armenian, it is 'Artsakh' that refers to 'the gardens of Aran' (Cornell, 1999). There are many discussions about the reasons for the Azerbaijani-Armenian

conflict. The origin of this conflict has been always controversial. For Souleimanov (2013, p. 98), the origin of the conflict lies behind the dissatisfaction of Azerbaijani nobility/intelligentsia about the dominance of Armenian element within Baku's economic and public life during the Soviet period, and the growing Armenian revolutionary nationalism which was rooted in the Ottoman Empire's 1894-96 programs that evaluated to create a collective image of the enemy in the form of 'Azerbaijani Turk.' However, it shouldn't be forgotten that those are only two of the various assumptions.

Tracing the history of Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijanis, Karabakh Armenians, and other minorities had lived peacefully for a long time until the beginning of the 20th century. For many centuries, Azerbaijanis and Armenians coexisted in peace; they celebrated common holidays, built friendships, etc. Starting with the Soviet period, mutual mistrust started to emerge between the two nations and small-scaled ethnic conflicts happened (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 94-95).

In 1922, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia became Socialist Republics of the Soviet Union. In 1936, the Soviet Union established Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region within the territory of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. Following this formation, several ethnic conflicts and clashes occurred between 1948 and 1953. As a result of it, more than one million Azerbaijani people were forcibly displaced from their lands (Aghayeva, 2018, p. 31). By the late 1980s, the hostility started to escalate; both Azerbaijanis and Armenians were forcibly migrated from the Nagorno-Karabakh region between 1988 and 1994. In 1992, the Armenian parliament declared the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. In the same year, the 'ethnic cleansing' was done in Khojaly by Armenian-Russian armies. Many Azerbaijani people were killed and taken as prisoners (Najafizadeh, 2013, p. 165). The invasion spread into the nearby regions as well. Between the years 1988 and 1994, 25.000 people were killed and more than one million people were forced to leave their homes and become refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (Linderstraus, 2015). During the war, many violent acts were recorded, and mass expulsions took place. At the end of this war, not only the Nagorno-Karabakh region but also the surrounding Azerbaijani districts were occupied by Armenia (Krüger, 2010, p. 22). Until 2020, six significant attempts were made for mediation and problem-solving. First was done by Boris Yeltsin and Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1991, then Iran played as the mediator in 1992. In the same year, Nazarbayev re-intervened in the problem, and then the Organization for Security and Co-operation Europe (OSCE) created the Minsk Group including 9 countries to deal with the conflict. Following the

inconclusive mediation of Russia between 1993-94 years, the OSCE decided to execute the co-chairs mediation (Russia, France, and the United States of America) in 1994 (Mooradian & Druckman, 1999). None gave conclusions until 2020. Then the long-time tense environment reignited, and the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War started and lasted 44 days. When the Azerbaijani army took control of Shusha, where is one of the two main centers of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Russia intervened diplomatically, and the ceasefire agreement was signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia through Russia's mediation on 10 November 2020. According to this agreement, the rest occupied lands were given to Azerbaijan excluding the Armenian-populated area in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The status of Khankendi and its nearby areas has remained problematic for the peace agreement between the two countries. The negotiations are still ongoing.

In this context, this study aims to find out how the Azerbaijani media framed the post-conflict situation in the online news. Considering the ceasefire agreement as the beginning of the post-conflict situation, based on purposive sampling, a one-year period (between 10.11.2020-10.11.2021) was selected for the analysis.

The literature review showed that there are some studies (Yavuz & Huseynov, 2020; Gamaghelyan & Romyantsev, 2021; Iskandarov & Gawliczek, 2021; Ibrahimov & Oztarsu, 2022) that focused on the Second Karabakh War from political review. However, no study has been conducted about the analysis of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War -related news. This research can be one of the initial studies. To see the reactions of individuals and ratings in terms of dissemination, the two most followed and popular online news sites were included in the sampling: *MeydanTv* (954.000 followers) and *Azadliqradiosu* (742.000 followers). The word *MeydanTv* comes to mean 'town square television.' It is a Berlin-based non-profit media organization sharing news in Azerbaijani, Russian, and English online, and is founded by former political prisoner and dissident blogger Emin Milli.

*Azadliqradiosu* is Prague-based and known as the US Global Media Agency-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty broadcast with 23 editorial offices. It produces programs in 28 languages. It has been officially running in Baku since 2004.


## **Media in the post-conflict period**

The research on media and propaganda during conflict dates back to the Second World War. In more recent times, efforts have been made to comprehend the special problems

of media reform and peace transitions in conflict- and post-conflict-affected nations (Schoemaker & Stremlau, 2014, p. 185). In general, two ways of communication's role in conflicts are identified: elite-level communication and mass-based appeals. The first type includes diplomacy, tactical communication by political leaders, pressure groups, rebel groups, and military commanders. The latter is related to the propagandist role to control the narratives and manipulate mass communication tools to coordinate mass behavior. The emergence of new media technologies has restructured those impact levels on political behavior due to its interactive nature. Such characteristics as accelerating the flow and dissemination of information, providing alternative sources, using strategic interaction (propaganda and persuasion techniques), and generating new data and information allow different contributions of new media technologies to conflicts (Zeitcoff, 2017).

In line with conflict theories, Galtung (1969, p. 183) categorized violence as positive and negative in the definition of peace and peace research. While positive violence refers to the absence of personal (direct) violence, another is the absence of structural (indirect) violence which is about social justice. To comprehend the conceptualization in a more detailed way, Galtung (2007, p. 31) prepared a table that characterizes negative and positive peace types under three components: direct, structural, and cultural. While there is absence of ceasefire, exploitation in negative peace; cooperation and equality are promoted in positive peace. The other main difference is the presence of a culture of peace and dialogue in positive peace unlike the negative one:

**Table 1:** Negative, positive, direct, structural, cultural

	<b>Direct peace (harming, hurting)</b>	<b>Structural peace (harming, hurting)</b>	<b>Cultural peace (justifying harm/hurt)</b>
Negative Peace	[1] absence of = ceasefire; or a desert, cemetery	[2] absence of = no exploitation; or no structure = atomic	[3] absence of = no justification; or no culture = anomie
Positive Peace	[4] presence of = cooperation	[5] presence of = equity, equality	[6] presence of = culture of peace, and dialogue
Peace	negative + positive	negative + positive	negative + positive

Source: J. Galtung, (2007, p.31)

For Gilboa (2009, p. 93-95) the conflict period has four phases under critical conditions which are (i) onset-prevention, (ii) escalation-management, (iii) de-escalation-resolution, and (iv) termination-reconciliation. The first stage is about the beginning of disagreements and the growth in hostility between the enemies. Therefore, prevention measures are

needed to stop the conflict. Conflict management is related to an attempt to take the conflict's control such as a ceasefire. The third and fourth phases are the phases of the post-conflict period. While the resolution phase refers to attempts and negotiations for an agreement to end violence; reconciliation is beyond the conflict resolution. It addresses various psychological and cognitive challenges and obstacles to stable peace. Being both process and outcome, reconciliation is not related to formal peace agreements; it aims to change the motivations, goals, attitudes, emotions, etc. of the society members towards conflict. Consequently, it seeks friendship and harmony between the adversaries. In parallel with Galtung's approach, resolution can be understood within 'negative peace,' and reconciliation in 'positive peace.' Negative peace is only about the non-existence of violence, however; positive peace includes building relationships.

For Galtung (1998a) there are two ways of reviewing the conflict: 'the high road' and 'the low road.' The low road is dominant in media and portrays the conflict as a battle, a sports arena in which the parties are reduced to two combatants. The high road asserts conflict transformation. Conflicts are identified as also an opportunity to find new ways for human progress. In this context, while a war frame is shaped by expressions of grief, anger, sadness, distress, and such, a peace frame is based on two different roles: the people-oriented image of the demonstrator and the elite-oriented image of the negotiator. The first role relates to the promotion of ceasefire, reconciliation, citizens protesting for peace etc., the second role is about showing the international actors engaging with a conflict solution. In general, peace journalism focuses on acts of '3R' which are reconstruction, reconciliation, and resolution (Neumann & Fahmy, 2012). Reconstruction covers rehabilitation, healing of traumatized humans, rebuilding and repairing the material damage, restructuring, and reculturation. Reconciliation is about ending hostilities, healing the relationships between the sides. In relation to the two phases, resolution becomes possible between the sides as to end violence and develop the relations (Galtung, 1998b, p. 53-98).

Media can be used both as a positive and negative tool throughout the conflict phases. Media coverage can pave over the conflict's 'real' causes by constructing different narratives. It depends on how to use its functions. On the other hand, new media technologies have transformed conflicts into global spectacles. No matter wherever you are, it is now possible to see and watch various images and scenes of different conflicts from all over the world. Therefore, it is more than reporting. Media platforms or activities can be also used as weapons that measure the conflict in terms of framing,

visualizing, elaborating, narrating, and promoting (Braucher, 2020, p. 296-297). For Golcevski et al. (2013, p. 121) media plays a significant role in shaping public discourse on conflict-related issues. Wolfsfeld's research (2018, p. 112-117) on the Israel-Palestine conflict reveals that social media use is effective in terms of visibility as it goes beyond the dominant view and allows for antagonist views. In particular, videos and images disseminated during the conflict process have the potential to reflect alternative views on the extent and content of the violence, but they can also create negative attitudes toward the achievement of peace. The extensive research on the coverage of the four Asian conflicts by Lee and Maslog (2005) pointed out that all the analyzed newspapers were dominated under war journalism principles. Only a little consideration of long-term peaceful solutions was revealed. The news focused on mainly knee-jerk, unreflective kind of coverage. Regarding the role of media, the study (Saleem & Hanan, 2014) argued that media is able to play roles of either escalation or de-escalation. If it is escalation, it triggers tensions and sensationalizes the happenings. On the opposite role, it encourages the conflicting parties, government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), etc. to produce solutions. It only reflects the actual facts and events without taking any position. By analyzing the two cases of Studio Ijambo in Rwanda and Bosnian Media Campaigns, Bratic (2008) suggested that well-organized media activities can significantly impact audiences during conflict periods. However, it doesn't mean it can single-handedly end the whole conflict. Regardless of its limitations, the media can contribute to future peace operations. In doing so, it is necessary to integrate several media channels and platforms to increase the success of the practice. In addition, the negative impact of media on the audience can be reduced by reducing the level and amount of hate messages during the conflict. In this context, Manoff (1998) suggested working on the positive impact of media during and post-war situations. Therefore, he asserted that the news-framing effect of media can create a discussion and negotiation platform for the conflicting parties and thus can contribute to the formation of confidence building.

## Aim and methodology

As the aim of the study is to analyze how the issue was framed in the news, four main questions were identified:



**RQ1.**What are the main themes of the news?

**RQ2.**Which concepts were emphasized in the news' contents?

**RQ3.**Which actors or powers were referred to in the news?

**RQ4.**How the post-war period was framed in all selected news?

Based on those research questions, framing analysis was selected as the research approach due to its both qualitative and quantitative characteristics that allow us to analyze the selected news in a detailed way.

The concept of 'frame' has become a phenomenon by sociologist Erving Goffman. It is being also used widely in psychology starting with Bateson's works. Being both a research paradigm and approach, framing analysis started to be used in social sciences by the late 1980s. Framing theory is evolved within Constructivist paradigm. In this context, 'frames' are identified as cognitive and cultural mechanisms (Goffman, 1974). They are tools that allow individuals, institutions, and structures to communicate with each other. At the social level, institutions and structures produce content that their target groups and the public can interpret. At the same time, this is a socialization process in which social reality is constructed (Hertog & Mcleod, 2001).

In general, framing analysis prioritizes the identification, problematization, and evaluation of the selected topic. Based on interpretation, framing analysis assumes that the specific content of the text has a 'clear' message. The approach focuses on how this message is interpreted. It is oriented toward defining the constructed reality and analyzing its structural features (Van Gorp, 2007). In this sense, it aims to understand the context within the text and to reveal the 'implicit' information within the specified 'boundaries' (Gurevitch & Levy, 1986). It allows research to analyze and reveal the 'hidden' knowledge within the story (Entman, 2007, p. 164). To be more precise, the framing approach, with its quantitative and qualitative aspects, is a method that interprets the message in its 'frames' by focusing on clues such as 'selected' and 'emphasized' words, stereotypes, visual materials, information sources, etc. in the text (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

The quantitative dimension allows for the measurement of language use in texts. Frequently used words, definitions, the number of emphasized concepts, expressions, highlighted discourses, and sources are used within the scope of quantitative analysis in this sense. The qualitative dimension helps us to understand and interpret the 'message' framed in the text with quantitative data. In the research, neither just quantitative nor just qualitative analysis is sufficient in the context of the framing approach. Both dimensions of analysis should be used together to reveal the 'implicit' message (Hertog & McLead, 2001, p. 153-154). There is no standard typology of the framing approach. What is common is the effective and balanced use of both qualitative and quantitative dimensions in the context of the sample (Linström & Marais, 2012, p. 24). In this vein, Vreese, Peter, and Semetko (2001, p. 108) suggested two different framing approach: topic-oriented specific and general news frames. Specific news frames are the framing of a particular topic in detail within a specific time frame. General news frames are based on how all different topics and events are presented in a general framework. The fact that the framing approach can be shaped according to the sampling and purpose of the research and that there are no mandatory principles allows a researcher to do analysis by revealing the relevant frames in different ways. In this study, based on case-study research methodology, a topic-oriented specific framing analysis was used to analyze the selected news.

Through purposive sampling, the one-year periods of both two news-sites were scrutinized manually. More clearly, the author read all the news that was published within the given period. As a result of it, in total 434 news, which is related to the topic (245 from *Azadliqradiosu*, and 189 from *MeydanTV*) were included in the sampling. Based on the research questions, the main themes, the most-emphasized words, references to other actors, and statements of the leaders were analyzed to identify the specific frames of the post-conflict period. Following the analysis, to find out how the online news sites framed the issue, common frames were identified based on the conflict categorization by Galtung (1998a, 1998b) and Gilboa (2009). Those frames are 'danger of conflict,' 'reconstruction' with sub-frames that are 'restructuration and rehabilitation,' 'resolution,' and 'reconciliation.'

For the reliability check of coding and categorization, the inter-coder reliability formula was implemented to the findings. Inter-coder reliability formula helps the researcher to obtain the coefficient reliability of the findings (Chadwick et al., 1984; North et al., 1963). The formula of inter-coder reliability is calculated as the dividing of numbers in the same category into the total number of units coded (Prasad, 2008). In

doing so, first, a small sample (20%) of news was selected and the formula was calculated through two researchers' coding ( $R=2(C1+C2)/C1+C2$ ). The conclusion was 86% which is valid for reliability.

## Findings

The findings were interpreted based on the four research questions which allow us to find out the sub-frames and frames of the news starting with specific details to the general portrait. In the scope of the first research question, the main themes of both news sites were identified and categorized separately in order to find out the differences between:

**Table 2:** News framing on *Azadliqradiosu*

Frames	Themes	Number	Percentage	
Restructuration	Views from the Liberated Areas	41	16.73%	32.65%
	Rebuilding	26	10.61%	
	Minesweeping	13	5.31%	
Resolution	Disputes over Border Demarcation	12	4.90%	14.29%
	Peace settlement	23	9.39%	
Reconciliation	Stories of Armenian Villagers	23	9.39%	19.19%
	Martyrs & Veterans' Stories	24	9.80%	
Rehabilitation	IDPs' Conditions	23	9.39%	22.04%
	Concerning Armenian Loss	18	7.35%	
	Memorial Day	13	5.31%	
Danger of Conflict	Breaking f ceasefire	13	5.31%	5.31%
	Other	16	6.53%	
<b>Total</b>		<b>245</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

Table 2 shows that half of the news framed the reconstruction phase (54.69%) of the post-conflict period. In this context, two sub-headings- restructuring (32.65%) and rehabilitation (22.04%) were mainly framed. The main themes in the restructuring frame were views from the liberated areas (16.73%), rebuilding (10.61%), and minesweeping operations (5.31%); in rehabilitation, the news covered Azerbaijani IDPs' conditions (9.39%), the information about Armenian loss (7.35%), and Memorial day (5.31%). Tragic conclusions such as the statistical information about the losses of both

sides, IDPs' expectations following the victory, Memorial day activities in both countries, etc. were mentioned in the rehabilitation frame along with dramatic images and videos. On the other hand, the reconciliation frame was formed through the news focused on the peace settlement negotiations (9.39%), stories of Armenian villagers (9.39%) which are about their concerns or expectations for social cohesion, and the stories of war victims (9.80%). The shared suffering of both countries was portrayed in that news. The resolution phase was framed through two themes which are disputes over border demarcation and peace settlement. Only 5.31% of the news drew attention to the still unresolved conflict situation through the news about frequent ceasefire breakdowns. Table 3 demonstrates the distribution of frames and themes of *MeydanTV* below:

**Table 3:** News framing on *MeydanTV*

Frames	Themes	Number	Percentage	
Restructuration	Rebuilding	33	17.46%	25.40%
	Views from the Liberated Areas	15	7.94%	
Rehabilitation	Severe Losses of the War	18	9.52%	13.75%
	IDPs' Conditions & Resettlement	8	4.23%	
Resolution	The Status of Armenian-Populated Karabakh Region	19	10.05%	34.92%
	Disputes over Border Demarcation	13	6.88%	
	Peace Settlement	34	17.99%	
Reconciliation	Martyrs and Veterans' Stories	22	11.64%	11.64%
Danger of conflict	Breaking of Ceasefire	12	6.35%	6.35%
	Other	15	7.94%	
<b>Total</b>		<b>189</b>	<b>100%</b>	

As can be seen in Table 3, two main frames were prominent in the news shared via *MeydanTV*. Those are reconstruction (39.15%) and resolution (34.92%). While rebuilding activities were mainly mentioned in 17.46% of the news within the restructuring frame, 9.52% of the news addressed the severe losses of the war in the rehabilitation frame. The resolution phase of the post-conflict period was framed through three main themes based on peace settlement negotiations (17.99%), the status of the Armenian-populated Karabakh region (10.05%), and disputes over border demarcation (6.88%). The reconciliation frame was seen in 11.64% of the news in which Azerbaijani martyrs and veterans' dramatic stories were mainly mentioned. Similar to *Azadliqradiosu*, the news of *MeydanTV* addressed the danger of conflict (23.28%) less.

Based on the second research question, the most-emphasized words were also analyzed in both news sites to understand the portrayal of the issue in the news. As comparatively demonstrated in Table 4 below, Shusha, where is one of the main centers of Nagorno-Karabakh and was reclaimed by the Azerbaijani army during the Second Karabakh War, was the top word used in both news sites. Shusha was so important to Azerbaijan due to its strategic location and cultural background. Therefore, it has become one of the main symbols of victory. While the word Martyr (13.76%) was the latter mostly-used one in *Azadliqradiosu*, peace (13.67%) was in *MeydanTV*. In general, the dramatic scene (47.09%) was mainly reflected in the news of *Azadliqradiosu* through the concepts of martyrs, killed, veterans, prisoners, and IDPs which addressed the tragic conclusions of the war. On the other hand, the victorious liberation scene (52%) was portrayed in *MeydanTV* through the concepts of peace, liberated, negotiations, victory, mine, and rebuilding which also pointed to success and future development.

**Table 4:** The most emphasized words

<i>Azadliqradiosu</i>			<i>MeydanTV</i>		
Words	Number	Percentage	Words	Number	Percentage
Shusha	31	16.40%	Shusha	59	15.82%
Peace	15	7.94%	Peace	51	13.67%
Liberated	22	11.64%	Liberated	42	11.26%
Killed	22	11.64%	Negotiations	23	6.17%
Negotiations	6	3.17%	Victory	14	3.75%
Victory	1	0.53%	Veteran	25	6.70%
Veteran	14	7.41%	Prisoner	25	6.70%
Prisoner	8	4.23%	Martyr	11	2.95%
Martyr	26	13.76%	IDPs	25	6.70%
IDPs	19	10.05%	Killed	30	8.04%
Mine	15	7.94%	Mine	42	11.26%
Rebuilding	10	5.29%	Rebuilding	26	6.97%
<b>Total</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Based on the third research question, first, it was revealed which external powers were referred to in the news. According to the findings, while five countries' approaches were covered in *MeydanTV*, four were in *Azadliqradiosu*. Russia was the most frequently referred actor in both news sites. However, while the second most mentioned country was Türkiye (19.05%) in *Azadliqradiosu*, Iran (23.57%) was in *MeydanTV*. Table 5 demonstrates all below:

**Table 5:** Reference to other powers

<i>Azadliqradiosu</i>			<i>MeydanTV</i>		
Countries	Number	Percentage	Countries	Number	Percentage
Türkiye	8	19.05%	Türkiye	25	17.86%
Russia	23	54.76%	Russia	58	41.43%
Georgia	7	16.67%	The United States of America	6	4.29%
İran	4	9.52%	France	18	12.86%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	Iran	33	23.57%
			<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Regarding the attitude of the powers towards the post-war situation and the unsolved area in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Türkiye's supporting stance was promoted on both news sites. Russia was reflected in a neutral position and in seeking for ensuring peace and stability in the region. On the other hand, the pro-Armenia support of France, and Iran were criticized.

The statements of the leaders about the period were also analyzed. According to findings, *MeydanTV* covered 14 statements by Armenian leader Pashinyan, 41 of Azerbaijani leader Aliyev. The necessity of peace (42.86%, n=6), the controversial Zangezur Corridor (28.57%, n=4), and war victims (21.43%, n=3) were the main points of Pashinyan's statements. As to Aliyev's statements, rebuilding in the liberated areas (34.15%, n=14), the necessity of peace (19.51%, n=8), the status of Khankhendi and Integration (12.20%, n=5), and the controversial Zangezur Corridor (9.76%, n=4) were revealed as the focal issues. In *Azadliqradiosu*, only eight statements of Aliyev and three of Pashinyan were given. While the necessity of peace was the focal issue of Pashinyan; the necessity of peace, and rebuilding in the liberated areas were of Aliyev. As can be seen from the discourses of both leaders, a peace settlement was the top issue.

Based on the final research question, the research focused on the analysis of general frames of all news. In this context, Table 6 was prepared to draw the general portrait of news framing holistically:

**Table 6:** News framing of the issue

Frames	Themes	Number	Percentage	
<b>Reconstruction</b>	Views from the Liberated Areas	56	12.90%	<b>29.26%</b>
	Rebuilding	59	13.59%	
	Minesweeping	19	4.38%	
<b>Resolution</b>	Disputes over border demarcation	25	5.76%	<b>23.27%</b>
	The Status of Armenian-Populated Karabakh Region	19	4.38%	
	Peace Settlement	57	13.13%	
<b>Reconciliation</b>	Martyrs & Veterans' Stories	46	10.60%	<b>15.90%</b>
	Stories of Armenian Villagers	23	5.30%	
<b>Rehabilitation</b>	IDPs' Conditions	31	7.14%	<b>18.43%</b>
	Memorial Day and Severe Losses	49	11.29%	
<b>Danger of Conflict</b>	Breakdown of ceasefire	25	5.76%	<b>5.76%</b>
	Other	25	5.76%	
<b>Total</b>		<b>434</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

As demonstrated in Table 6, almost half of the news (47.69%) was shared within the reconstruction frame including two sub-frames which are reconstruction (29.26%) and rehabilitation (18.43%). The latter main frame was resolution (23.27%). Under this frame, the diplomatic efforts for peace settlement (13.13%), negotiations on border demarcation (5.76%), and the status of Khankendi centered region (4.38%) were revealed as the main themes. The phase of reconciliation was framed in 15.90% of news. The tragic stories of martyrs and veterans and concerns of Armenian villagers living in the border areas were mainly mentioned in the news. On the other hand, 5.76% of the news addressed the ongoing tension and the danger of re-conflict between the sides. The main theme was the breakdown of the ceasefire.

## Discussion and conclusion

Based on the idea that communication has been always essential and critical for conflict resolution and peace, as Zeitcoff (2017) stated, new mass communication tools have reshaped the role of communication in terms of its technological and interactive structure for providing opportunities for public discussions, reactions, and suggestions.

In this context, it has become necessary to analyze content shared via new media tools during conflict and post-conflict periods by taking into account individual reactions such as likes, shares, comments, etc. As Wolfsfeld's (2018) research revealed that the social media provides platform for both dominant and antagonist views by visualizing violence and war situation, in this case it was also possible to analyze the news based on the reactions of audiences. This study aimed to find out how two popular and the most-followed news sites in Azerbaijan framed the problematic Nagorno-Karabakh conflict following the Second Karabakh War. Four research questions were identified for the research; specific-topic-oriented framing analysis was employed.

Comparing the news sites, the construction phase of the post-conflict period was the main frame of both news sites. Under this frame, two sub-frames restructuration and rehabilitation were mainly framed in the news. In particular, there was a difference in the themes of the rehabilitation frames of the news sites. While the theme of the conditions of IDPs and resettlement issues was the common theme in both news sites, other themes differed from each other. Severe losses of the war were also mentioned in *MeydanTV* in the rehabilitation frame. While only statistical information on the Armenian side was given, tragic stories of the Azerbaijani side were mentioned in that news. However, in *Azadliqradiosu*, there was also news reflecting the tragic stories and losses of the Armenian side. Also, the theme of Memorial day included the views and events from both sides. As Galtung (1969; 2007) differentiated between negative and positive peace based on their structures, resolution can be understood within negative, and reconciliation in positive peace (Gilboa, 2009). In this context, the difference was revealed in the distribution of positive and negative peace frameworks. While the resolution frame was higher in *MeydanTV* with 34.92%, lower in *Azadliqradiosu* with 14.29%. The negotiations on peace settlement principles, the problem of the Armenian-populated region in Karabakh, and the disputes over border demarcation were discussed in the resolution-framed news. Regarding the reconciliation frame, *MeydanTV* covered only the stories of the Azerbaijani Martyrs and Veterans, *Azadliqradiosu* mentioned not only similar stories but also concerns of the Armenian people (9.39%) living in the border areas. The danger of conflict was mentioned less in both news sites compared to other frames.

When examined more discursively specifically, it was revealed that Shusha was the top word used in both news sites. Shusha can be understood as the symbol of victory and liberation. However, the frequency of use of words showed that such notions as



martyrs, killed, veterans, prisoner, and IDPs supported the formation of the tragic scene in *AzadliqRadosu*, the most-used concepts of peace, liberated, negotiations, victory, mine, and rebuilding created the victorious liberation scene and success in *MeydanTV*. Focusing on the powers or actors that were referred to in the news, Russia was the most-mentioned country in both news sites. Türkiye and Iran were the other regional powers referred to in the news. While Russia was reflected in a neutral position, Türkiye in supportive and an ally, however, Iran was portrayed as a biased country.

In general, the construction phase of the post-conflict period was dominantly formed in all selected news. The latter one was the resolution phase. Consecutively, reconciliation and danger of conflict were framed. Based on all those findings, by Galtung's (2007) categorization, the research can infer that negative peace was mainly framed in all news in which the violence was totally avoided, the peace was promoted, and the restructuration works, and rehabilitation process were predominantly mentioned. Based on Saleem & Hanan's (2014) perspectives on the role of media during the post-conflict period, it can be alleged that de-escalation was targeted in the news. However, in the framework of positive peace, there were few mentions of issues or proposals to improve the hostile relations between the two countries in the future. It is still the main barrier to social cohesion and the sustainability of peace in the region. There is a strong distrust between the two nations. As Manoff (1998) asserted, it should be better to focus on communication and the media's role in confidence building. More research and projects needed to be implemented by including specialists, researchers, academics, and related persons from both countries.

As stated before, no study has been conducted about the role of media following the Second Karabakh War in Azerbaijan. In this context, this study can be a directive study in the literature. This research was limited to the analysis of two news sites' news for a one-year period. It cannot be generalized. The findings should be evaluated within its sampling. In the future, comparative research can be conducted in both Azerbaijan and Armenia. In this context, pro-governmental and other independent media outlets can be compared for more different and comprehensive research.

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# An analysis of anti-Syrian's signature campaign in Türkiye: The cases from *Change.org*

## *Türkiye'de Suriyeli karşıtı imza kampanyasının analizi: Change.org örneği*

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### Abstract

This study aims to examine the individual actions taken against Syrian immigrant through online signature campaigns launched on the *Change.org* website and their role in inciting hate speech and related crimes in Türkiye. These campaigns represent one of the largest anti-immigrant petitions globally. To collect the data, a basic search was conducted on the *Change.org* website using the keyword 'Syrian(s),' which yielded 154 signature campaigns. Campaign texts were analyzed thematically through the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The main themes identified were the stigmatization of Syrian identity in virtual spaces, the reproduction of stereotypes within migrants, guest discourse, and cultural racism. The findings indicate that the campaigns frequently employ discriminatory stereotypical categories, portraying Syrians as an economic burden, potential/imaginary enemies, not willing to integrate, betrayers of their homeland, fleers from the war, and even terrorists. The expression of Syrian(s) is framed as a stigmatized and ethnicized group identity rather than a social identification, mainly reflecting on Syrian men as being immoral and fleeing from war. The results also show that this identity is equipped with a hegemonic masculinity construct over a gendered perception.

**Keywords:** Syrian identity, stigmatization, stereotypes, cultural racism, *Change.org*

### Öz

Bu çalışma, *Change.org* internet sitesi üzerinden başlatılan çevrimiçi imza kampanyaları aracılığıyla Suriyeli göçmenlere yönelik bireysel eylemleri ve bunların Türkiye'de nefret söylemini ve buna bağlı nefreti teşvik etmekteki rolünü incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu imza metinleri dünya çapındaki en büyük göçmen karşıtı sanal imza kampanyalarını temsil ediyor. Çalışmada verileri toplamak için *Change.org* web sitesinde Suriyeli(ler) anahtar kelimesi kullanılarak basit bir web araması yapıldı. Bunun sonucunda 154 imza kampanyasına ulaşıldı. Kampanya metinleri, Eleştirel Söylem Analizinin Söylem Tarihsel Yaklaşımı kullanılarak tematik olarak analiz edildi. Belirlenen ana temalar, Suriyeli kimliğinin sanal

ortamda damgalanması, göçmenler arasında stereotiplerin yeniden üretilmesi, misafir söylemi ve kültürel ırkçılık olarak saptandı. Bulgular, kampanyalarda Suriyelilerin ekonomik bir yük, potansiyel/hayali düşmanlar, entegre olmaya istekli olmayanlar, vatanlarına ihanet edenler, savaştan kaçanlar ve hatta teröristler olarak tasvir edildiği ayrımcı basmakalıp kategorilerin sıklıkla kullanıldığını göstermektedir. Suriyeli(ler) ifadesi, sosyal bir kimlikten ziyade damgalanmış ve etnikleştirilmiş bir grup kimliği olarak çerçeveleniyor ve

esas olarak Suriyeli erkeklerin ahlaksız ve savaştan kaçan kişiler olduğu yansıtıyor. Etnik kategorizasyon sonucu Suriyeliler damgalanmış bir kimlik algısına tabi tutuluyor. Sonuçlar aynı zamanda bu kimliğin toplumsal cinsiyet algısı üzerinde hegemonik erkeklik kurgusuyla donatıldığını da göstermektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Suriyeli kimliği, damgalama, stereotipler, kültürel ırkçılık, *Change.org*

## Introduction

Türkiye's efforts to host a large group of refugees were widely praised as the country's open-door policy was seen as a humane and compassionate response. The government's open-door policy was legally deficient rather than lacking in humanitarian considerations (Bozdağ, 2019; Koca, 2016). This preference, one that solely encompasses emotional and national boundaries, stands in contrast to the definition style commonly employed by global organizations such as the United Nations and international legal norms. This form of relationship, which is based on emotional ties rather than legal, is gradually weakening. However, on the emotional basis of this relationship style, acting with the moral superiority motive against the West has a great contribution (Polat, 2018). The purpose of using the Islamic discourse is to gain superiority over the anti-immigrant attitude and moral stance of the West through the emphasis on Islamic brotherhood and to adsorb all social oppositions.

Nevertheless, the guest discourse found social acceptance and overshadowed most failures. However, as time passed, it became clear that the concept of the guest was no longer adequate, and a new approach was needed. Studies, such as Saraçoğlu and Belangar's (2019) research based on field findings in Izmir, have shown that economic, urban, and social cohesion problems have led to an increase in hostility towards Syrians and the emergence of Syrian xenophobia with anti-Syrian sentiment. Erdoğan (2020) has also noted the creation of exclusion mechanisms for Syrians, leading to a weakening of the guest perspective and decreased cultural closeness.

The fact that the increasing opposition towards Syrians takes place in daily racist practices shows that the discontent is becoming more and more effective (Deniz et al., 2016; Erdoğan, 2020). It is also seen that these anti-immigrant reactions, which are

becoming more and more massive, especially on the internet, have begun to organize and increase their dosage. It is an important indicator that anti-Syrian sentiment is increasingly gaining ground on *Twitter* (now *X*), as well as other social media platforms and media tools (Bozdağ, 2019; Filibeli & Ertuna, 2021; Karlıdağ & Bulut, 2020; Onay-Coker, D., 2019; Öztürk & Ayvaz, 2018; Özdüzen et al., 2020). Dal and Tokdemir (2021) conducted a study that found that the national media's coverage of Syrians in Türkiye contributes to an increased perception of threat among citizens towards Syrians.

This study adopts a distinctive approach by directing its attention to the most prominent anti-immigrant petition campaigns in Türkiye, which surfaced as a response to the call for tangible measures addressing immigration-related concerns. It aims to reveal the dynamics of consciousness and anti-immigrant grouping that creates an imaginary community around the Turkish national identity, which the study assumes to constitute Signature Texts (ST). Social identity theory is used as the theoretical starting point to understand how opposing groups are formed, from creating STs to supporting them and making them public through campaigns. It is also important to understand the dynamics of anti-immigrant sentiment and the dimensions of grouping. The study delineates a distinction within the domain of comprehensive conceptualizations of social groups, specifically focusing on categories such as citizenship and immigration.

To understand how arguments against Syrians have evolved into racist practices, the study employs Goffman's (1963) stigma theory. This theory helps to identify how stereotypes and disinformative information towards immigrants become practical attitudes and shape public action. By analyzing the context in which Syrians are handled in STs and revealing the discourse strategies as a product of created power relations, the study aims to provide insight into how anti-immigrant sentiments are perpetuated in Turkish society.

The study has adopted the DHA of CDA to comprehend how the arguments against Syrians have evolved toward racist practices, and how these perspectives are turned into actions. This approach facilitates the analysis of the social circumstances that construct anti-immigrant discourse by delving into the historical context with thorough actions (Krzyzanowski & Wodak, 2009).

This observation signifies a theoretical framework known as cultural racism theory, as elucidated by Balibar (1991). This theory is discernible within anti-immigrant texts



that disseminate an environment characterized by fear and apprehension within an imaginary national community. Remarkably, this hypothetical community is predominantly structured around cultural rather than traditional racial exclusionary mechanisms. The pervasiveness of these texts not only mirrors the onset of a fresh wave of nationalism, as noted by Billig (1995) but also contributes to the inception of a unique strain of racism deeply embedded within a cultural identity. This novel manifestation of racism seeks to uphold the envisioned uniformity of the national community, from Anderson's perspective (1991), by fostering cultural harmony and solidarity.

### **Social identity and Syrians**

While society determines how people are categorized, individuals play a complementary role by conforming to these categories, making them seem ordinary and natural (Goffman, 1963). Immigrants are expected to conform to the social representations created by the host society. Social identities (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) and representations (Moscovici, 1988) that are distinct in society become the criteria that determine whether an immigrant will be viewed as an "invader" or "honest" (Goffman, 1963, p. 2). Although social representations are ultimately based on a socio-cognitive approach that compares groups and cultures, they also reveal that collective memory is activated and becomes an attitude toward individuals (Moscovici, 1988). This attitude aims to transform the foreign into something familiar.

### **Stigma and Syrians**

Goffman's (1963, p. 2) theory of stigma distinguishes between "virtual social identities" and "actual social identities," with virtual identities being ascribed to potential meanings that may not necessarily reflect reality. Stigmatization arises when there is an inconsistency between these virtual and actual identities, which leads to the formation of stereotypes that can be negative or positive. However, stigmatization is primarily directed towards discrediting an individual or group and is sustained by the inconsistency between their fundamental qualities and stereotypes. Goffman (1963) explains that stigmatization arises from social differences, and symbols and metaphors are used as tools to create stigmas. Stigmatizing immigrant groups by using "tribal stigma" based on their in-group characteristics is an attempt by the host group to impose the average and standard in a hegemonic way (Tsuda, 1988; Valenta, 2009).

According to Deniz et al. (2016), the perception of Syrians in Türkiye has shifted from an “ethnic and culturally based discourse” to one that entirely excludes Syrian identity. Syrians are stigmatized as an indolent nation, traitor, and invader, and their men as immoral. These stigmas have become a part of Syrians’ daily lives, and they often point to weakened masculinity after forced migration. For instance, Syrian men in Egypt target those who migrated to Europe to cope with the stigma of being a refugee, and men who cannot hold on to jobs in the Dutch labor market face similar challenges (Huizinga & Hoven, 2020; Suerbaum, 2018). The connection between masculinity and military practice is also evident in Türkiye, where leaving the homeland without a fight is seen as a loss of masculinity from a hegemonic perspective (Sancar, 2016).

### **Syrians and new media**

While social networks are considered a new public sphere (Castells, 2015), the discourse on migration is primarily produced by ordinary people, leading to a populist discourse (Datts, 2020). However, this new field is an unstable, platformed field that is heterogeneous, as expressed by De Blasio et al. (2020). Talking about a globally homogeneous new public sphere concerning immigration is challenging (Schlesinger 2020), and it remains unclear how the concept of publicness can promote equal and peer-to-peer communicative action within the context of a nation-state understanding (Habermas, 1991).

According to Papacharissi (2004), the Internet has enlarged the public sphere, but the lack of face-to-face communication in virtual environments has led to an increase in political discussions that are more contentious and unfettered. Furthermore, social networks cluster the anti-immigration and exclusionary power of increasing populist discourse heterogeneously (Datts, 2020; KhosraviNik & Zia, 2014; Kreis, 2017) leading to a pathological side of an imaginary community that finds an area of flow in any form through the “roots of fear and hatred of the other” (Anderson 1991, p. 141).

The difference between the government’s guest discourse and open-door approach towards Syrians and its perspective in the civilian field (Deniz et al., 2016; Erdoğan, 2020) can be understood through the dynamics of informal nationalism (Eriksen, 2010). Eriksen differentiates between the dynamics of formal and informal nationalism, dealing with the nationalism spreading from the grassroots, through the conceptualization of informal nationalism.

The discriminatory and exclusionary discourse (Bozdağ, 2019; Öztürk & Ayvaz, 2018) towards Syrians in new media environments can be seen as a voice rising from the bottom in the context of informal nationalism. Bozdağ (2019) noted that hate speech, especially in social media, has sparked a broad discussion on citizenship, exemplifying the ethnocentric perception of the citizenship institution towards Syrians. Similarly, Güney (2022) emphasizes that the people of Bolu are distant regarding citizenship. On the other hand, emphasizing “us” in the discourse toward Syrians to reinforce national identity shows the hegemonic and daily positioning of informal nationalism (Billig 1995; Özkırımlı 2015).

This study holds significance in its contribution to elucidating the pervasive nature of unofficial nationalism and anti-Syrian sentiment within the virtual realm. Particularly noteworthy is its revelation that hostility can proliferate across various virtual environments, extending beyond conventional social platforms. The study underscores the hierarchical targeting of hate towards Syrians, employed within an exclusionary framework. Consequently, discussions within the public domain concerning immigrants gain a broader and more intensified perspective. Furthermore, the study reinforces the notion that anti-immigrant sentiment disrupts the conception of a homogeneous public sphere.

## Aim and methodology

*Change.org* is an online platform that enables the creation of recognizable online petitions, which allows for the interaction of real people and transparency through the identification of individuals who created and participated in STs (Change.org 2020; Halpin et al. 2018). *Change.org* aims to transform ordinary individuals into important figures through public participation and its ‘civil participation cycle.’ By doing so, it aims to press campaign launchers and signatories to respond to social demands on political decision-makers (Change.org, 2020 p. 7).

Halpin et al. (2018; p. 5) assert that online signature campaigns lead individuals to engage in a unique act of creation by emphasizing the act of creating in a specific format, termed “creation petition”. The principal idea for conducting the study via *Change.org* is to observe the evolution of anti-immigrant sentiment within the virtual sphere, concomitant with the aspiration for the texts posted on the platform to catalyze a public consensus. This phenomenon encompasses a form of collective demand wherein there is a discernible

inclination for the transformation of anti-immigrant sentiment into widespread tangible animosity. Qualitative methodology has been adopted, allowing this demand to be observed in a methodological, in-depth, and contextual manner.

The study assumes that signature campaigns created for Syrians on online platforms, in Türkiye, extensively deal with Syrians in a discriminatory and stigmatizing context, fueled by hatred (Bozdağ, 2019; Filibeli & Ertuna, 2021; Karlıdağ & Bulut, 2020). Additionally, STs are believed to be created with the instinct of being members of an imaginary national community (Anderson 1991) rather than individual acts, leading to the production of common and similar arguments and discursive strategies. The investigation also pertains to the inquiry of whether discernible anti-immigrant sentiment can be identified within the seminal texts when viewed from a macroscopic standpoint.

The research endeavors to address the following inquiries: Firstly, the contextual framing of discussions about Syrians within these petitions. Secondly, it aims to unveil the discourse patterns crafted for Syrians, including an examination of the ideological, social, and cultural underpinnings that inform these texts. Lastly, the study endeavors to elucidate the arguments that are employed in this discourse.

A qualitative approach was used to investigate this, and the keyword Syrian(s) was searched for on the site on December 20, 2021. The keyword was chosen due to its use in field studies on Syrians (Deniz et al., 2016; Erdoğan, 2020; Saraçoğlu & Belangar, 2019; Güney, 2022) to describe this immigrant group of locals/citizens. The search resulted in 154 signature campaign texts. Focusing on texts created by individuals rather than a one-dimensional representation made it an interactive field study.

The signature campaigns were saved in a Word file according to the search results due to the online environment and hypertextuality (Çomu & Halaiqa, 2014). During the registration process, the STs, creators, addressees, titles, date of creation, and the number of supporters were recorded and converted from metadata to data in the form of C(campaign)-1, C-2, C-3...C-154. After eliminating 20 petition texts due to problems unrelated to the topic, the data was divided into main and sub-categories through a specific segmentation process, and trial coding was created. The main categories consist of macro themes that contain the ideological, cultural, and social driving force that creates the texts.

Campaigns addressing anti-immigrant sentiment through similar themes are divided into certain main categories. The categories were hierarchically created, with main categories emphasizing the associative aspect of the texts, and sub-categories established to allow for a consistent, mutual, and original relationship between each other by enabling the approach of the data from the micro-domain within a specific context. The process of categorizing the STs and gathering them around certain main themes was carried out by two different experts through a blind process to reach a consensus on the categories. The discrepant texts were opened to discussion and reinterpreted. Thus, the main themes on which a clear consensus was reached were formed.

### **Discourse-historical approach**

The critique presented in this study is derived from the social context in which critical theory is rooted (Reisigl & Wodak, 2008). The text suggests that a deep DHA is required to comprehensively analyze and understand the complex phenomenon of anti-immigrant discourse. This approach should prioritize the examination of the historical and social power relations that shape such discourse, rather than solely relying on semiotic and linguistic analysis (Leeuwen, 2008). By doing so, a more nuanced and critical understanding of the factors that contribute to the production and reproduction of anti-immigrant discourse can be obtained (Krzyzanowski & Wodak, 2009).

Additionally, the role of language in focusing on hegemonic relations and how ideology positions and reproduces itself led to Critical Discourse of Analysis (Fairclough, 2010; Van Dijk; 2018; Wodak, 2001; Wodak, 2017). Understanding the themes, actors, arguments, linguistic strategies, social positions, and sources of legitimacy used in the discourse, and how power tries to justify, normalize, and use innocent ways by positioning itself is crucial (Van Dijk, 1987).

The concept of criticality is important in terms of taking a position and determining the positions of the agents of discourse (Hart, 2015). It is also important to reveal the manipulative side of the discourse. Criticism does not mean taking an idle position but acting based on social theory. To comprehend the underlying social conditions that give rise to anti-immigrant discourse and the structures that uphold and generate this opposition, it is essential to adopt a critical stance and an approach that justifies that stance. DHA benefits greatly from the insights of critical theory, which enables a deep exploration of the historical structures that underlie discourse.

Reisigl & Wodak (2008) define ideology in the context of DHA as a shared set of attitudes and patterns of meaning among members of a specific social group, typically taking the form of a biased and one-sided worldview. Discourse plays a central role in enacting this process, as it helps to expose power relations and make sense of transformations. The main goal of DHA is to uncover the hegemony of particular discourses by revealing the ideologies that support or challenge relations of domination. DHA posits that language is not a self-contained entity but rather a structure that is shaped by the power relations in which it is situated (Krzyzanowski & Wodak, 2009; Reisigl and Wodak, 2008; Rheindorf & Wodak, 2017).

Representative textual samples were methodically integrated beneath each thematic heading. These samples were subject to systematic interpretation within the framework of the DHA to CDA. For instance, the findings section comprises an exposition of the discursive strategies, conceptual constructs, binary oppositions, and argumentative elements employed, accompanied by elucidations that elucidate the overarching discourse landscape. Furthermore, the study drew upon references from social theory and pertinent literature, as they contributed significantly to the systematic comprehension and explication of the findings. Consequently, as the discursive elements evolved into empirical findings, these findings were imbued with substantive significance and made amenable to extensive deliberation and analysis.

## Findings

Categories were primarily structured by recurring themes commonly found in STs. The overarching theme of each text determined its placement within a specific categorical topic. Subcategories were established by analyzing the finer details of the discourses, strategies, and arguments employed, followed by their subdivision into subheadings within the primary categories. STs typically portray Syrians in a negative light, with content organized around four primary problems. These include STs on the axis of political problems (n=99), STs on the axis of urban-daily life problems (n=24), STs on the axis of economic problems (n=27), and STs on the axis of right-seeking, in which Syrians are the subject (n=4) or object (n= 9).

Syrians are frequently represented in texts on political and urban issues as fertile, 'breeding' (n=3), 'stinky,' 'scum' (n=4), 'seeking shelter' (n=2), 'creatures' (n=1), 'asylum seekers' (n=3), 'viruses' (n=2), 'refugees' (n=28), 'our siblings' (n=5), 'oppressed' (n=3), or

'simply Syrian' (n=13). In representations of Syrian men, sub-categories often include 'lazy nation' (n=2), 'treasonous,' 'escaped from war' (n=16), 'immoral' (n=10), 'terrorist' (n=3), 'living in pleasure,' 'comfortable' (n=3), and 'stray,' 'idle' (n=1). Texts on the axis of economic problems tend to depict Syrians as 'people who receive money from the state' (n=3), 'beggars' (n=6), 'work illegally' (n=7), or 'having better conditions than Turks' (n=2).

Moreover, those who create these texts often position themselves by emphasizing we-I versus them. In the texts, it is common to find references to "our country" (=31), "our soldiers" (n=13), "our state" (n=3), "our hero Mehmetçik! (s)" (n=3), "our house" (n=4), "our people" (n=1), "our children" (n=3), "our neighborhood" (n=1), "our youth" (n=2), "our future generations" (n=1), "our country Türkiye" (n=2), "our glorious Turkish army" (n=2), "our nation" (n=6), "our homeland" (n=5), "our lands" (n=1), "our martyr" (n=4), "we" (n=8), "we are Turkish" (n=6), "Turkish Nation" (n=5), "Turkish youth" (n=4), "my country" (n=13), "my people" (n=2), "a son of the country" (n=4), or "a citizen of Türkiye" (n=2). Overall, the texts establish a dichotomy between us and them, a classic anti-immigrant trope (Van Dijk, 2018).

### **STs on the axis of economic problems: "The government gives money"**

The government's use of economic aid to Syrians has been widely discussed as a reflection of populist-hegemonic rhetoric, often aimed at countering the West (Polat, 2018). While this aid has been cited as a key argument by the government, it has also been used to fuel negative attitudes towards Syrians through stereotyping (STs). "They get money from the government, and the government helps them. Our tax contributions are allocated toward their funding. They sell illegal cigarettes; they are begging and make their children begging too" (C-27, 2019).

In these STs, Syrians are portrayed as receiving aid through illegal means such as the sale of cigarettes or by begging at traffic lights, while the Turkish people are depicted as being neglected by their state. Such comparisons reinforce the 'us vs them' dichotomy and emphasize the Syrian's outsidership through intergroup antagonism. The STs also make use of emotional appeals to national belonging, which reflect the dynamics of formal and informal nationalism (Eriksen, 2010).

Many STs employ manipulative and generalizing arguments, which aim to fill in the gaps of incomplete information and reinforce the idea that 'we' are worse off than

'them.' Begging is often presented as a central argument to stigmatize the Syrian group identity, as it is seen as an immoral behavior by the host society. Such arguments are used to refute the discourse of the Syrian group as guests, oppressed, and victims. Society generally accepts the government's victim and guest discourses towards Syrians, but there are breaks due to the distance from certain national consciousness and narratives that an imaginary epistemic community presupposes (begging, harassing women, living in pleasure, etc.) (C-8, 2018).

The STs also create a hegemonic context by emphasizing the Andersonian concept of an imagined community (Anderson, 1991), which highlights the differences between Syrians and Turks. The STs claim that the Syrians are an economic problem and consume limited national resources (Burns & Gimpel, 2000). This economic representation and stereotype are expanded towards a racist discourse through campaigns that argue that Syrians are a burden on the Turkish economy.

### **STs on the axis of urban- daily life problems**

The discourse in STs about the Syrian group is often generalized to group identity based on daily life and social events. However, the presentation of these discourses in a racist context frequently employs metaphors that strip Syrians of their humanitarian characteristics, seeking rationality for divisive purposes and general exclusion. For instance, the use of metaphors in STs is a distinguishing feature, as seen in this excerpt (C-18, 2017): "How many of our youth have been slaughtered by these creatures, but our media has only broadcast the boy a food company threw water in his face."

The word 'creature' and 'murdered' are dehumanizing and portray Syrians in an inhuman, brutal light. Criticisms of the media suggest that this perspective is rooted in informal and everyday nationalist practices (Anderson, 1991; Billig, 1995).

Moreover, STs often criticize the government and media over Syrians. There is a discourse that suggests that hosting is fulfilled, but the Syrian group is problematic, implying that while the host is doing their best, Syrians are not willing to be worthy of it. This inference is used to deconstruct the emphasis on hospitality, which is often reproachfully voiced, as evident in this example (C-124, 2016):



As citizens of the Republic of Türkiye, we are extremely hospitable. We welcome anyone who comes to our house. We are always with the oppressed. It is the sincere sincerity of the people of Türkiye to welcome everyone in our beautiful mosaic country. In these difficult times, while we are in unity and solidarity, it is observed that self-conscious Syrians are walking around with iPhones in their hands, rioting in the streets, and having fun while looking into the eyes of our citizens, causing uneasiness and distress in many parts of the country.

There are reactions when Syrians cannot meet the expectations of the hospitality codes created by the host society. This reaction is also fed by the government's guest and victim rhetoric (İnal & Nohl, 2018). Syrians are not seen as entitled subjects but as objects suitable for Turkish society's victimization and guest codes. The notion that a Syrian can become self-sufficient with an expensive phone in hand or that a war victim can have fun deconstructs stereotypes and turns Syrians' support in the social arena into exclusion in the opposite way. Furthermore, STs employ these arguments as a strategy of exclusion with racist reflexes.

Although the examples given are seen as individual references and experiences from daily life, they are generalized to a certain group and lead to the exclusion of that group. In all examples, the negative experience of a person who is believed to be a Syrian can be turned into a useful argument to denigrate Syrians. All examples are based on sensations or personal experiences. Naturally, these experiences lead to increased distance and hatred towards Syrians.

### **The contextual view of racism: "They should be prevented from giving birth"**

In the STs, demands are made in a racist context towards Syrians, attempting to rationalize their problems by suggesting that they are morally, culturally, and ethnically inferior and incompatible. The Turkish identity is portrayed as dominant, and the Syrians are viewed as objects to be corrected by purifying them of their humanitarian characteristics, which plays a significant role in designing the social space (C-55, 2018). Racist context can often find a place in the daily life. It is common to see the level of hatred deepened and fear intensified with references from daily life. For example (C-23, 2019; C-67, 2018, C-89, 2019), analogies such as "Syrians swimming in the sea," "Syrians wandering around idle," "Syrians living for free," "idle Syrians smoking hookah" are presented with references from daily life.

One example of this is the belief that people of Syrian origin who came to Türkiye as refugees should be prevented from living under refugee conditions and giving birth under Turkish conditions to avoid putting strain on both the country and their families' conditions and budgets. This is accompanied by a call for sanctions on those who give birth, and a campaign has been started to prevent them from giving birth until their conditions are suitable for return.

Most STs transform individual performance into a public demand through the rights arising from a particular national membership. Expressions such as "our country" result in "I started" while fulfilling a duty required of national belonging. The fundamental paradox is that all interventions and plans against the Syrians are justified through the sense of duty arising from this national belonging.

Dehumanization or moral-cultural discrediting of the group is also a basic strategy (Hagendoom, 2010) used to rationalize reluctance and incompatibility. This represents one of the measures taken to create distance and establish boundaries between groups. The strategy involves dehumanizing the opposing group or presenting exclusionary forms of new types of racism as strategic moves (Balibar, 1991; Tajfel & Turner, 2001).

In these STs, the idea that Syrians are incompatible without exception is presented, and they are portrayed as morally, culturally, and ethnically inferior to Turks with a nationalist reflex. The idea that decisions must be made on behalf of Syrians seems quite human. These rational thoughts legitimize all negativities by associating them with group identity. The presentation of a racist approach as a pragmatic demand is strategic rather than coincidental. The justification for speaking on behalf of the other is the principle of utility. These demands are also dialogic, preserving the homogeneity of the fictitious national community to avoid potential danger.

### **STs on the axis of political issues**

According to some individuals, granting citizenship to three million Syrians at once would mean the occupation of Türkiye by this ethnic group, and it would transform Türkiye into an Arab country. This ethnocentric perspective seeks to marginalize Syrians, who are seen as imaginary others of Turkish national identity. While this approach reveals the ethnic emphasis in the dynamics of Turkish national identity, it also ensures that Syrians are perceived as a homogeneous ethnic group, who are part of the war.

The fear that the homogeneous identity imaginary, which is based on the potential danger to the future, will be disrupted is a heterophobic approach (racism) according to Balibar (1991). This approach rationalizes reluctance to discredit the other. In some instances, individuals argue that Syrians are potential betrayers and pose a danger to Turkish identity. This argument is based on historical narratives and the rhetoric of 'the homeland is going away.' The emphasis on nationalism and the fear of the Turkish identity being dissolved within Muslim Arabs is a legacy of Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals. Arabs and Turks cannot be friends, they have always stabbed us in the back and betrayed us (C-11, 2017; C-72, 2016)

The strategy of certainty and credibility in these discussions is built on historical narratives that position the Syrian identity at the point that is just the opposite of the warrior and holy Turkish identity. Therefore, the Syrian identity is often perceived as a potential danger/hostile social identity based on certain stereotypes and representations and marginalized over historical references. This approach is ironic, given that it only considers the Syrian identity of those who immigrated to Türkiye after 2011, which is an inductive, ethnicized, virtual social identity feature based on certain stereotypes and representations.

### **The ideal immigrant as an argument: "People of our blood"**

The ethnocentric perspective is most prominently reflected in STs through the use of kinship to describe the distance towards refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. To deepen the differentiation between Syrian and Turkish identity, examples of kinship are often used to illustrate the ideal immigration model:

In 1989, when our compatriots from Bulgaria fled persecution and came to their homeland, they kissed the land, worked tirelessly for this country, and did not engage in extortion, rape, or begging. They did not seek refuge from the cruel Bulgarian President during Eid because they were Turkish (C-70, 2017).

The emphasis on kinship is used to present the ideal migrant prototype as a justification for the reluctance toward Syrians. Although Turkishness is positively emphasized in STs, cognates and other Turkish communities such as Ahıska Turks are not recognized as refugees or immigrants. Therefore, being a migrant or a refugee is viewed as a subcategory of citizenship. It is essential to note that Turkishness is portrayed through an emotional

bond with the homeland. The rhetoric of kinship over other immigrant groups implies that Syrians are culturally incompatible. Consequently, homogeneity can only exist through emphasizing citizenship based on ethnic Turkish identity.

### **Being a refugee as an informal concept of hegemonic status: Syrian(s), refugees**

The emphasis on refugees created in the STs regarding Syrians is perceived in a lower hegemonic relationship than the legal, moral, and cultural dynamics on which citizenship is defined.

I am treated like a refugee in my own country. It is to employ Syrians simply by saying that they work for cheap, to establish an order of exploitation, and to condemn the youth of this country to hunger, poverty, and illegality! (C-98, 2019).

In a way, Syrians are seen as having refugee status, which is seen in a lower category than citizenship and built with stereotypes (cheap working, poor, illegally working, non-Turkish, etc.). While the concept of refugee is employed in the context of the specified STs (C-1-9-12-14-18-24-28-33-37-41-50-55-70-98-113-126-149) for the designation of a specific group, certain other STs (C-70-74-128-129) opt to underscore the affiliation of Turkish groups by utilizing the concept of “kinship” instead of “refugee.”

The term refugee is perceived more as a lifestyle descriptor rather than strictly adhering to its legal definition, as indicated by reference (C-140, 2016). The practical application of this perspective is evident in phrases such as “granting citizenship to Syrian refugees in our country.” This conveys that the term extends beyond a mere legal categorization. Such utilization is not confined solely to Syrians, as emphasized in reference (C-113, 2016), where a distinct status understanding is articulated: “We do not want Iraqi refugees in our country.”

As it can be understood from the expression “Iraqis have no respect for the Turkish flag or Turkish citizens (...)”, for groups that are not members of the imaginary community, being a refugee is seen as a beneficial secondary status (C-113, 2016). The status of refugees is important in terms of having an understanding fed by informal nationalism dynamics. In a sort of classification, Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghans were pushed into an undesirable position as refugees. A ground for implicit exclusion is created with a holistic perspective by positioning it under this status.

Moreover, the perception of 'refugee' extends to a hierarchical category under citizenship, one that lacks a well-defined citizenship status and is associated with individuals demonstrating a sense of well-being:

As we see refugees in our country who are in a better situation than us, the question of whether we are refugees or are they refugees comes to our minds, as if their comfortable living is not enough, they also disturb us. (C-18, 2017).

From a refugee point of view, it also includes the bad economic conditions and victimization codes. The economic indicators in the refugee emphasis are also compatible with the victim and needy codes of the Syrians. However, refugees also have a representation of Syrians with the stereotypes it contains. Its relation to reality shows a fictional virtual identity (Goffman, 1963). While the uneasiness arises from the fact that the Syrians have the wealthy people they have, the discourse is developed over the dual dialogic context between citizens and refugees in STs.

### **Hegemonic masculinity: "Our great Turkish soldier versus Syrian men who fleeing from the war"**

Hegemonic masculinity is a useful concept for analyzing the construction of different masculinities and the power relations between them (Nagel, 2015). The representation of Syrians often reinforces masculine stereotypes, leading to stigma. For instance, terms like "traitor" (C-1-14-65-76), "it-broken" (C-41), and "fleeing from the war" (C-10-21-33-54-84) perpetuate a gendered discourse. The depiction of an indolent nation characterizes men as weak and powerless, reinforcing their inferior position within a hegemonic framework:

Homeland means honor. Let the Syrian men go and claim their honor. For this reason, we want the Syrian citizens spread across Türkiye to gather, the women and children to stay in the camps, and the deportation of the men to protect their honor (C-115, 2016)

This representation of masculinity is linked to national identity and is a result of the sexist structure of the historical dynamics that shape national consciousness (Nagel 2015; Sancar 2016). The demand to ban women from giving birth (C-55, 2016) is an example of reducing women to iconic roles that give birth to the nation's masculine

figures. The instinct to protect the homeland reinforces the importance of the warrior male figure, and masculinity becomes a key feature of Turkish national identity (Sancar, 2016). The comparison of masculinities becomes a strategic reference source in the texts, establishing a hegemonic relationship: “Friends since our Mehmetçiks were fighting shoulder to shoulder on the mountain and the slope since the Syrian men came to our country in pursuit of women, let them join the war with our Mehmetçiks” (C-52, 2018).

Military service is the most critical indicator of completing masculinity and transforming into a strong man figure in terms of national dynamics, leading to stigma against Syrian men (C-110, 2018). Masculinity is a social construct built on certain stereotypes, and the glorification of masculinities through comparison is a key element of national consciousness.

The metaphor of “Mehmetçik,” often used in these texts, emphasizes the emotional and robust side of the ‘us’ of the Turkish soldier, positioning representations of Syrian men as morally, culturally, and ideologically inferior to Turkish men. This creates a stigmatizing ground. The age range of 18-45 emphasizes the importance of military service and reveals the distance of masculinity from biological discourse. The binary opposition discourse of our soldiers and Syrians fleeing war, which makes it so easy to stigmatize masculinity, is one of the ways that stigmatization turns into public hatred.

## Discussion and conclusion

In the texts, the social positioning of ‘we’ and ‘them’ has been discussed about the Syrian identity and its relationship with the Turkish national identity, which has been hegemonically emphasized in an exclusionary and stigmatization manner. This stems from the perception of citizenship on an ethnic basis (Yeğen, 2004). Akçam (2008) argues that the historical construction of ethnicity in Türkiye is an integral part of the mechanisms that shape national identity and ideology, which in turn determine citizenship. Consequently, while immigrant identity is often relegated to a secondary status, Turkishness, which is defined on an ethnic basis, is deemed a prerequisite for citizenship. As such, the idealization of immigration is often framed in terms of kinship.

The recurrent deployment of distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’ within the texts underscores the prominence of a uniform perception of identity, with a conspicuous emphasis on portraying Syrians as the ‘other’. Van Dijk (2018) already mentions the

intense use of us and them distinction in discourses towards immigrants. As noted by Güney (2022), in citizenship debates regarding Syrians, local populations have constructed a border based on ethnic perceptions of Turkishness.

The recurrent argumentative utilization of the concepts of “people of our blood” and “Turkishness” substantiates this assertion. Hence, a more precise interpretation of the texts, a focal point of this study, entails considering them as outcomes of collective endeavors imbued with the impetus to belong to an imagined nationalist community, rather than as manifestations of individual performance or agency.

The texts examined in this study reveal a pattern of demands that reflect group dynamics shaped within the context of Turkish supra-identity, which is constructed on an ethnic basis with citizenship as its reference point. An opposition to perceived threats to the homogeneity of this identity characterizes the majority of these demands. The perceived threat to the imagined homogeneity of a given community may prompt individuals to present irrational arguments in defense of anti-immigration positions. This fear contributes to the normalization of anti-Syrian sentiment within every day-nationalist attitudes. Such ordinary nationalist attitudes may persist until demands for the removal of immigrants from everyday life are made.

The STs rely on strategies such as ethnicization, criminalization, exaggeration, generalization, and stereotyping to construct the Syrian virtual social identity and perpetuate the stigma of Syrian identity. These strategies are not individual acts but rather reflexes of the (imaginary) national consciousness and are constructed as a public discourse. Or, they may have been directed towards stimulating a public demand.

The concept of Syrians is a practical example of an exclusionary style of discourse, referring to power relations based on an intrusive form of ethnic categorization towards a particular group. The power to use the concept of ‘Syrians’ as a distinct label for immigrants exemplifies the exclusionary nature of social power dynamics against immigrants. This is further supported by the way group belonging is constructed around national identity in the texts, which portrays immigrants as a perceived threat to the national group.

However, the representations of Syrian men as immoral, war-fleeing, treasonous, and terrorist in the STs contribute to stereotypes and lead to the holistic stigmatization of Syrian identity. These representations are often encoded as the opposite of the

representations of Turkish men who are depicted as hardworking, patriotic, and protectors of the homeland from a national perspective. Such hegemonic masculinity of Syrian men perpetuates the negative stereotypes against them.

For instance, the fact that only Syrian men are considered immigrants and are expected to take part in the war is an example of a militaristic and male-centric perspective. The term Mehmetçik serves to rationalize social boundaries by invoking a militaristic perspective that embraces the concepts of homeland and border, rather than just serving as a military label. This perspective justifies excluding those who are fleeing the war and reinforces power dynamics between other immigrant men and Turkish men.

The discourses in the STs are influenced by informal nationalist dynamics, different from the state's perspective. This can be seen in the state's rhetoric of Syrians as guests, victims, and oppressed, which contradicts the STs' portrayal of Syrians as a party to the war. The Syrians are also stigmatized as being culturally, morally, and economically inferior to Turkish citizens, as evidenced by the emphasis on their poverty status and their dependence on state aid. This stereotype extends to other non-Turkish refugee communities who are not seen as refugees, even though they share the same kinship as Turkish citizens.

While the STs mostly refer to kinship Iraqi, Afghan, or Syrians are excluded based on Arab identity. Moreover, the Arab identity is portrayed as stigmatized within an ethnicized context that is hostile towards Turkish national identity, using historical references and imagination.

The claim that Arabs betrayed Turks during times of war often cited in prominent texts, is presented as a historical reference. To address this issue, the DHA was employed to deconstruct the arguments that were deemed suitable for the stigmatizing discourse style, by removing them from their historical context. The STs also demonstrate a heterophobic approach, which posits that Syrians are culturally, ethnically, and morally incompatible with the Turkish national community. This approach is based on myths, disinformation, nationalist historical arguments, and stereotypes, rather than a rational basis.

Economic arguments are constructed based on myths, exaggerated references, disinformation, and stereotypes, which perpetuate a racist context and double standards.



In conclusion, the STs perpetuate negative stereotypes against Syrians through various strategies and approaches, which are influenced by informal nationalist dynamics and myths, rather than a rational basis.

According to Daniş and Parla (2009), immigration holds hierarchical meanings in Türkiye that differ based on geography and Turkish identity. They further argue that the state reflects this hierarchy of acceptance in its policy-making practices. The predominant emotion evident in prospective scenarios for immigrants is fear, alongside the cultivation of a tumultuous atmosphere.

It is evident from this that the government's emphasis on fostering social acceptance toward immigrants has been significantly undermined. This fear serves to facilitate the normalization of anti-Syrian sentiment within the realm of commonplace nationalist attitudes, as delineated by Billig (1995). Furthermore, the sense of belonging to a nationalist community, by Anderson's framework (1991), augments the rationale behind anti-immigrant arguments. In essence, concerning immigrants, we are confronted with a construct of truths shaped by the prevailing majority.

Balibar (1991) accentuates the disparities in immigration experiences by elucidating distinctions between the Portuguese and Arab communities in France. A concept of an idealized immigration model is likewise observable in the Turkish context, with a notable differentiation between individuals of Arab heritage and those of Turkish lineage (Akçam, 2008; Akçura, 2015).

Regarding prospects, it is evident that the rising prevalence of anti-immigrant practices in Türkiye will progressively foster an atmosphere of animosity that will manifest prominently within the public domain. The divergence in approaches to immigration policy among various forms of nationalism is becoming more pronounced and distinct, as reflected in the evolving discourse styles.

It is emphasized that the anti-immigrant discourse in Austria (Rheindorf & Wodak, 2017; Krzyzanowski & Wodak, 2009) as well as Sweden (Krzyzanowski, 2018) and Poland (Krzyzanowski, 2017; Krzyzanowski & Ledin, 2017) are on the rise in the dominant political discourse in the public sphere (Masalha & Baş, 2023). Similarly, this study has tried to draw attention to how the anti-immigrant populist discourse, which is rising in the virtual environment in Türkiye, is increasingly organized. Similar to other countries,

Türkiye has experienced a wave of populist and informal nationalist sentiment in the context of labor (Yılmaz, et al., 2023). This nationalist reflex has led to a growing opposition towards immigrants.

In conclusion, the STs perpetuate negative stereotypes against Syrians through various strategies and approaches, which are influenced by informal nationalist dynamics and myths, rather than a rational basis. It is emphasized that the anti-immigrant discourse in Austria (Rheindorf & Wodak, 2017; Krzyzanowski & Wodak, 2009), as well as Sweden's anti-immigrant discourse (Krzyzanowski, 2018), are on the rise in the dominant political discourse in the public sphere. Similarly, in Türkiye, it is possible to talk about an anti-immigrant sentiment that is getting stronger and rising in the public sphere. The public power this will create may gradually strengthen the desire for the arguments requested in the texts to turn into political debates.

The study reveals that irrespective of the nationalist perspective, all forms of discourse contribute to the reinforcement of anti-immigrant sentiment. Texts predominantly characterized by anti-Syrian sentiment emerge as the primary drivers of hate speech, delineating citizenship boundaries with an emphatic *us*, while subjecting the Syrian group to exclusionary discourse through ethnic categorization with a contrasting emphasis on them as devoid of positive attributes. The research exposes the principal discourse strategies and arguments underpinning this hatred within the examined texts.

It is noteworthy that counter-discourse often portrays itself as the truth when addressing matters related to Syrians. However, the study contends that anti-Syrian hate speech, camouflaged as an absolute truth, should not be permitted to dominate public spaces, particularly in virtual environments. To address this, a legal and rights-oriented definition should supersede discourse boundaries like 'guest' or 'brother.' For instance, numerous texts depict Syrians as a potential threat. The ambiguity stemming from these unclear definitions facilitates the propagation of fear and animosity towards foreigners as the primary rationale for hatred.

To counteract this trend towards stigmatization, emphasis should be placed on promoting tolerance and understanding. Unofficial anti-immigrant nationalism's dynamics must be scrutinized more closely, and ambiguous forms of definition, enabling its ascendancy in public discourse, should be discarded. Instead of perpetuating cultural

distance, efforts should be directed towards generating more pluralistic political and discursive approaches.

## Endnotes

- 1 This unofficial designation is conferred upon Turkish soldier by the Turkish population, and it serves as a symbol of their courage, resilience, and protective attributes.

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# Looking at the Russian-Ukrainian War from Lithuanian point of view: Ideology, media and the ‘Russian world’

## *Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşına Litvanya’nın bakış açısından bakmak: İdeoloji, medya ve ‘Rus dünyası’*

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### Abstract

This short note deals with the clash of ideologies and communication in the media under conditions of war, with reference to global and local phenomena. It covers the Russian-Ukrainian War and its reactions in Lithuania. The concept of the Russian world as a kind of ‘hard’ ideology is analysed. Thesis are as follows: 1 There is no society without any ideology that forms the identity of a community different from other communities. 2 The clash of ideologies leads to political conflict and war. 3 There are ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ ideologies; during war the ‘soft’ ideology turns into ‘hard’ and as a result the conflict increases. The commentary uses media reports as well as historical and philosophical analyses of the Russian-Ukrainian War. In conclusion, when analysing the Russian-Ukrainian War, it is possible to say that in the post-truth era European values are in direct conflict with a Russia-centred ideology. This juxtaposition of opposing value systems becomes a focal point for understanding the complexity of contemporary geopolitical conflicts. The research contributes to understanding of the complex dynamics between war, ideology, media, rhetoric, and the elusive nature of truth, and offers insights into the challenges of the coexistence of different ideologies in the modern era.

**Keywords:** Communication, war, ideology, media, post-truth

### Öz

Bu kısa not, küresel ve yerel fenomenlere atıfta bulunarak savaş koşulları altında medyada ideolojilerin ve iletişimin çatışmasını ele almaktadır. Çalışma, Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşını ve Litvanya’daki tepkilerini kapsamaktadır. Bir tür ‘sert’ ideoloji olarak Rus dünyası kavramı analiz edilmektedir. Bu yazının ana tezlerini ise şöyle sıralamak mümkündür: 1. Diğer topluluklardan farklı bir topluluğun kimliğini oluşturan herhangi bir ideolojisi olmayan toplum yoktur. 2. İdeolojilerin çatışması siyasi çatışma ve savaşa yol açar. 3. ‘Yumuşak’ ve ‘sert’ ideolojiler vardır; savaş



sirasında 'yumuşak' ideoloji 'sert'e dönüşür ve sonuç olarak çatışma daha da artar. Bu yorum yazısında, Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı ile ilgili olarak medya raporları ile beraber tarihsel ve felsefi değerlendirmeler de kullanılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı'nı incelerken, post-truth çağında Avrupa değerlerinin Rusya merkezli bir ideolojiyle doğrudan olarak çatışma içinde olduğunu söylemek oldukça mümkündür. Öte yandan zıt değer sistemlerinin bu yan yana gelişi, çağdaş jeopolitik çatışmaların karmaşıklığını

anlamada bir odak noktası haline gelmektedir. Araştırma böylece savaş, ideoloji, medya, retorik ve hakikatin anlaşılması zor doğası arasındaki karmaşık dinamiklerin daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmakta ve modern çağda farklı ideolojilerin bir arada var olmasının yarattığı zorluklara dair de çeşitli örnek ve bilgiler sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** İletişim, savaş, ideoloji, medya, post-truth

## Introduction

Why rave ye, babblers, so — ye lords of famous wonder?  
Why do such anathemas 'against Russia do you thunder?  
What moves your idle rage? Isn't Lithuania's fallen pride?  
'T is but Slavonic kin among themselves contending,  
Ancient household strife, oft judged but still unending,  
A question which, be sure, you never can decide.

Alexander Pushkin 'To the slanderers of Russia'

The poem by the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, "To the Slanderers of Russia," was written in 1831 during the Polish-Lithuanian uprising; it is characterized by the attitude of the Russian intelligentsia (or part of it) to the repressive policy pursued by the authorities: it is a Slavic dispute, and you, Westerners, do not interfere unless you want to find a place in a Russian cemetery. The influence of an official Russo-centric ideology undoubtedly shapes this view. We can also say the opposite: The poet's words strengthened this ideology through emotional content. In other words, we face a hermeneutic circle. It is no coincidence that another poet, Adam Mickiewicz, who considered himself a Lithuanian but wrote in Polish, considered it a betrayal of the (Western) ideas of freedom, appealing not as much to the nations enslaved by Russia as to the captivity of very Russians (his friends) after the suppressed Decabrist uprising (Mickiewicz, 1920).

Before analyzing these issues, let us consider Pushkin's 'mistake.' This not only reflects the concept of Lithuanian people at that time, the residents of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Russian poet considers Lithuanians to be Slavs. Otherwise, they cannot

be attributed to 'us,' who are subject to the rules of the Russian house, i.e., the Russo-centric ideology. Isn't Europe fed by Russian gas and oil also 'ours'?

Scholars investigate different aspects of communication in the media under the conditions of war. On the other hand, some scholars interpret the clash of messages as a kind of information war. In both cases, ideology plays a vital role. Firstly, ideology justifies the war. Secondly, ideology feeds the difference of messages that confront. Aday et al. (2005) analyze the television coverage of the 2003 Iraq War. The authors found that objectivity in the media is defined more by culture and ideology than by events. Hariman & Lucaites (2003) deal with the collective memory of the United States of America (USA) after the Vietnam War. The authors interpret the famous photograph of a naked girl running down from the napalm. They analyze the image as an influential emotional resource for moral deliberation and democratic dissent. Perry et al. (2020) analyze the aspects of ideology and distrust for news media during the pandemic. Hromadžić and Popović (2022) interpret the public media discourse during the pandemic. Besides, they show the connotations of it with power relations and ideology and pay attention to its war and military character. Ugarizza (2009) analyses the ideologies (nationalism, fundamentalism, and socialism) in the post-Cold War, as well as the role of the media in it. Barabash et al. (2019) analyze the aspects of information war in the media. The authors pay attention to the growth of xenophobia, as well as extremist ideology.

Last but not least, the authors use the case of Russia before the war against Ukraine. Al-Ghazzi (2019) investigates the social media environment and news media in the case of the Syrian conflict. His focus is on children mediated as archetypical witnesses in the war. Kosiuk (2022) analyses military journalism using the case of the Russian-Ukrainian War. Besides, he compares the global (world) and local (Ukrainian) mass media. Lipkan & Artymyshan (2022) analyze the Nazi ideology and its use in the information war during the Russian-Ukrainian War.

The short note is original by combining the issues of information war, post-truth, communication in the war, and the clash of ideologies. Besides, it uses the recent cases of the Russian-Ukrainian War. Finally, it covers media studies, philosophical reflections, and historical analysis.

## The clash of ideologies

Hans-Georg Gadamer, a representative of German hermeneutic philosophy, argued that the most extraordinary prejudice is the belief that we can dispense with prejudices (Gadamer, 1975). Is not the most significant ideology that we can dispense with ideologies? However, this assumption does not mean that we are fighting with new ideologies against ideologies. We have an ambiguous situation in Lithuania: On the one hand, it is officially declared that ideologies associated with the Soviet past are being abandoned; on the other, historical narrations are created as a new ideology. One is the narration of shameful non-resistance in 1940; another is the narration of heroic partisan resistance in 1945–1953. The role of history and its interpretation (understanding) is significant here. Pushkin bases his idea on 'do not interfere, Westerners' by appealing to history. He speaks about the events several decades ago (during the war with Napoleon's France) and several centuries ago (during the war with Poland-Lithuania) when Moscow burned down.

Like any concept, 'ideology' has evolved. Although both elements of this compound word are of Greek origin, the term "ideology" was coined by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy in 1796 (Kennedy, 1979), who, along with other ideologists of the French Revolution, sought a higher, socially engaged form of knowledge cleansed of the prejudices of feudalism. Thus, the emergence of the concept was marked by two things: (1) the opposition of novelty to the tradition by distancing from prejudices and (2) the social engagement inherent in the Enlightenment. On the one hand, ideology claims a higher, universal knowledge. Conversely, ideology is inseparable from the interests and preferences of a particular society, more precisely, its rulers. Thus, from the beginning of the concept, its controversy arises: by claiming to be the queen of universal knowledge, it becomes a servant of the ruling politicians. In other words, its social claim to impartiality makes it biased. This is illustrated by the change in ideologies, changing the ruling ones (classes or parties) and the social environment. The questions arise here as follows. What is the relationship between different ideologies in changing configurations of political power? Does the changing ideology change the ideology of the ruling parties under the circumstances of democracy? Or is ideology beyond party bias? What is meta-ideology's content and attitude, i.e., discussing ideologies? Where is meta-ideology, not another ideological claim to cover what is not covered, i.e., incommensurable political discourses?

The change in the concept of ideology and the different (negative or positive) connotations are illustrated by its further development. In the French post-revolutionary period, full of Napoleon's activities, marches, and wars, ideology is stigmatized as a theory of 'dreamers and doctrinaires' beyond political reality. Such an assessment is already a kind of ideology presupposed by a different political environment. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (2017) have revived the concept of ideology, which also falls into contradiction. On the one hand, they argue that behind the ideology of the dominant ruling class lies a superstructure, that is, a particular social and political system based on an economic base. On the other, by calling the working class to destroy this structure in a revolutionary way, they presuppose another – communist – ideology. As history has shown, this was an ideology far more jealous and intolerant of other ideas than the one it has changed, forcing a new political (totalitarian) environment.

Herbert Marcuse (1991) points out two things. On the one hand, as different socio-political systems fight each other, ideologies become similar, and man on both sides of the Iron Curtain becomes one-dimensional. On the other, consumerism and pursuing material well-being eliminate ideological tensions between the ruling and the ruled. Similarly, Antonio Gramsci (1973) speaks of the prevailing hegemonic ideological perspective. With the establishment of performative Postmodernism (Lyotard, 1984) and, in particular, with the fall of the Iron Curtain (i.e., one more change of political reality), it was argued that ideology had died. Different perspectives of different views and approaches have replaced it. Along with the death of ideology, the post-truth era (Lewandowsky et al., 2017) has paradoxically arrived when the imposition of one truth is associated with relict ideological ambitions.

Finally, Russia's war with Ukraine has turned things upside down again. The roots of the war are in Pushkin's Russo-centric ideology: It is our business, the Slavs, who will interfere in our home dispute and regret it. The war is 'ours' both because we are defending our people beyond the border and because Ukraine was created by 'us,' the Soviets, so we can now annex it for our security reasons. By the way, this war has a historical parallel. The beginning of the war of Russia against Poland-Lithuania in 1654–1667 was the decision of the Moscow Duma to accept 'own' Ukraine under the tsar's hand. However, this war forced the consolidation of countries (not only in Europe and the European Union (EU) ) while opposing the European values to the Russo-centric ideology. Can the first be called (anti-)ideology? Should an anti-ideology be as reckless as an ideology to overcome the latter?

By the way, European consolidation came after a pandemic, with clashes of different ideologies in different countries concerning individual rights under the social threat, and Western societies seemed more disunited than ever before. This period has shown that every ideology (in this case, one of vaccination and subordination of the individual to society) is accompanied by anti-ideology (not only as much anti-vaccination as of the priority of the individual in society). The war suddenly canceled these tensions, consolidating the West under the banner of anti-ideology. Lithuania is not a Slavic land, Ukraine is not a disobedient child of the Kremlin, and Europe is not a hostage to Russian gas.

Ideology is firmed in different ways. One is through public art, with monuments in the squares telling about whose 'truth.' In this way, two bunnies are shot: on the one hand, the artists (intellectuals) are made accessories of the regime, and on the other, the ideology becomes more suggestible. However, this communication also provokes anti-ideology. For example, the removal of the regime and the change of ideology are marked by the demolition of the monuments of 'leaders of the people.' Lithuania is no exception, where Lenins were removed from the pedestals during the Singing Revolution (1988–1990). It is symptomatic that it takes several decades to fill the empty places. The question is, is this the same as speaking about the ideologies? Does removing one ideology take several decades for another to emerge?

The cleansing of Soviet artifacts or signs of the time in public places by erasing the occupation environment is associated with a wave of anti-ideology. Does this contribute to anti-ideological education? Or is it just the continuation of Bolshevik cleansing and demolition? Is not anti-ideology an ideology as well? Does the anti-ideology form resistance to an imposed ideology?

After all that has been said, let us return to whether an ideology was consciously formed in Lithuania after 1990, when the independence was re-declared. First, we must remember the negative connotations of ideology while connecting it with the imposition of viewing in a totalitarian state. This hindered the formation of national ideology and did not allow calling the cherished national (historical) narratives as ideology. Second, the formation of ideology was hindered by the ambiguity of narratives after the 1990s: the national narrative was accompanied by a European and transatlantic orientation, i.e., coexistence in a new union. Third, the excesses over monuments without explicit Soviet references have shown that the Bolshevik ideology of destroying tradition has survived, directed against Soviet artifacts in this case.

Speaking about ideology, we should consider the theory of limited effect. Paul Lazarsfeld (1972) has shown in his empirical research in the USA during World War II that propaganda has a very limited or even opposite effect. The result of Soviet ideology is disappointment, suspicion concerning the government, and disbelief in official knowledge. This creates an environment for informal communication (rumors) that is easy to manipulate. This heritage has been alive for more than thirty years after 1990.

### **Paradoxes of ideologies**

We should start with the negative connotations of the word 'ideology.' As mentioned, ideology is primarily associated with the indoctrination of the totalitarian state. The oppressive memories of Soviet reality undoubtedly contributed to the negative evaluation of ideology. The question is how to fight against the ideology of neighboring totalitarian states. Should we talk about contra-ideology (anti-ideology)? Or is the antidote to ideology the freedom of speech and public debate? In general, intellectuals are opposed to any ideology. However, freedom of speech and the press already presupposes different views and attitudes toward ideology. How do we react to the propaganda spread by an aggressive state? Is ideology the imposition of a single official opinion? How can this be reconciled with a change of governments and opinions in a democratic environment? Does ideology presuppose intolerance, hostility to a different opinion (ideology), and militancy towards it?

There are several paradoxes about ideology. The first is the paradox of the protagonists of ideology: by pushing an ideology, they herewith incite hostility to their ideology, thus increasing the probability of its removal. This paradox illustrates the theory of limited effect mentioned above. Thus, proponents of contra-ideology or anti-ideology face the same risks as holders of ideology. The biggest threat is the end of democracy itself. For example, the hunt for red witches in the post-war USA restricted freedom of speech and formed a "one-dimensional man" (Marcuse, 1991).

On the other hand, an illusion, prejudice, or even an ideological attitude would be the belief that society can exist without any ideology. The narratives of the heroes of the past or a negative evaluation of the precedents of non-resistance already shape some ideologies. We should pay attention here to conflicts of values, herewith of ideologies in a democratic country where freedom of expression presupposes a diversity of views and, presumably, ideologies.

The second is the sustainability paradox: one dominant ideology does not increase but decreases political sustainability in the state. One ideology shows the totalitarian ambitions of the rulers. In other words, by suppressing freedom of the press and speech and eliminating public debate, the government is provoking a compressed society to the spring effect, mass demonstrations, and unrest that could be accompanied by violence. Besides this, the theory of limited effect suggests that one ideology is unaffected. It is no coincidence that religion is not tolerated as a competitor under the conditions of one ideology. In today's militaristic Russian society, the Orthodox religion has merged with the ideological narration when the patriarch is blessing war machines. This is another aspect of unsustainability after the Russian Orthodox Church has condemned itself to isolation from Ukrainian, Greek, Romanian, and other Orthodox communities that distance themselves from it.

Similarly, the dominant Russo-centric ideology condemns economic self-isolation, bankruptcy, or even a collapse after the rouble is devaluated. An elementary form of resistance to ideology is laughing and spreading political anecdotes. Satire and irony are culture's response to the dominant ideology; in other words, it is already an anti-ideology.

On the other hand, War exposes the truth in the post-truth age: except for the aggressive country's society or part of it, misled by militaristic ideology, the societies of democratic countries suddenly become clear about who is right. However, this 'facilitation' of a search for the truth also hides the danger. For example, it can presuppose attacks on people of Russian nationality and Russian culture. The latter is precisely what can resist a militaristic ideology. On the other hand, bringing the 'truth' to light increases the risk of ideologizing public discourse by eliminating any debate, thus resembling a hostile camp that violates freedom of speech and the press. The one-dimensionality mentioned by Marcuse threatens not only the mirror-like assimilation of ideologies but primarily the disappearance of shades of truth by restricting public debate and free speech.

In management, we face two principles: 'hard' and 'soft' control (Bilton, 2007; Ford & Gioia, 2000). The first is associated with strict accounting of working time and results, and the second is associated with the order without specifying how it will be realized. The first is associated with the 'slavery' of industrial society, and the second is associated with the freedom of the creative society, although with uncertainties. Shouldn't we

discuss a 'hard' and a 'soft' ideology? The first is associated with militaristic intolerance and the inflexible and unsustainable course of society, and the second is associated with the discussions within a flexible and tolerant environment. As mentioned, there is no society without ideology. Shouldn't we choose a soft ideology instead of a hard one? It is associated with cherished historical narrations and public debates on relevant issues, while the participants in its formation are all free-speaking citizens. What is more worrying is not the more brutal ideology in a hostile militarized society but our response by introducing the state of emergency and, with it, the restrictions on freedom of expression and making the soft ideology.

Despite the etymology of Ukraine's name, which refers to the rims and the borders, it is now the center of Europe because of the struggle for European values. Let us use an analogy between Ukraine and Greece in the historical narration. The latter is significant in shaping Europe. By the way, the poles of ancient Greece, like the European states of today, were very different despite the similarities in language, culture, and art of life. Nevertheless, they united in the face of a threat, such as an attack by Persian troops. Withstanding them has just allowed shaping Europe with its values. The Ukrainian army is a platoon of Leonidas' troops trying to stop the Persians at the pass of Thermopylae. When King Xerxes of Persia, at the forefront of the 100.000-strong army, demanded to give up his arms, Leonidas replied: "Come and take it." Leonidas could not stand and did not stand up to the Persians. However, because of betrayal, the Persians were shown a secret pass, and Leonidas had to fight on two fronts. Is not the Belarusian 'batya' (daddy) the traitor that allowed Ukraine to attack from behind? Let us ask differently: Would it not be Europe's betrayal to choose a 'hard' ideology instead of a 'soft' one with enough room for freedom of speech and the press?

On the ideological front, there is a war of words and a war because of words. The very word 'war' obliges to regard 'ius belli', war conventions, and international obligations. Meanwhile, the phrase 'special operation' legitimizes the killing of civilians, the use of vacuum and cluster bombs, and other killing machines – a game without rules to test the latest machinery of mass destruction. Is this a triumph of technology over humanity? It has been mentioned that the technological approach in training specialists is dissociated from the moral attitude. Can this be called a confrontation between morality and technology? What is the role of morality in an era of post-morality that depends on agreement, more precisely, on the relationship of power? We face a clash of values: on the one hand, democracy, freedom to speak and to travel, respect for the other, and



a soft ideology; on the other, national security interests go beyond the limits of rationality and annex the region of 'other,' along with a 'hard' ideology.

### **Rhetoric instead of argumentation**

Good communication and long speeches are incompatible. The most encouraging is the threat. The exemplary posture of Volodymyr Zelensky is noteworthy here: being with the people, a personal example, and a demonstration of courage. Besides this, the nation needs heroes to tell stories and create songs about it. A paradox arises: what is needed is not philosophical sophisms about the relativity of values but straightforward, persuasive speeches, i.e., rhetoric instead of argumentation—another paradox: the dictators, including Adolf Hitler and Vladimir Putin, used rhetoric instead of arguments.

Attention should be paid to the irrationality of ideology. Putin's conclusion that the Bolsheviks created the Ukrainian nation does not correspond to any historical data but is in line with the Russo-centric ideology. It does not matter here that the Ukrainian nation began to form during the two hundred years of being part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and especially in the Polish-Lithuanian confederation, where the Cossacks had freedoms but also the duty to defend the rims (hence the name Ukraine) of the republic. By the way, the Lithuanian period (in Ukrainian литовська доба) (1320–1569), to which the term *Pax Lithuanica* is associated (Rowell, 1994), was characterized by a 'soft' ideology, when the Lithuanian dukes accepted the local religion without destroying established social relations. On the other hand, it allowed members of the Ukrainian nobility to integrate into the society of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where they held high positions (for example, the great Hetman of Lithuania, Konstanty Ostrogski). Thus, the Bolsheviks did not create but suppressed Ukraine's mature independence.

Although the war started by Putin is irrational revenge, it is also possible to talk about rational aspects. Let us remember Heraclitus: War is the father of things. On the one hand, modernity with the rationality of the Enlightenment gives birth to the progress of technology, including weapons and the corresponding ideology. On the other hand, Postmodernism gives birth to perspectivism with the relativity of values and pluralism of opinion, i.e., anti-ideology. However, war, the irrational pretext, shocks Postmodernism by forcing it to choose "either, or" (Kierkegaard, 1992). There is also a collective memory of resistance works, regardless of ideology or even thanks to imposed hostile ideology. Lazarsfeld's (1972) theory of limited effect can be transformed into

the theory of opposite effect when the effect of a 'hard' ideology is quite the opposite. We should consider it while speaking about the opposition to hostile ideology.

First, we should pay attention to the fact that in contemporary Lithuania (as in other Baltic states), two contradictory ideas (ideologies) compete: one of the national states and one of coexistence in the EU. The latter denies the former but paradoxically supports it. After all, successful defense is only collective, being in the family of EU countries or under the flag of the NATO. In other words, the ideology of the national state is possible only by understanding its limits. This is the case of a flexible ideology.

Before examining the sociological surveys in Lithuania, let us compare two refugee crises: several thousand migrants from Iraq and almost one hundred thousand Ukrainian refugees. The latter is already ten times more, but it does not arise as a problem; on the contrary, it is an opportunity. Hundreds of millions of euros have been spent trying to deal with the first crisis (the construction of the border alone costs around two hundred million, and the accommodation of Iraqi migrants several tens of millions). The shelter of Ukrainians, who will soon be ten times as significant, is not considered a crisis at all, and there is little need for state funding since volunteers gladly accommodate the refugees. Where does this disproportion in identifying 'crises' come from? What has changed? Does the attitude towards 'our' Ukrainians do not reflect the typical European home in which we share common values while living with them? The same cannot be said of strangers, not 'our' Iraqis. Let us ask again: What about our 'national' values if they do not have a currency, that is, if they cannot be shared in our European homes? Are not 'national' values the most susceptible to inflation during crises? This inflation is evidenced by the unjustified imprisonment of Iraqi migrants (literally, some of them were closed in former prisons for a year) without a court order. Are we ready to betray European ideas of freedom and justice while protecting our national identity? The war in Ukraine has changed attitudes towards many things but has not released imprisoned 'not our' migrants.

Let us remember Kant's (2015) argument for God's existence, which is needed as a regulator of our activities, a guideline based on the moral imperative to "behave in such a way that your conduct becomes a universal maxim." Suppose we have a post-ideology or me-ideology analogous to me-communication and me-journalism in the post-truth age. Are the maxims no longer universal in the background of this ideology? Moreover, what about those twenty thousand volunteers from many countries ready

to die for Ukraine, for their own and its democracy, for their own and its freedoms? Is Putin testing Kant's imperative in this way?

Several surveys concerning defense were conducted in Lithuania. For example, in 2017, at the request of the Baltic Institute of Advanced Technology (BPTI), the center of public opinion market research, Vilmorus, surveyed 1.306 Lithuanian residents (Vilmorus, 2017). According to the survey, only 18% saw a threat that another state would attack Lithuania. 71% believed that the NATO would defend the Baltic states. 54% would support the Lithuanian army by various civilian means. 64% replied that we should take armed resistance. 52% are convinced of society's ability to resist in the case of war. However, only 34% see themselves or closed people as contributing to the resistance.

In 2018, at the request of the Ministry of National Defence and the Centre for Eastern European Studies, Spinter Research surveyed 1.007 country residents (Spinter, 2018). According to the study, 44% of respondents believe that Russia's policy poses a direct threat to Eastern European countries. Interestingly, after Russia and Belarus (23%), the USA is in third place (14%). This has to do with Donald Trump's statements. 63% replied that Russia poses a threat to Lithuania. However, this survey shows that only 24% would contribute to armed resistance. Only 14% believed that the Lithuanian army was adequately prepared to defend the country, and only 24% supported the defense budget increase.

2020, the same company interviewed the Lithuanian population again (Spinter, 2020). According to the survey, 73% trust the Lithuanian army. 65% support the decision of close people to perform initial military service voluntarily. 87% welcome Lithuania's membership in NATO and 66% support allocating 2% of Gross Domestic Product for national defense funding. By the way, while comparing these three surveys, we should pay attention to the different formulations of the questions ("Do you see yourself or closed people as resisters?," "Would you contribute to armed resistance?" and "Would you support the closed people's decision to volunteer for military service?") and different 'institutional' interpretations of the answers.

In the background of these surveys, the question arises – what is the future of the national state's idea (and ideology)? Clustering into political, economic (as the EU is), and defense (as NATO is) alliances to resist political threats inevitably corrects the idea

of a national state. Is not the idea of a national state what poses the greatest threat to the state itself? Instead of this ideology being popular in the interwar period and revived in the early 1990s, the idea or ideology of coexistence, of being in an alliance and union, of collaboration. Communication and consultation are essential for cherishing mutual respect and assistance, openness, tolerance, human rights, and freedom of speech. Recently, these values have experienced at least three trials: a pandemic, a migrant crisis, and the war in Ukraine. In the first two cases, the test was not passed. In the first case, under the pretext of health security, the attitudes of the majority were imposed on a minority and opposed the sides of society. In the second case, the imprisonment of migrants without court demonstrated disrespect for human rights and freedoms – if it was a provocation of a totalitarian regime, it succeeded. A promising sign is that the war in Ukraine has allowed Europe to unite on the base of the mentioned values and that war refugees from Ukraine (although their number is much higher) are not all associated with the migrant crisis.

### **The media against ideologies**

Speaking about ‘imposed’ values, we already have a history of fighting them. In 2018, the Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission (LRTK) suspended the retransmission of the Russian television channel *RTR Planeta* for a year on the grounds of incitement to national hatred and militaristic content related to the events in Ukraine, creating tensions between Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking people and spreading hatred. Before that, the LRTK had suspended the retransmission of this Russian channel for three months in 2015 and 2016. The Russian State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company replied that it would not be a censor of its broadcasts, although it could listen to Lithuania’s position. The European Commission (EC) has acknowledged that Lithuania’s measures against the Russian state channel are non-discriminatory and proportionate. However, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has indirectly criticized Lithuania’s measures as restricting press freedom and leading to censorship (OSCE, 2015, p. 60–61).

The response is similar now: Lithuania and other Baltic countries are closing Russian channels. By the way, the target of Russian channels is exclusively Russian speakers in Lithuania (as well as in Latvia and Estonia). In this way, society is divided. The question remains open: Should we fight against an ideology with the help of prohibitions and other (counter) ideologies? Or perhaps a more successful tool in the fight against ‘imposed’ values is information and discussion, including on hostile ideology?

By the way, Ukraine's communication success is noteworthy: dead Russian soldiers are counted, but not Ukrainian; images of the bombing of the peaceful population are shown; the Red Cross is invited to gather the dead enemy soldiers and to transfer them over to Russia, thus showing that Russia does not care about its living and the dead. What concerns the burial of the dead has a parallel in Ancient Greece. During the Peloponnesian War, despite the victory, Athens strategists were convicted for leaving the bodies of those killed at sea after the battle and the storm. Russia's defense minister issued an order to destroy the bodies of dead Russian soldiers. Who will judge the instigators of war and the desecrators of soldiers' bodies in Russia?

Although Russia denies the state of war, this does not prevent it from destroying the remnants of speech and press freedom in Russia. Thus, the Russian war finally turned against its citizens. This ideological fierceness testifies to a communicative defeat, while Ukraine is supported unanimously in the West. Another sign of defeat is the flight of not only potential conscripts but also intellectuals from Russia (the case of theatre critic Marina Davydova). On the one hand, we are facing Russia's reckless external attack; on the other hand, internal defense (entrenching) on ideological and economic fronts. Are information and public debate about both the insufficient means of counter-propaganda? Here, we can add another powerful tool – the mockery that Zelensky makes excellent use of.

The attacks on Russian speakers and Russian culture are entirely counterproductive. For example, some Lithuanian pop culture representatives favor removing Russian culture from the cultural treasure. What about Alexander Pushkin, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Dmitry Shostakovich? They and many others can do well against the militaristic Russo-centric ideology of Russia. Although Pushkin's case is different (characterized as an illustration of ideology), Dostoevsky's (2003) statement from the *Brothers Karamazov* is worth mentioning: "The happiness of the whole world is not worth one tear on the cheek of an innocent child." The context of this utterance is Ivan Karamazov's discussion with his brother Aliosha, who was educated in an Orthodox monastery (i.e., by a particular ideology). Ivan argues that the goal does not justify measures. Imagine Russia's imaginary goal of expanding the Russian world and bombing schools, kindergartens, and hospitals to achieve that goal.

Shostakovich's *Leningrad Symphony* is also instructive. First, the Russian army takes the example of the Nazis who occupied the then Leningrad: civilians trying to escape from the siege of Mariupol and other cities were shot by Russian soldiers. Second, the

symphony's premieres have been performed worldwide in support of the attacked country. Similarly, a wave of support for Ukraine has covered the world from Poland to Japan. Third, the symphony premiere in 1942 in Leningrad, surrounded by shots, forced people to believe in victory. Similarly, Ukraine's resistance and the recklessness of the Russian government and army have forced the Ukrainians to believe in victory. These are counter-ideological examples from Russian culture.

Finally, let us ask about Pax Rossica (In Russian русский мир). Is not the ambiguity of the Russian word 'mir,' which means both peace and world, confusing all of Russia's neighbors? Will not a Russo-centric ideology bury itself?

### Last remarks

This short note shows the massive role of history and its interpretation while shaping an ideology. Two ideologies are analyzed, namely 'hard' and 'soft'. Democracy is at risk when our response to a 'hard' hostile ideology leads to restrictions on freedom of speech and expression, i.e., it becomes another 'hard' ideology. There is no society without any ideology that nourishes the identity of a nation or region. In the case of the Russian-Ukrainian War, we face a clash of European values and Russo-centric ideology. An illusion, prejudice, or even an ideological attitude would be the belief that society can exist without any ideology. The Russian-Ukrainian War exposes the truth in the post-truth age: except for the aggressive country's society or part of it, misled by militaristic ideology, the societies of democratic countries suddenly become clear about who is right. However, this 'facilitation' of a search for the truth also hides the danger since it can presuppose attacks on people of Russian nationality and Russian culture. The one-dimensionality mentioned by Marcuse (1991) threatens not only the mirror-like assimilation of ideologies but primarily the disappearance of shades of truth by restricting public debate and free speech.

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### DERGİNİN TANIMI

1992 yılından bu yana yayın hayatına devam eden Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences, hakemli, açık erişimli, Haziran ve Aralık ayları olmak üzere yılda iki kere yayımlanan uluslararası, bilimsel bir e-dergidir.

Dergiye gönderilen bilimsel çalışmaların dili Türkçe ya da İngilizce olmalıdır.

### AMAÇ VE KAPSAM

Derginin amacı, ulusal ve uluslararası camialardan araştırma makaleleri ve derlemeler yayınlamak, akademik araştırmacılar, iletişim uzmanları ve profesyonel karar vericiler için iletişim bilimlerinin tüm alanlarında bilimsel bilgi paylaşımı için entelektüel bir platform sağlamaktır. Uluslararası ölçekte akademik diyalogu teşvik etmek amacıyla dergi, 2022 yılından bu yana dünyanın dört bir yanındaki saygın üniversiteler ve akademisyenlerle işbirliği içinde sanal uluslararası toplantılar ve konferanslar düzenlemektedir. Böylelikle, dergi, uluslararası katkı, işbirliği ve yazarlık olanaklarını genişletmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Uluslararası indekslerde taranan bir dergi olarak yazarlarına uluslararası görünürlük sağlayan Connectist, Web of Science Core Collection - Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Erih Plus, EBSCO Communication Source, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Turkey Database, ProQuest Social Sciences Database ve ProQuest Social Sciences Premium Collection'da yer almaktadır ve ayrıca TR Dizin'de de taranmaktadır.

Connectist, iletişim alanında sistemler, teoriler, yöntemler ve uygulamalara odaklanır, iletişimin tüm yönleriyle ilgili araştırma makaleleri ve derlemeler yayımlar. İletişimin çağdaş araştırma alanlarının yanı sıra sosyal bilimler ve beşeri bilimlerde iletişim alanıyla ilgili güncel tartışmaları hem disiplinler hem de disiplinler arası olarak inceleyen teorik ve/veya uygulamalı araştırma makalelerine açıktır.

Dergide titiz bir çift-kör hakem değerlendirmesi uygulanmaktadır. Derginin hedef kitlesi akademisyenler, araştırmacılar, profesyoneller, öğrenciler ve ilgili akademik ve mesleki kuruluşlardır.

### EDİTORYAL POLİTİKALAR VE HAKEM SÜRECİ

#### Yayın Politikası

Dergi, yayın etiği ile ilgili en yüksek standartlara uymaktadır. Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) ve World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) tarafından yayımlanan etik yayıncılık ilkelerini benimsemektedir; Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing başlığı altında ifade edilen ilkeler için aşağıdaki linki ziyaret edebilirsiniz:

<https://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines-new/principles-transparency-and-best-practice-scholarly-publishing>

## YAZARLARA BİLGİ

Gönderilen çalışmalar derginin amaç ve kapsamına uygun olmalıdır. Özgün, daha önce yayımlanmamış veya aynı anda başka bir dergide değerlendirme sürecinde olmayan, her bir yazar tarafından içeriği ve gönderimi onaylanmış yazılar, değerlendirmeye kabul edilmektedir.

Yayımlanmak üzere dergiye gönderilen çalışmalarda; yazarlardan herhangi birinin ismi, tüm yazarların yazılı izni olmadan çalışma künyesinden silinemez, yeni bir isim künyeye eklenemez ve yazar sırası değiştirilemez.

İntihal, duplikasyon, sahte yazarlık/inkâr edilen yazarlık, araştırma/veri fabrikasyonu, makale dilimleme, dilimleyerek yayın, telif hakları ihlali ve çıkar çatışmasının gizlenmesi, etik dışı davranışlar olarak kabul edilir. Kabul edilen etik standartlara uygun olmayan tüm çalışmalar yayından çıkarılır. Yayın sürecinden sonra tespit edilen kuraldışı ve/veya etik dışı çalışmaların yayını aynı şekilde durdurulur.

### ***İntihal Kontrolü***

Ön kontrolden geçirilen çalışmalar, iThenticate yazılımı kullanılarak intihal için taranır. İntihal/kendi kendine intihal tespit edilirse yazarlar bilgilendirilir. Editörler, gerekli olması halinde, değerlendirme ya da üretim sürecinin çeşitli aşamalarında çalışmayı intihal kontrolüne tabi tutabilirler. Yüksek benzerlik oranları, bir çalışmanın kabul edilmeden önce ve hatta kabul edildikten sonra reddedilmesine neden olabilir.

Çalışmanın yayımlanması için türüne bağlı olarak, benzerlik oranının %15'ten az olması zorunludur.

### ***Çift Kör Hakemlik Süreci***

İntihal kontrolünden sonra, uygun olan çalışmalar baş editör tarafından özgünlük, yöntem, işlenen konunun önemi ve dergi kapsamıyla uyumluluğu açısından değerlendirilir. Baş editör, biçimsel esaslara uygun olan çalışmaları, yurtiçinden ve /veya yurtdışından en az iki hakemin değerlendirmesine sunarak, adil bir şekilde çift taraflı kör hakemlikten geçmesini sağlar. Baş editör, hakemlerin gerek gördüğü değişiklikler yazar(lar) tarafından yapıldıktan sonra çalışmaların yayımlanmasına onay verir.

Dergiye yayınlanmak üzere gönderilen makalelerin içeriği derginin amaç ve kapsamı ile uyumlu olmalıdır. Dergi, orijinal araştırma niteliğindeki yazıları yayınlamaya öncelik vermektedir

### ***Açık Erişim İlkesi***

Açık erişimli bir dergi olan Connectist'in içeriği, okura ya da okurun dâhil olduğu kuruma ücretsiz olarak sunulur. Okurlar, ticari amaç haricinde, yayıncıdan ya da yazardan izin almadan çalışmaların tam metnini okuyabilir, indirebilir, kopyalayabilir, arayabilir ve link sağlayabilir. Bu ilke, BOAI açık erişim tanımıyla uyumludur.

Derginin açık erişimli çalışmaları Creative Commons Atıf-GayriTicari 4.0 Uluslararası (CC BY-NC 4.0) olarak lisanslıdır.

### ***İşleme Ücreti***

Derginin tüm giderleri İstanbul Üniversitesi tarafından karşılanmaktadır. Dergide çalışmaların

yayınlanması ve yayın süreçlerinin yürütülmesi ücrete tabi değildir. Dergiye gönderilen ya da yayın için kabul edilen çalışmalar için işleme ücreti veya gönderim ücreti alınmaz.

### **Telif Hakkında**

Yazarlar dergide yayınlanan çalışmalarının telif hakkına sahiptir ve çalışmaları Creative Commons Atıf-GayriTicari 4.0 Uluslararası (CC BY-NC 4.0) olarak lisanslıdır. CC BY-NC 4.0 lisansı, eserin ticari kullanım dışında her boyut ve formatta paylaşılmasına, kopyalanmasına, çoğaltılmasına ve orijinal esere uygun şekilde atıfta bulunmak kaydıyla yeniden düzenleme, dönüştürme ve eserin üzerine inşa etme dâhil adapte edilmesine izin verir.

### **Yayın Etiği Beyanı**

Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences, yayın etiğinde en yüksek standartlara bağlıdır ve Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) ve World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) tarafından yayınlanan etik yayıncılık ilkelerini benimser; Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing başlığı altında ifade edilen ilkeler için adres: <https://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines-new/principles-transparency-and-best-practice-scholarly-publishing>

Gönderilen tüm makaleler orijinal, yayınlanmamış ve başka bir dergide değerlendirme sürecinde olmamalıdır. Her bir makale editörlerden biri ve en az iki hakem tarafından çift kör değerlendirmeden geçirilir. İntihal, duplikasyon, sahte yazarlık/inkar edilen yazarlık, araştırma/veri fabrikasyonu, makale dilimleme, dilimleyerek yayın, telif hakları ihlali ve çıkar çatışmasının gizlenmesi, etik dışı davranışlar olarak kabul edilir.

Kabul edilen etik standartlara uygun olmayan tüm makaleler yayından çıkarılır. Buna yayından sonra tespit edilen olası kuraldışı, uygunsuzluklar içeren makaleler de dahildir.

### **Araştırma Etiği**

Dergi araştırma etiğinde en yüksek standartları gözetir ve aşağıda tanımlanan uluslararası araştırma etiği ilkelerini benimser. Makalelerin etik kurallara uygunluğu yazarların sorumluluğundadır.

- Araştırmanın tasarlanması, tasarımın gözden geçirilmesi ve araştırmanın yürütülmesinde, bütünlük, kalite ve şeffaflık ilkeleri sağlanmalıdır.
- Araştırma ekibi ve katılımcılar, araştırmanın amacı, yöntemleri ve öngörülen olası kullanımları; araştırmaya katılımın gerektirdikleri ve varsa riskleri hakkında tam olarak bilgilendirilmelidir.
- Araştırma katılımcılarının sağladığı bilgilerin gizliliği ve yanıt verenlerin gizliliği sağlanmalıdır. Araştırma katılımcıların özerkliğini ve saygınlığını koruyacak şekilde tasarlanmalıdır.
- Araştırma katılımcıları gönüllü olarak araştırmada yer almalı, herhangi bir zorlama altında olmamalıdır.
- Katılımcıların zarar görmesinden kaçınılmalıdır. Araştırma, katılımcıları riske sokmayacak şekilde planlanmalıdır.
- Araştırma bağımsızlığıyla ilgili açık ve net olunmalı; çıkar çatışması varsa belirtilmelidir.

## YAZARLARA BİLGİ

- Deneysel çalışmalarda, araştırmaya katılmaya karar veren katılımcıların yazılı bilgilendirilmiş onayı alınmalıdır. Çocukların ve vesayet altındakilerin veya tasdiklenmiş akıl hastalığı bulunanların yasal vasisinin onayı alınmalıdır.
- Çalışma herhangi bir kurum ya da kuruluşta gerçekleştirilecekse bu kurum ya da kuruluştan çalışma yapılacağına dair onay alınmalıdır.
- İnsan ögesi bulunan çalışmalarda, “yöntem” bölümünde katılımcılardan “bilgilendirilmiş onam” alındığının ve çalışmanın yapıldığı kurumdan etik kurul onayı alındığı belirtilmesi gerekir.

### Yazarların Sorumluluğu

Makalelerin bilimsel ve etik kurallara uygunluğu yazarların sorumluluğundadır. Yazar makalenin orijinal olduğu, daha önce başka bir yerde yayınlanmadığı ve başka bir yerde, başka bir dilde yayınlanmak üzere değerlendirmede olmadığı konusunda teminat sağlamalıdır. Uygulamadaki telif kanunları ve anlaşmaları gözetilmelidir. Telif hakkı materyaller (örneğin tablolar, şekiller veya büyük alıntılar) gerekli izin ve teşekkürle kullanılmalıdır. Başka yazarların, katkıda bulunanların çalışmaları ya da yararlanılan kaynaklar uygun biçimde kullanılmalı ve referanslarda belirtilmelidir.

Gönderilen makalede tüm yazarların akademik ve bilimsel olarak doğrudan katkısı olmalıdır, bu bağlamda “yazar” yayınlanan bir araştırmanın kavramsallaştırılmasına ve dizaynına, verilerin elde edilmesine, analizine ya da yorumlanmasına belirgin katkı yapan, yazının yazılması ya da bunun içerik açısından eleştirel biçimde gözden geçirilmesinde görev yapan birisi olarak görülür. Yazar olabilmenin diğer koşulları ise, makaledeki çalışmayı planlamak veya icra etmek ve / veya revize etmektir. Fon sağlanması, veri toplanması ya da araştırma grubunun genel süpervizyonu tek başına yazarlık hakkı kazandırmaz. Yazar olarak gösterilen tüm bireyler sayılan tüm ölçütleri karşılamalıdır ve yukarıdaki ölçütleri karşılayan her birey yazar olarak gösterilebilir. Yazarların isim sıralaması ortak verilen bir karar olmalıdır. Tüm yazarlar yazar sıralamasını Telif Hakkı Anlaşması Formu’nda imzalı olarak belirtmek zorundadırlar.

Yazarlık için yeterli ölçütleri karşılamayan ancak çalışmaya katkısı olan tüm bireyler “teşekkür / bilgiler” kısmında sıralanmalıdır. Bunlara örnek olarak ise sadece teknik destek sağlayan, yazıma yardımcı olan ya da sadece genel bir destek sağlayan, finansal ve materyal desteği sunan kişiler verilebilir.

Bütün yazarlar, araştırmanın sonuçlarını ya da bilimsel değerlendirmeyi etkileyebilme potansiyeli olan finansal ilişkiler, çıkar çatışması ve çıkar rekabetini beyan etmelidirler. Bir yazar kendi yayınlanmış yazısında belirgin bir hata ya da yanlışlık tespit ederse, bu yanlışlıklara ilişkin düzeltme ya da geri çekme için editör ile hemen temasa geçme ve işbirliği yapma sorumluluğunu taşır.

### Editör ve Hakem Sorumlulukları

Baş editör, makaleleri, yazarların etnik kökeninden, cinsiyetinden, cinsel yöneliminden, uyruğundan, dini inancından ve siyasi felsefesinden bağımsız olarak değerlendirir. Yayına gönderilen makalelerin

adil bir şekilde çift taraflı kör hakem değerlendirmesinden geçmelerini sağlar. Gönderilen makalelere ilişkin tüm bilginin, makale yayınlanana kadar gizli kalacağını garanti eder. Baş editör içerik ve yayının toplam kalitesinden sorumludur. Gereğinde hata sayfası yayınlamalı ya da düzeltme yapmalıdır.

Baş editör; yazarlar, editörler ve hakemler arasında çıkar çatışmasına izin vermez. Hakem atama konusunda tam yetkiye sahiptir ve Dergide yayınlanacak makalelerle ilgili nihai kararı vermekle yükümlüdür.

Hakemlerin araştırmayla ilgili, yazarlarla ve/veya araştırmanın finansal destekçileriyle çıkar çatışmaları olmamalıdır. Değerlendirmelerinin sonucunda tarafsız bir yargıya varmalıdırlar. Gönderilmiş yazılara ilişkin tüm bilginin gizli tutulmasını sağlamalı ve yazar tarafında herhangi bir telif hakkı ihlali ve intihal fark ederlerse editöre raporlamalıdırlar. Hakem, makale konusu hakkında kendini vasıflı hissetmiyorsa ya da zamanında geri dönüş sağlaması mümkün görünmüyorsa, editöre bu durumu bildirmeli ve hakem sürecine kendisini dahil etmemesini istemelidir.

Değerlendirme sürecinde editör hakemlere gözden geçirme için gönderilen makalelerin, yazarların özel mülkü olduğunu ve bunun imtiyazlı bir iletişim olduğunu açıkça belirtir. Hakemler ve yayın kurulu üyeleri başka kişilerle makaleleri tartışamazlar. Hakemlerin kimliğinin gizli kalmasına özen gösterilmelidir. Bazı durumlarda editörün kararıyla, ilgili hakemlerin makaleye ait yorumları aynı makaleyi yorumlayan diğer hakemlere gönderilerek hakemlerin bu süreçte aydınlatılması sağlanabilir.

### **Hakem Süreci**

Daha önce yayınlanmamış ya da yayınlanmak üzere başka bir dergide halen değerlendirmede olmayan ve her bir yazar tarafından onaylanan makaleler değerlendirilmek üzere kabul edilir. Gönderilen ve ön kontrolü geçen makaleler iThenticate yazılımı kullanılarak intihal için taranır. İntihal kontrolünden sonra, uygun olan makaleler baş editör tarafından orijinallik, metodoloji, işlenen konunun önemi ve dergi kapsamı ile uyumluluğu açısından değerlendirilir.

Baş Editör, makaleleri, yazarların etnik kökeninden, cinsiyetinden, uyruğundan, dini inancından ve siyasi felsefesinden bağımsız olarak değerlendirir. Yayına gönderilen makalelerin adil bir şekilde çift taraflı kör hakem değerlendirmesinden geçmelerini sağlar.

Seçilen makaleler en az iki ulusal/uluslararası hakeme değerlendirmeye gönderilir. Hakem tarafından söz konusu makale için verilen düzeltmeler yazar tarafından tamamlanır ve farklı bir şekilde renklendirilerek teslim edilir. Yayın kararı, hakemlerin talepleri doğrultusunda yazarların gerçekleştirdiği düzenlemelerin ve hakem sürecinin sonrasında baş editör tarafından verilir.

Baş editör; yazarlar, editörler ve hakemler arasında çıkar çatışmasına izin vermez. Hakem atama konusunda tam yetkiye sahiptir ve dergide yayınlanacak makalelerle ilgili nihai kararı vermekle yükümlüdür.

Hakemlerin değerlendirmeleri objektif olmalıdır. Hakem süreci sırasında hakemlerin aşağıdaki hususları dikkate alarak değerlendirmelerini yapmaları beklenir.

- Makale yeni ve önemli bir bilgi içeriyor mu?
- Öz, makalenin içeriğini net ve düzgün bir şekilde tanımlıyor mu?
- Yöntem bütünlüklü ve anlaşılır şekilde tanımlanmış mı?
- Yapılan yorum ve varılan sonuçlar bulgularla kanıtlanıyor mu?
- Alandaki diğer çalışmalara yeterli referans verilmiş mi?
- Dil kalitesi yeterli mi?

Hakemler, gönderilen makalelere ilişkin tüm bilginin, makale yayınlanana kadar gizli kalmasını sağlamalı ve yazar tarafında herhangi bir telif hakkı ihlali ve intihal fark ederlerse editöre raporlamalıdır.

Hakem, makale konusu hakkında kendini vasıflı hissetmiyor ya da zamanında geri dönüş sağlaması mümkün görünmüyorsa, editöre bu durumu bildirmeli ve hakem sürecine kendisini dahil etmemesini istemelidir.

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## YAZILARIN HAZIRLANMASI VE GÖNDERİMİ

- Derginin yayın dili Türkçe ve İngilizce'dir.
- Gönderilen yazılarla ilgili tüm yazışmalar, aksi belirtilmedikçe, ilk yazarla yapılacaktır. Makale gönderimi çevrim içi olarak <https://iupress.istanbul.edu.tr/tr/journal/connectist/home> üzerinden yapılmalıdır. Gönderilen çalışmalar, çalışma türünü belirten ve çalışmayla ilgili bilgileri içeren (bkz: Son Kontrol Listesi) bir mektup; yazının elektronik formunu içeren Microsoft Word 2003 ve üzerindeki sürümler ile yazılmış elektronik dosya ve tüm yazarların imzaladığı "Telif Hakkı Anlaşması Formu" eklenerek gönderilmelidir.
- Her yazarın aynı yıl içinde (özel sayılar hariç) sadece 1 (bir) çalışması yayımlanır.
- Derginin bir sayısında yayımlanmak üzere kabul edilmiş ancak henüz ait olduğu sayı oluşmamış olan makaleler, "Erken Görünüm" olarak yayımlanır.
- Dergimize yayımlanmak üzere gönderilen her çalışmanın tüm sorumluluğu, ilgili çalışmanın yazar(lar)ına aittir.
- Dergimizin yazım kurallarına uygun olarak hazırlanmamış olan çalışmalar, hakem değerlendirmesine gerek duyulmaksızın doğrudan reddedilmektedir.
- Çalışmalar, A4 boyutundaki kağıdın bir yüzüne, üst, alt, sağ ve sol taraftan 2,5 cm. boşluk bırakılarak, 12 punto Times New Roman harf karakterleriyle ve 1,5 satır aralık ölçüsü ile hazırlanmalıdır.
- Çalışmaların türleri; "araştırma makaleleri" (6500 – 8500 sözcük), "derleme makaleleri" (6500 – 8500 sözcük) ve "değerlendirme yazıları" (2000-4000 sözcük) şeklindedir.

- Giriş bölümünden önce, çalışmanın kapsamını, amacını, önemini, kullanılan yöntemi ve ulaşılan sonuçları içeren 180-200 kelimelik Türkçe ve İngilizce “öz” ile 600-800 kelime uzunluğunda İngilizce “genişletilmiş öz” yer almalıdır. Çalışmanın İngilizce başlığı İngilizce özün üzerinde yer almalıdır. Türkçe özün altında çalışmanın içeriğini temsil eden 5 (beş) Türkçe anahtar kelime, İngilizce özün altında çalışmanın içeriğini temsil eden 5 (beş) Türkçe anahtar kelime yer almalıdır. İngilizce genişletilmiş öz sadece Türkçe makaleler için zorunludur.
- Çalışmaların başlıca şu unsurları içermesi gerekmektedir: Başlık, Türkçe öz ve anahtar kelimeler; İngilizce başlık, İngilizce öz ve anahtar kelimeler; İngilizce genişletilmiş öz, ana metin bölümleri, son notlar ve kaynaklar.
- Çalışmalarda yer alan tablo ve şekillere metnin içerisinde yer verilmelidir. Tablo ve şekil sayıları sınırlı tutulmalıdır. Örneğin; yazarlar az sayıdaki bulgu ve bilgileri tablo olarak değil, metin içinde düzyazı şeklinde vermelidirler.
- Çalışmalarda yazar(lar)ın vurguları tek tırnak ile belirtilmeli; sadece kitap, film, gazete isimleri italik yazılmalıdır. 40 kelimeyi aşan alıntılar içerden, tek aralık ve tırnaksız bir biçimde verilmelidir.
- Dergi Yazı Kurulu ve hakem raporları doğrultusunda yazarlardan, metin üzerinde bazı düzeltmeler yapmaları istenebilir.
- Dergiye gönderilen çalışmalar yayımlansın veya yayımlanmasın geri gönderilmez.
- Dergimizde yayımlanacak çalışma türlerinin bölümlerinin aşağıdaki akışı uygun olacak şekilde hazırlanması gerekmektedir.

## 1. ARAŞTIRMA MAKALELERİ

### GİRİŞ

-Araştırmanın sorunsalı yabancı ve yerli alanyazına göndermeler yapılarak tanımlanmalıdır. Alt başlıklara geçilmeden önceki son paragrafta çalışmanın önemi, diğer çalışmalardan farkı yani özgünlüğü, amacı ve yöntemi belirtilerek sınırları çizilmelidir.

Konu ile ilgili alt başlık/ başlıklar

### AMAÇ VE YÖNTEM

- Amaç ve yönteme geçiş cümlesi veya cümleleri

Amaç

Çalışmanın genel amacı verildikten sonra; çalışmanın araştırma soruları maddeler halinde belirtilmeli ve/veya hipotez/hipotezleri yazılmalıdır.

Yöntem

Nicel/nitel araştırmaların içereceği aşağıdaki unsurlar, başlık halinde verilmese bile içerik olarak bu bölümde mutlaka yer almalıdır:

- Araştırma Modeli
- Evren, Örneklem / Denekler / Katılımcılar
- Veri Toplama Aracı
- İşlem



Çalışmalarda kullanılan ölçek, anket, mülakat çeşitleri vb. belirtilmeli, özellikle istatistiksel analiz/ analizler içeren çalışmalarda geçerlik ve güvenilirlik katsayıları verilmelidir.

### BULGULAR

#### TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

Bu bölümde ilk olarak çalışmanın amacı hatırlatılarak bulguları kısaca özetlenmeli ve alanyazına göndermeler yapılarak tartışılmalıdır.

Daha sonra araştırmacının çalışmasının bulguları ile ilişkilendirilebilecek özgün sonuç niteliğindeki kanaatlerine yer verilmelidir.

Çalışmayı nihayetlendirirken sonraki araştırmalar için araştırma önerileri sunularak alana katkı sağlanmalıdır.

### SON NOTLAR

### KAYNAKLAR

## 2. DERLEME MAKALELER

### GİRİŞ

Araştırmanın sorunsalı yabancı ve yerli alanyazına göndermeler yapılarak tanımlanmalıdır. Altbaşlıklara geçilmeden önceki son paragrafta çalışmanın önemi, diğer çalışmalardan farkı yani özgünlüğü, amacı ve yöntemi belirtilerek sınırları çizilmelidir.

Konu ile ilgili altbaşlık/ başlıklar

#### TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

Çalışmanın amacı belirtilerek tartışılan fikir, kavram vs. özetlenmeli ve alanyazına göndermeler yapılarak tartışılmalıdır.

Daha sonra araştırmacı yaptığı taramalar sonucunda oluşturduğu özgün sonuç niteliğindeki kanaatlerine yer verilmelidir.

Çalışmayı nihayetlendirirken sonraki araştırmalar için araştırma önerileri sunularak alana katkı sağlanmalıdır.

### SON NOTLAR

### KAYNAKLAR

## 3. DEĞERLENDİRME YAZILARI

Değerlendirme yazıları kapsamında iletişim alanını ilgilendiren herhangi bir konunun, görsel / işitsel / yazılı bir metnin, etkinliğin veya olgunun eleştirel bir değerlendirmesi sunulur. Bu yazılar, özgün araştırma makalelerinden farklı olarak alan araştırması içermeksizin kitap eleştirisi, film eleştirisi, diğer görsel / işitsel / yazılı ürünler veya düzenlenen etkinliklerin eleştirel değerlendirmelerini içerir. Çalışmaların özgünlüğünü konunun uzmanı olan yazarların yeni ve farklı bakış açılarıyla alana sunduğu katkılar oluşturur.

Değerlendirme yazıları için yazarların uyması gereken bir başlık sistemi bulunmamaktadır. Yazarlar, konunun özüne uygun bir başlık sistemi benimseyebilirler.

### Kaynaklar

Yazar(lar)dan çalışmalarında birincil kaynaklara atıf yapmaları beklenmektedir.

Erken Görünüm olarak yayımlanan makalelere atıflar “sayısı hazırlık sürecindeki yayın” şeklinde verilmelidir.

Kaynakların doğruluğundan yazar(lar) sorumludur. Tüm kaynaklar metinde belirtilmeli ve alfabetik olarak sıralanmalıdır.

### Referans Stili ve Formatı

Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences, metin içi alıntılama ve kaynak gösterme için APA (American Psychological Association) 7. stilini benimser. Bu stille ilgili kurallara aşağıdaki linkten ulaşılabilir:

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples/>

Kaynaklar, aşağıdaki örneklerde belirtildiği gibi gösterilmelidir.

### Metin İçinde Kaynak Gösterme

Kaynaklar metinde parantez içinde yazarların soyadı ve yayın tarihi yazılarak belirtilmelidir. Birden fazla kaynak gösterilecekse kaynaklar arasında (;) işareti kullanılmalıdır. Kaynaklar alfabetik olarak sıralanmalıdır.

Kaynaklar metinde parantez içinde yazarların soyadı, yayın tarihi ve sayfa numarası ya da aralığı yazılarak belirtilmelidir. Birden fazla kaynak gösterilecekse kaynaklar arasında (;) işareti kullanılmalıdır. Kaynaklar alfabetik olarak sıralanmalıdır.

### Örnekler:

#### ***Tek yazarlı kaynak:***

(Akyolcu, 2007)

Akyolcu (2007)

#### ***İki yazarlı kaynak:***

(Tekinalp & Uzun, 2009, p. 127)

Tekinalp ve Uzun (2009), gündem belirlemenin, iletişim araçlarındaki gündemin toplum üzerindeki etkileriyle ilgili olduğunu belirtmiştir (p. 127).

#### ***Üç ve daha çok yazarlı kaynak:***

(Çavdar et al., 2003)

#### ***Kısaltması bulunan kaynak gösterimi:***

İlk Atıf: (Dünya Sağlık Örgütü [DSÖ], 2020)

Sonraki Atıflar: (DSÖ, 2020)

İlk Atıf: Dünya Sağlık Örgütü (DSÖ, 2020)

Sonraki Atıflar: DSÖ (2020)

#### ***Metin içi atıflardaki belirsizliği önlemek için***

Aynı yazar ve tarihli iki farklı çalışmaya yer verildiğinde kaynaklar a, b şeklinde gösterilmelidir:

(Timisi, 2020a) (Timisi, 2020b)

Aynı soyadlı isimden farklı yazarların kaynak gösteriminde, yayın yılı farklı olsa da metnin içindeki alıntılarda yazarların adının baş harfleri de yazılır.

(G. Büyükbaykal et al., 2019; C. Büyükbaykal, 2016)

Aynı yayının yazarlarının soyadı aynı ise, adlarının ilk harflerine yer vermeye gerek yoktur.  
(Okay & Okay, 2021)

### **Doğrudan atf**

Doğrudan atf yapılırken cümle(ler) tırnak içine alınır ve metin içi alıntılarda sayfa numarası da belirtilir.

Yıldırım ve Şimşek'e göre (2016), "İçerik analizinde temelde yapılan işlem birbirine benzeyen verileri belirli kavramlar ve temalar çerçevesinde bir araya getirmek ve bunları okuyucunun anlayabileceği bir biçimde düzenleyerek yorumlamaktır" (p. 242).

Birden fazla kaynak parantez içinde gösterilirken alfabetik olarak sıralanmalıdır.  
(Akyolcu, 2007; Sayiner & Demirci, 2007, p. 72)

### **Kaynaklar bölümünde kaynak gösterme**

Kullanılan tüm kaynaklar metnin sonunda ayrı bir bölüm halinde yazar soyadlarına göre alfabetik olarak numaralandırılmadan verilmelidir.

Her bir yayının türüne göre kaynağın nasıl gösterileceğinin örnekleri aşağıda sunulmuştur.

### **Kitap**

#### **a) Tek yazarlı kitap**

Karasar, N. (1995). *Araştırmalarda Rapor Hazırlama* (8th ed.). 3A Eğitim Danışmanlık Ltd.

#### **b) Çeviri kitap**

Geraghty, C. (1996). *Kadınlar ve pembe dizi*. (N. Nirven, Trans.) AFA Yayınları.

#### **c) Çok yazarlı kitap**

Tonta, Y., Bitirim, Y., & Sever, H. (2002). *Türkçe arama motorlarında performans değerlendirme* (1st ed.). Total Bilişim.

#### **ç) Editörlü kitap**

Ören, T., Üney, T., & Çölkesen, R. (Ed.). (2006). *Türkiye bilişim ansiklopedisi* (6st ed.). Papatya Yayıncılık.

#### **d) Kitap içerisinde bölüm**

Morva, O. (2016). Ben, kendim ve dijital benliğim: Dijital iletişim çağında benlik kavramsallaştırması üzerine. N. Timisi (Ed.), *Dijital kavramlar; olanaklar; deneyimler* (pp. 41-60). Kalkedon Yayıncılık.

#### **e) Çeviri kitap içerisinde bölüm**

Schmeder, G. (2015). İşbölümü dinamiğinde kopmalar ve kesintiler. C. Vercellone (Ed.) ve D. Kundakçı (Trans.). *Bilişsel kapitalizm*. (1st ed., 61-75). Otonom Yayıncılık.

#### **f) Kitap incelemesi**

Gül Ünlü, D. (2018). Kitap incelemesi [Şeffaflık toplumu: Şeffaf toplumun eleştirisi üzerine bir okuma]. Galatasaray Üniversitesi İletişim Dergisi, 28, 279-290. <http://iletisimdergisi.gsu.edu.tr/tr/pub/issue/37677/436058>

#### **g) Yayıncının ve yazarın kurum olduğu yayın**

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı. (2021). *Asrın küresel salgını: Türkiye'nin koronavirüsle başarılı mücadelesi*. İstanbul, Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı Yayınları.

**Makale****a) Makale**

Çağlayan, S. (2021). Covid-19 pandemisi sürecine ilişkin bir retorik analiz: T. C. Sağlık Bakanı Dr. Fahrettin Koca'nın basın açıklamaları. *Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences*, 60, 27-62. <https://doi.org/10.26650/CONNECTIST2021-801246>

**b) Yediden fazla yazarlı makale**

Lal, H., Cunningham, A. L., Godeaux, O., Chlibek, R., Diez-Domingo, J., Hwang, S.-J., ... Heineman, T. C. (2015). Efficacy of an adjuvanted herpes zoster subunit vaccine in older adults. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 372, 2087–2096. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa1501184>

**c) DOI'si olmayan online edinilmiş makale**

Sidani, S. (2003). Enhancing the evaluation of nursing care effectiveness. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 35(3), 26–38. Retrieved from <http://cjr.mcgill.ca>

**ç) Popüler dergi makalesi**

Gürer, Z., Gürer, M. (2021, May-June). Fantastik diziler. *Episode*, 26, 9-12. <https://episodedergi.com/fantastik-diziler/>

**Tez, Bildiri****a) Tezler**

Karahan, O. (2019). *Şiddet ve postmodernizm bağlamında Martin Scorsese sineması* [Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi]. İstanbul Üniversitesi. <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezSorguSonucYeni.jsp>

Türk, E. (2016). *GSM markalarının sosyal medya kullanımlarının halkla ilişkilerin çift yönlü simetrik modeline göre twitter üzerinden analizi* [Yayımlanmamış doktora tezi]. İstanbul Üniversitesi. <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezSorguSonucYeni.jsp>

**b) Sempozyum katkısı**

Serdar, M. (2019, Aralık, 19-20). Covid-19 pandemisinde medya: Hipergerçeklik ve dezenformasyon. M. Binark (Oturma Başkanı), *Pandemi döneminde enformasyon arayışı ve infodemi* [Sempozyum]. Üsküdar Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi 8. Uluslararası İletişim Günleri, İstanbul, Türkiye.

**Diğer Kaynaklar****a) Gazete yazısı**

Browne, R. (2010, March 21). *This brainless patient is no dummy*. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 45. <https://www.smh.com.au/technology/this-brainless-patient-is-no-dummy-20100320-qn7n.html>

**b) İnternet sayfası kaynakları**

Bordwell, D. (2013, June 18). David Koepp: Making the world movie-sized. <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/page/27/> adresinden 15 Eylül 2020 tarihinde alınmıştır.

**c) Resmî yayınlar ve basın bülteni**

Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu. (2021). Çocuklarda bilişim teknolojileri kullanım araştırması (Yayın no. 41132). <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Cocuklarda-Bilisim-Teknolojileri-Kullanim-Arastirmasi-2021-41132>

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Sağlık Bakanlığı (2022, 18 Ocak). Koronavirüs Bilim Kurulu Toplantısına İlişkin Açıklama [Basın Bülteni]. <https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,87208/koronavirus-bilim-kurulu-toplantisina-iliskin-aciklama-18012022.html>

### **ç) Sözlük**

Mutlu, E. (2012). *İletişim sözlüğü* (1st ed.). Sofos Yayınları.

### **d) Podcast**

Tufan, F. (2021, June 7). Prof. Dr. Burcu Kaya Erdem ile Jacques Derrida'yı okumak (Bölüm 7) [sesli podcast bölümü]. *İletişim podcast* içinde. [https://open.spotify.com/episode/5sz5nRZUCIE4RIKoCw8N7w?si=RJWap-AeSs2ro6IDGUcGRg&dl\\_branch=1&nd=1](https://open.spotify.com/episode/5sz5nRZUCIE4RIKoCw8N7w?si=RJWap-AeSs2ro6IDGUcGRg&dl_branch=1&nd=1)

### **e) Video/Film**

Gökalp, S. (2016). *Sosyal medya* [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIayzRpy1X8>  
Ceylan, N. B. (Yönetmen). (2011). *Bir zamanlar Anadolu'da* [Film]. Tiglon.

### **f) Televizyon dizisi**

Çatay, K. (Yapımcı). (2018). *Şahsiyet* [Televizyon Dizisi]. Ay Yapım.

### **g) Sosyal medya**

Nişancı, İ. [@ilkayNS]. (2022, 25 Ocak). Sadece sosyal bilimler için geçerli olduğunu düşünmekle beraber çok önemli bir noktada ayrım var: Makale ya da bilimsel araştırma yapmanın bilim insanını verdiği dersler konusunda eğittiği bir gerçek. Bu da üniversitenin asıl öznesi öğrenciye dönük bir faydadır [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/ilkayNS/status/1485866565337853956>  
Twitter için [Tweet], [Twitter profili] vb., Facebook için [Facebook durumu], [Zaman tüneli] vb., Instagram için [Fotoğraf], [Highlight] gibi gösterimler kullanılabilir.

### SON KONTROL LİSTESİ

Aşağıdaki listede eksik olmadığından emin olun:

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  - ✓ Makalenin Türkçe ve İngilizce başlığı
  - ✓ Özetler 180-200 kelime Türkçe ve 180-200 kelime İngilizce
  - ✓ Anahtar Kelimeler: 5 adet Türkçe ve 5 adet İngilizce
  - ✓ Makale Türkçe ise, İngilizce genişletilmiş Özet (Extended Abstract) 600-800 kelime
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### DESCRIPTION

Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences is an open access, peer-reviewed, scholarly and international e-journal being published biannually in June and December since 1992.

The manuscripts submitted for publication in the journal must be written in Turkish or English.

### AIM AND SCOPE

The aim of the journal is to publish research articles and reviews from both international and national communities, providing an intellectual platform for academic researchers, communication professionals, and policymakers to share scientific knowledge across all fields of communication sciences. To encourage academic dialogue on an international scale, the journal has organised virtual international meetings and conferences in collaboration with esteemed universities and colleagues worldwide since 2022. As such, the journal aims to expand international contributions, collaborations and authorship opportunities. Additionally, the journal provides its authors with international visibility, as it is indexed in several international research databases: Web of Science Core Collection - Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Erih Plus, EBSCO Communication Source, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Turkey Database, ProQuest Social Sciences Database, and ProQuest Social Sciences Premium Collection. The journal is indexed in TUBITAK ULAKBIM TR Index as well.

Connectist focuses on systems, theories, methods, and applications in communication and publishes research articles and reviews covering all aspects of communication. Theoretical and/or applied research articles that explore current debates in the social sciences, humanities, and contemporary communication research fields, both disciplinary and interdisciplinary are welcome.

A rigorous double-blind peer-review evaluation is implemented in the journal. The target audience of the journal includes academics, researchers, professionals, students, and relevant academic and professional organisations.

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## INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

All parties involved in the publishing process (Editors, Reviewers, Authors and Publishers) are expected to agree on the following ethical principles.

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The name of any author cannot be deleted from the manuscript without the permission of all authors. A new author name cannot be included in the manuscript, and author order cannot be changed without the permission of all authors.

Plagiarism, duplication, fraud authorship/denied authorship, research/data fabrication, salami slicing/salami publication, breaching of copyrights, prevailing conflict of interest are accepted as unethical behaviors. All manuscripts that do not comply with the accepted ethical standards are removed from the publication. If a manuscript with illegal and/or unethical features is realized after its publication, it is also removed from the publication.

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Pre-controlled manuscripts are scanned for plagiarism via using iThenticate software. If plagiarism/self-plagiarism is detected, the authors are informed. If necessary, editors might check the manuscript for plagiarism at various stages of the evaluation or production process. High similarity percentages might cause a manuscript to be rejected before or even after it is accepted.

For a manuscript to be published the similarity percentage must be less than 15% depending on the category of the manuscript.

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The journal adheres to the highest standards in research ethics and follows the principles of international research ethics as defined below. The authors are responsible for the compliance of the manuscripts with the ethical rules.

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- Principles of integrity, quality and transparency should be sustained in designing the research, reviewing the design and conducting the research.
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- Research participants should participate in the research voluntarily, not under any coercion.
- Any possible harm to participants must be avoided. The research should be planned in such a way that the participants are not at risk.
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- In experimental studies with human subjects, written informed consent of the participants who decide to participate in the research must be obtained. In the case of children and those under wardship or with confirmed insanity, legal custodian's assent must be obtained.
- If the study is to be carried out in any institution or organization, approval must be obtained from this institution or organization.
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Reviewers must ensure that all the information related to submitted manuscripts is kept as confidential and must report to the editor if they are aware of copyright infringement and plagiarism on the author's side.

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Manuscript is to be submitted online via <http://connectist.istanbul.edu.tr> and it must be accompanied by a cover letter indicating that the manuscript is intended for publication, specifying the article category (i.e. research article, review etc.) and including information about the manuscript (see the Submission Checklist). In addition, a Copyright Agreement Form that has to be signed by all authors must be submitted.
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- The manuscripts should be in A4 paper standards: having 2.5 cm margins from right, left, bottom and top, Times New Roman font style in 12 font size and line spacing of 1.5.
- Word count must be 6500 – 8500 words for “research articles”, 6500 – 8500 words for “review articles” and 2000-4000 words for “short notes”.
- Before the introduction part, there should be an abstract between 180 and 200 words in English and an extended abstract only in English between 600-800 words, summarizing the scope, the

purpose, the results of the study and the method used. Underneath the abstracts, 5 keywords that inform the reader about the content of the study should be specified in Turkish and in English. Extended abstract in English is mandatory for all manuscripts.

- The manuscripts should contain mainly these components: title, abstract and keywords; extended abstract in English, sections, end notes and references.
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## 1. RESEARCH ARTICLES

### INTRODUCTION

-The problem of the research should be defined by making references to the relevant literature. In the last paragraph before moving on to the sub-headings, the importance of the study, its difference from other studies, namely its originality, the purpose and method of the study should be specified and its boundaries should be drawn.

Subheading(s) related to the topic

### AIM AND METHODOLOGY

Introductory remarks for the aim and methodology

Aim

After the major aim of the study is indicated, research (sub)questions and/or hypothesis/hypotheses should be formulated.

Method

The following elements should be given in this section as content, even if they are not given as a title.

- Research Model
- Universe, Sample / Subjects/ Participants
- Data Collection Tool
- Operation

The types of scale, questionnaire, interviews etc. should be clarified, and especially the research including statistical analyses should have reliability and viability coefficients.

## **FINDINGS**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

After restating the aim of the study in short, findings should be summed up very briefly and discussed with reference to the relevant literature.

Then the original opinions related to the research findings should be stated by the author as concluding remarks.

Before finalizing the study some suggestions should be formulated for future research to contribute to the relevant field.

### **ENDNOTES**

### **REFERENCES**

## **2. REVIEW ARTICLESINTRODUCTION**

The problem of the research should be defined by making references to the relevant literature. In the last paragraph before moving on to the sub-headings, the importance of the study, its difference from other studies, namely its originality, the purpose and method of the study should be specified and its boundaries should be drawn. Subheading(s) related to the topic

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

After restating the aim of the study in short, findings should be summed up very briefly and discussed with reference to the relevant literature.

Then the original opinions related to the research findings should be stated by the author as concluding remarks.

Before finalizing the study some suggestions should be formulated for future research to contribute to the relevant field.

### **ENDOTES**

### **REFERENCES**

## **3. SHORT NOTES**

Within the scope of short notes, a critical evaluation of any subject, audio-visual/written text, an event or phenomenon that concerns the field of communication is presented. Unlike original research articles, short notes do not include field research but may include book criticism, film criticism, or evaluation of other audio/visual/written products or critical evaluations of organized events.

Originality of the short notes is expected to be created via new and different perspectives of the experts and veteran scholars.

There is no title system that authors must comply with for short notes. Authors may adopt a title system appropriate to their subject.

### **References**

- Author(s) are expected to cite primary sources in their studies.
- References to articles published as Early View should be given as “publication in preparation”.

- The author(s) are responsible for the accuracy of the references. All sources should be cited in the text and listed alphabetically.

### Reference Style and Format

- Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences, adopts 7th edition of APA (American Psychological Association) style for in-text citation and references. The rules for this style can be found at the link below:
- <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples/>
- References should be cited as indicated in the examples below.

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Sources should be indicated in the text by writing the surnames of the authors and the publication date in parentheses. If more than one source is to be shown, a semicolon (;) should be inserted between the sources. References should be listed alphabetically.

### Citations in the Text

Citations must be indicated with the author surname and publication year and page number within the parenthesis. If more than one citation is made within the same parenthesis, separate them with (;). References should be listed alphabetically

### Samples:

#### ***Citation with one author;***

(Carpentier, 2011)

Carpentier (2011)

#### ***Citation with two authors;***

(Deleuze & Guattari, p. 1992)

Deleuze and Guattari (1992) aim to explain schizophrenia in a positive manner (p. 45).

#### ***Citation with three or more authors;***

(Curran et al., 2009)

Citation with abbreviation:

First Citation: (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2020)

Next Citations: (WHO, 2020)

First Citation: World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020)

Next Citations: WHO (2020)

#### ***To avoid ambiguity in in-text citations***

If the same author published more than one study in the same year: (Fiske, 2010a) (Fiske, 2010b)

If the first authors of multiple references share the same surname but have different initials, include the first authors' initials in all in-text citations, even if the year of publication differs.



(A. A. Berger, 2010; J. Berger, 2010)

If the authors of the same publication have the same surname, there is no need to include the first letters of their names. (Chen & Chen, 2019)

### **Direct quotations**

When citing directly, sentence(s) are enclosed in quotation marks and page numbers are also indicated in in-text quotations.

According to Luhmann (1982), "Subjectivity is an abstract term invented by philosophers which does not refer to human beings. The real subject of social action is the social system" (p. 324).

If more than one citation is made within the same parenthesis, separate them with (;). References should be listed alphabetically.

(Mulvey, 2012; Ryan & Kellner, 2012, p. 152).

### **Citations in the Reference**

All the citations done in the text should be listed in the References section in alphabetical order of author surname without numbering. Below given examples should be considered in citing the references.

#### **Book**

##### **a) Citation with one author;**

Berger, A. A. (2017). *Media analysis techniques*. Sage Publications.

Kamien R., & Kamien A. (2014). *Music: An appreciation*. McGraw-Hill Education.

##### **b) Translated book**

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punishment: The birth of the prison*. (A. Sheridan, Trans.). Vintage Books.

##### **c) Book with Multiple Authors**

Bordwell, D. & Thompson, K. (2010). *Film Art: An Introduction*. McGraw-Hill.

##### **ç) Edited book**

Miller, T., & Stam, R. (Eds.). (2004). *A companion to film theory* (Vol. 18). John Wiley & Sons.

##### **d) Chapter in an Edited Book**

Jenkins, H. (2004). The work of theory in the age of digital transformation. T. Miller & R. Stam (Eds.), *A Companion to Film Theory* (pp. 234-261). Blackwell.

##### **e) Chapter in the translation book**

Schmeder, G. (2015). İşbölümü dinamiğinde kopmalar ve kesintiler. C. Vercellone (Ed.) ve D. Kundakçı (Trans.). *Bilişsel kapitalizm*. (1st ed., 61-75). Otonom Yayıncılık.

Piaget, J. (1988). Extracts from Piaget's theory (G. Gellerier & J. Langer, Trans.). In K. Richardson & S. Sheldon (Eds.) *Cognitive development to adolescence: A reader* (pp. 3-18). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. (Reprinted from Manual of child psychology, pp. 703-732, by P.H. Myssen, Ed., 1970. Wiley)

### **f) Book Review**

Gül Ünlü, D. (2018). Kitap incelemesi [Şeffaflık toplumu: Şeffaf toplumun eleştirisi üzerine bir okuma]. *Galatasaray Üniversitesi İletişim Dergisi*, 28, 279-290. <http://iletisimdergisi.gsu.edu.tr/tr/pub/issue/37677/436058>

Seo, S. (2016). [Review of the book *Journalism and Human Rights: How Demographics Drive Media Coverage* by John C. Pollock]. *Journal of Communication*, 66 (6), E-15-E-17. <https://academic.oup.com/joc/article-abstract/66/6/E15/4082402?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

### **g) Book with Organization as Author**

American Psychological Association. (2009). Crediting sources: Citing references in text. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed., p. 177).

## **Article**

### **a) Article**

Seyidov, I. (2020). On conceptual and methodological deficiencies of data journalism-related studies in Turkey. *Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences*, 58, 273-289. <https://doi.org/10.26650/CONNECTIST2020-0070>

### **b) Online article without DOI**

Grist, L. (2007). Masculinity, violence, resistance: A new psychoanalytic reading of Raging Bull. *Atlantis*, 29(1), 11-27. Retrieved from <https://go.gale.com/>

### **c) Popular magazine article**

Salmon, C. (2016, Oct). Ken Loach is right: British film and TV has become too cosy and conservative. *Little White Lies*. <https://lwlies.com/articles/ken-loach-fake-nostalgia-tv-period-dramas/>

## **Thesis, Symposium**

### **a) Thesis**

Kendrick, J. (2005). *Screen violence and the new Hollywood* [Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation]. Indiana University. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/433bbaa0b9973dad53d0aa735d1f941a/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

### **b) Symposium contribution**

Gündüz, U. & Pembecioğlu N. (2021, October, 26-27). Covid-19. H. Adıyaman (Chairs), *The health*

*agenda of media in the lights of information ethics and the Covid-19 sentiment analysis of garlic news* [Symposium]. 18. International Communication in the Millennium Symposium, Erzurum, Turkey.

### Other Sources

#### a) Newspaper Article

Lee, E. (2019, February 1). Digital Media: What Went Wrong. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/01/business/media/buzzfeed-digital-media-wrong.html>

#### b) İnternet sayfası kaynakları

Bordwell, D. (2013, June 18). David Koepp: Making the world movie-sized. <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/page/27/> adresinden 15 Eylül 2020 tarihinde alınmıştır.

#### c) Official publications and press release

Turkish Statistical Institute (2022). Foreign Trade Statistics (Publication number: 45536). <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Foreign-Trade-Statistics-January-2022-45536&dil=2>

The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. (2010, August 4). Administration officials continue travel across the country holding “Recovery Summer” events [Press release]. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/realitycheck/the-press-office/administration-officials-continue-travel-across-country-holding-recovery-summer-eve>

#### ç) Dictionary

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *Communication*. In Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford University Press. Retrieved January 1, 2022, from <https://www.lexico.com/definition/communication>

#### d) Podcast

West, S. (2020, December). On Media pt. 1- Manufacturing Consent (Episode 148) [Audio podcast]. In Philosophize this!. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/04YIh1REL6KOxlnaJWlvfh?si=86782f420d744114>

#### e) Video/Film

Zizek, S. (2008). *Violence* [Video]. Youtube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_x0eyNkNpL0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_x0eyNkNpL0)

Scorsese, M. (Director). (1976). *Taxi Driver* [Film]. Columbia Pictures.

#### f) TV series

Chase, D. (Producer). (1999-2007). *The Sopranos* [TV Series]. HBO.

#### g) Social Media

Manovich, L. [@manovich]. In the late 1990s South Korea became the leader in Internet connections, and they launched one of the first social networks Cyworld. Next, they used YouTube to create k-pop

## INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

global popularity. Can they repeat their success in metaverse? [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/manovich/status/1462405978356207626>

[Tweet] for Twitter, [Twitter profile] etc., [Facebook status] for Facebook, [Timeline] etc., [Picture] for Instagram, [Highlight] can be used.

## SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Ensure that the following items are present:

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<b>Kabul Tarihi</b> <i>Acceptance date</i>	
<b>Yazarların listesi</b> <i>List of authors</i>	

Sıra No	Adı-Soyadı Name - Surname	E-Posta E-mail	İmza Signature	Tarih Date
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<b>Makalenin türü (Araştırma makalesi, Derleme, v.b.)</b> <i>Manuscript Type (Research Article, Review, etc.)</i>	
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