

## Constructing the "Arab Spring": News Discourses in Turkish Newspapers

*Banu Dağtaş*

Anadolu University, Turkey

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***Abstract:***

Originating in Tunisia and spreading rapidly to Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and Libya, the recent wave of popular movements that the Western media have dubbed the "Arab Spring" has been closely monitored by the whole world including in Turkey. This country is geographically close to the region and the ruling *Justice and Development Party* (AKP) has been active in developing foreign policies in relation to the key countries involved. This paper analyzes the news discourses in the reports published between January 25<sup>th</sup> and February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011, in six Turkish national newspapers. This is the period when upheaval reached its peak in Tahrir Square in Cairo, the most potent symbol of "Arab Spring". The newspapers sampled fall into two categories, those supporting the AKP government (*Star*, *Zaman*, and *Sabah*) and those not supporting the AKP government (*Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet*, and *Taraf*). To map the discursive fields employed in the news reports, this paper draws on methods from critical discourse analysis and examines news actors and their quotation patterns, lexicalization, overlexicalization and syntactic preferences.

***Keywords:*** Arab Spring; Arab Uprisings; Arab Uprisings in the Turkish Press; Critical Discourse Analysis; News Discourse

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**Résumé:**

Prenant son origine en Tunisie et se propageant rapidement en Égypte, au Yémen, au Bahreïn et en Libye, la récente vague des mouvements populaires dans les médias occidentaux a été intitulée “le printemps arabe” et a été suivie de près par le monde entier, incluant la Turquie, un pays géographiquement près de la région et où le parti au pouvoir, Parti pour la justice et le développement (AKP) a pris part au développement des politiques étrangères en relation avec les pays-clés impliqués. Cet article analyse le discours des nouvelles dans les rapports publiés entre le 25 janvier et le 25 février 2011 dans six journaux nationaux turcs. Cette période coïncide avec les soulèvements à Tahrir Square au Caire, le plus puissant symbole du printemps arabe. L'échantillon des journaux est divisé en deux catégories: ceux qui supportent le gouvernement AKP (*Star*, *Zaman*, et *Sabah*) et ceux qui ne le soutiennent pas (*Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet*, et *Taraf*). S'inspirant de méthodes d'analyse de discours critique, cette recherche examine les nouveaux acteurs et les modèles de leur citation, lexicque et préférences de syntaxe afin de schématiser les champs discursifs employés dans les articles.

**Mots-clés:** Analyse de discours critique; Discours des nouvelles; Printemps arabe; Révolte arabe; Révolte arabe dans la presse turque

**Introduction**

It is now widely accepted that the “Arab uprising” was initially triggered when Muhammed Buazizi, a Tunisian street vendor, burnt himself to death on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010, in protest against the bad conditions he lived in. In the month that followed, protests rapidly spread to Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and Libya, and were dubbed by the Western media as an “Arab Spring”, a rebirth of popular opposition to authoritarian ruling elites. Also known as the “Arab Uprising” these movements were closely monitored by the whole world including in Turkey which is geographically close to the centres of protest and where the *Justice and Development Party* (AKP)<sup>1</sup>, Turkey’s ruling party since 2002, has developed and pursued active foreign policies in the region. These policies, also called “public diplomacy policies” deal extensively with the relationships with civil society.

This study examines the way that the “Arab Spring” was discursively constructed in a sample of major national Turkish newspapers, between January 25<sup>th</sup> and February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the period when upheavals reached a peak in Egypt in the occupation of Tahrir Square in Cairo, the most important symbol of popular protest. Six titles were chosen for study grouped into two categories, three pro-AKP government newspapers (*Star*, *Zaman*, and *Sabah*) and three newspapers that are not in favour of the AKP government (*Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet*, and *Taraf*). The AKP became the ruling party in 2002 receiving 34.43 percent of all votes cast and consolidated its position in the 2007 and 2011 general elections, increasing its share of the vote to 46.58 percent and then to 49.89 percent. As a consequence, since 2007 selected media strengthened their support for government.

*Star*, a pro-government newspaper, was launched at the end of the 1990's, but it became a pro-AKP government after 2004 when its ownership structure has changed. *Sabah* dates back to the early 1990s but was purchased by the Çalık Group supporters of the AKP government. *Zaman* is owned by the Fethullah Gülen Islamic Community, the largest in Turkey known for its “moderate Islam” approach. The community has been supporting the AKP government since 2002. One major newspaper that does not support the government, is *Cumhuriyet*. Active in the Turkish printed media since the declaration of Turkish Republic it is today explicitly opposed to the AKP government. *Hürriyet* was launched in 1948 is a significant newspaper in Turkish history, and although it is not an explicit opponent of the AKP government, it does not support it either. *Taraf*, published since 2007, is well known for its oppositional news coverage towards the military institution of Turkey in its early years. For the last two years, it has been criticizing the AKP government especially for its Kurdish policy, a stance that has led the chief editor to have serious arguments with the Prime Minister.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and News Discourse**

In this study, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (e.g., Teo, 2000; van Dijk, 1983; 1988a; 1988b; 1991; 2005; 2011) is used to identify *the discourses of news reports* using analytical categories taken from van Dijk's and Teo's studies. CDA, which has attracted a number of researchers including Fairclough (1995; 2003), Wodak and Meyer (2009), Theo van Leeuwen (1996), and Richardson (2004) has its roots in critical linguistics, but goes beyond the description of discourse to an explanation of how and why particular discourses are produced. CDA typically concentrates on texts like news reporting, political interviews, counselling and job interviews that describe “unequal encounters” or embody manipulative strategies that seem neutral or natural to most people (Teo, 2000). In the case of news analysis, Teo underlines that CDA is a critical, multidisciplinary approach which focuses on issues of prejudice, power, dominance and hegemony, and the discursive processes through which they are enacted, concealed, legitimated and reproduced in newspaper reporting (Ibid). Teun A. van Dijk prefers to use the term of “Critical Discourse Studies” (CDS) to suggest that it is not only a form of analysis but also a “critical theory” with “critical applications” (van Dijk, 1991; 2011). He sees CDS not as a method, but rather as a perspective, position, or attitude within the discipline of multidisciplinary discourse studies. Two of the leading writers in the field, Fairclough and Wodak describe CDA as follows:

CDA sees discourse-language use in speech and writing-as a form of “social practice”. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially condoned-it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationship between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects-that is they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men,

ethnic / cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people.

(Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 258)

As this description makes clear, Fairclough and Wodak underline the dialectic relationship between discourses and the situations, institutions and social structures which frame them. They also underline that discursive practices have the ideological effect of producing and reproducing unequal power relations. CDA aims to reveal how social inequality is expressed, constituted and legitimized by language use or in discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This process does not necessarily proceed uncontested however and *texts* are seen not as relay mechanisms but as sites of contest that may display traces of differing ideologies struggling for dominance. In CDA, text is also regarded as a manifestation of social actions, which are broadly determined by social structures (Ibid). In this connection it is useful to remember van Dijk's (2011) notion of ideology as a *socio-cognitive* approach. It presents ideologies as collective belief systems shared by members of groups and not as individual beliefs. And since people are members of different social groups, each person "participates" in various ideologies including: feminist, socialist, and journalist. As a consequence, one's activities and discourses may be influenced by fragments of several ideologies at the same time. According to van Dijk, "even on each occasion one or a few of such ideologies will be dominant—as is more generally the case for identities" (Ibid: 384). Drawing on van Dijk's view, Wodak and Meyer (2009) underline that discourse structures and social structure cannot be related directly, there is a need for the mediation of an interface. According to van Dijk, this interface must be cognitive, in the sense that it is not objective social situations, but the subjective definitions of the relevant properties of communicative situations that influence text and talk (Ibid). In keeping with the emphasis on the reproducing of inequality much work within CDA has focused on mechanisms of *social inclusion* and *exclusion*. For example, van Dijk (2005) has paid special attention to the discursive reproduction of racism in Spain and Latin America while Richardson (2004) has explored the way British press discourses reproduce and reinforce the social exclusion of the Islam.

In this present study, to determine the discourses of the news reports, the analytical categories of *news actors and their quotation patterns*, *lexicalization*, *overlexicalization* and *syntactic preferences* are employed and applied at both the macro structure of the news reports—the headlines, leads, and main topic, and the micro structure—namely the rest of topics in news reports. The topics of news discourse are not simply a list, rather they form a hierarchical structure from the most important to less important (van Dijk, 1988b). It is suggested by critical news discourse studies (e.g., van Dijk, 1983; 1988a; 1988b; 1991; Teo 2000) that the macrostructure embodies the *ideology* of the news. According to Teo (2000), as the highest topic within the macrostructure of the news, *headlines* include both knowledge of news event and their interpretation. As journalists (especially the editors of newspapers) construct headlines on the basis of minimum words-maximum knowledge, every word is chosen very carefully. According to van Dijk, "journalists may 'upgrade' a less important topic by including it in the headline, thereby 'downgrading' the importance of the main topic. In other words, headlines are the subjective definition of the situation, which influences the interpretation made by the readers" (1991: 51). Journalists also use the summarizing headlines to understand and memorize the information they get from the discourses of their many sources.

Since the main question posed by critical discourse analysis is "*who speaks and how*", determining the *news actors* and *their quotations* is crucial. How the press present and represents

social actors is a part of a broader ideological structure of values (van Dijk, 1991). As van Dijk has emphasized “there is a hierarchy of sources and associated degrees of reliability. Elite sources are not only considered more news worthy (as news actors) but also more reliable as observers and opinion formulators” (1988b: 87). It is important to mention here that Hall and colleagues (1999), label journalists as the *secondary definers* who reproduce the discourses of the powerful persons that represent institutional power and position. Hall and colleagues call these “accredited” sources who speak in news reports as *primary definers* (Ibid). The sources accredited to speak on political issues are prime ministers, ministers and political leaders. Their favoured position is conveyed through the use of direct *quotation* rather than paraphrase. As a consequence, quotation becomes a device that admits only those in positions of power and influence shutting out the opinions and perspectives of those deemed by society to be powerless. “Thus, while the powerful are further empowered through quotation patterns that enhance their status and visibility, the systematic silencing of the powerless—the poor, the young, the uneducated etc.—only further disempowers them” (Teo, 2000: 18). In the case of news reports, quotation patterns can become a powerful ideological tool in constructing meaning.

*Lexicalization* (word choice) and *overlexicalization* are also important devices revealing the ideological meanings carried by news discourse. The most famous example of “*word choice*” in relation to “news actors” is the use of the terms “terrorist” and “freedom fighter” while describing the same person (van Dijk, 1988b). Teo (2000: 20) argues that using a surfeit of repetitious and quasi-synonymous terms, *overlexicalization* creates “over-completeness” in the news discourse suggesting that that no further analysis and interpretation is needed. The *syntactic analysis* in news reports, explores *active/passive/imperative sentence structures*. According to van Dijk (1988a), the grammatical analysis of language use in the press can reveal the perspective of journalists or newspapers. He argues that “[s]entence syntax expresses the semantic roles of participants in an event by word order, relational functions (subject-object), or the use of active and passive forms” (van Dijk, 1988a: 11).

## The Development of the “Arab Spring”

### *The Initial Stages of the Arab Uprisings*

*Muhammed Buazizi*, a Tunisian street vendor, is now generally credited with having sparked the “Arab uprising” by setting himself on fire on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The police had confiscated his card and not returned it although he had officially applied three times that day to have it returned. Buazizi’s burning himself was a reaction to his bad living conditions. After December 24<sup>th</sup> 2010, the uprisings spread to other regions in northern Tunisia. Following his death on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011, *Buazizi* became a generalized symbol and popular protests gathered momentum in other countries in the region: in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen where the disruption open the way for a civil war. Another outstanding symbol of the Arab uprising was “*Tahrir Square*” in Cairo, the place where King Farouk had celebrated the withdrawal of British troops from Egypt together with his citizens in 1949. Other symbols included “*tent, rage and honor*”, referring to the popular occupation of public space and the depth of popular feeling informing the protests (Çubukçu, 2012).

At the outset, few people participated in the uprisings. However, more and more people became involved in demonstrations and spent the night in the tents set up in the square. The main reason for the increase in the number of people participating was that January 25<sup>th</sup> National

Police Day was declared the “rage day” against Mubarak under the slogan of “The Solution is Tunisia”. Gelvin describes the organizers of the protests as follows:

There were several groups calling for protest on January 25. One included activists from the young wings of political parties and the Muslim Brotherhood, along with labor organizers. Another consisted of the administrators of the Facebook page “We are all Khaled Said”. And there was Asmaa Mahfouz, a founder of a group called April 6 Movement, who posted a video in which she taunted, “I, a girl, am going down to Tahrir Square and I will stand alone . . . I’ll hold up a banner, perhaps (other) people will show some honor”.

(Gelvin, 2012: 44-45)

Gelvin underlines that the groups, who called the protests, had diverse social bases. There were the young wings of political parties, the Muslim Brotherhood, along with labor organizers. People were also effectively mobilized by the Facebook page of “We are all Khaled Said” established by Wael Gonim, one of Google’s top executives in the Middle East region at that time. Another major spur to protest was the young girl, Asmaa Mahfouz.

The masses gathered in “Tahrir Square” persistently demanded the resignation of Mubarak and since he was not supported by the army, he was forced to resign on February 11th 2011 with the demonstrators cheering the following slogans in the square: “Egypt was reborn”; “Finally, we are proud of being Egyptians”; “The sun will rise onto a more beautiful Egypt” (Çubukçu, 2012: 12). It is clear from these slogans that protesters in Egypt viewed the resignation of Mubarak as signaling the rebirth of their country bring better conditions and saw themselves as the main actors in securing this change. Following this dramatic demonstration of the potential effectiveness of protest, protests in Algeria and Yemen took a new turn as young people consciously adopted the Tunisian and Egyptian style of protests there. In Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Morocco, the kings faced demands for the constitutional monarchies. In Libya the regime met the protests with violence sparking a civil war between regime loyalists and self-designated “revolutionaries”. One month later, civil war began in Syria and it is still continuing with its seriously harmful effects on civilians.

### ***The Reasons Lying Behind the Arab Uprisings***

Approximately 60 percent of population of the Arab world is under the age of thirty. Moreover, the broader Middle East and North African region is second only to sub-Saharan Africa in the percentage of youth within that bracket (Gelvin, 2012: 19). Nearly 40 percent of this young population is “unemployed”. In common with many places across the world neoliberal policies have resulted in rising income disparities and huge losses in jobs that have impacted particularly severely on the young population of the Arab world. Youth unemployment in Egypt stands at 43 percent, and 30 percent in Tunisia. Gelvin highlights that almost 60 percent of the youth (between 18 and 29) are out of the labor force (in case of women, it is 83 percent). When it comes to employment, education affords little advantage. Egyptian youngsters with a college degree rank highest among the unemployment of any sector of youth. Similarly, in Syria a vast majority of college graduates spend at least four years looking for employment before landing a job. Political scientists call this phenomenon “waithood”, a period in which youths wait for

(good) jobs, wait for marriage and intimacy and wait for full participation in their societies (Ibid: 20).

According to Castells, the major factors leading to the “Arab Spring” are poverty and social alienation due to the practice of “fake democracy” (Castells, 2011). Due to globalization and new communication technologies, the Arab world has started to have connections with the societies living in the rest of the world and learned about the other people’s life styles. Democratic practices and the importance given to human rights in the Western world have been remarkably influential on the young population. Çubukçu states that Al-Jazeera TV channel has also been another effective factor in the change of Arab societies’ views on political affairs (Çubukçu, 2012).

From the beginning of the uprisings, the Turkish media followed ongoing events very closely. Because of continuing crises in the Middle East—in Egypt and Syria—Turkish public opinion and Turkish media still follow events in detail. So analysis of the Turkish newspapers discourses of the beginning of the “Arab Spring” may be useful in understanding the today’s situation.

## **The Discursive Construction of the “Arab Spring” in the Turkish Press**

### ***Number of News Items***

In counting news items, all the news articles ranging from one column to eight columns in size were included in the sample. The number of news items in pro-government newspapers is as follows: *Zaman* (150), *Sabah* (99), and *Star* (92). The number of newspapers not in favor of the government was: *Taraf* (94), *Cumhuriyet* (81), and *Hürriyet* (77). From these figures it is clear that *Zaman*, a pro-government newspaper, carried the largest number of items, with 150, while the oppositional *Hürriyet* carried the lowest number with 75. When the overall means for the total numbers of news items printed were calculated, pro-government newspapers emerged as giving more space than the newspapers that are not in favor of the government.

### ***Who Speaks in the News Discourses: News Actors and Their Quotations***

The featured actors in news stories were as follows:

*Countries:* Egypt, Turkey, the USA, Tunisia, Bahrain, Yemen, Israel, Syria, Libya.

*Persons:* Hosni Mubarak (Ex-President of Egypt), Mohamed El Baradei (an opponent leader foregrounded by the Western world), Omar Suleiman (Vice President of Egypt), Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi (the Muslim Brotherhood), Barack Obama (President of the USA), Hillary Clinton (U.S. Secretary of State), Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Prime Minister of Turkey), Ahmet Davutoğlu (Foreign Minister of Turkey), Bashar al-Assad (President of Syria), Shimon Peres (President of Israel), Binyamin Netanyahu (Prime Minister of Israel), Nicholas Sarkozy (former President of France), David Cameron (Prime Minister of England), Rashid Ghannouchi (Leader of the an-Nahda Party of Tunisia), Wael

Gonim (Director of Google in the Middle East), Muammar Gaddafi (former President of Libya), Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali (former President of Tunisia).

*Communities:* Egyptians, Egyptian Army, protesters, the Muslim Brotherhood, the AKP (Justice and Development Party, the ruling party in Turkey).

The hierarchy of social actors employed the news discourses is common across both pro-government newspapers and those not in favor of the government. The dominant news actors are the leaders and foreign ministers of the Middle East and the leaders and foreign ministers of the powerful countries of the West. At the same time, the protesters, the human actors involved in the upheavals, the people of Egypt, the Egyptian Army, the Muslim Brotherhood and the AKP also figure common prominently.

An analysis of “*quotation patterns*” used in news discourses might reveal which actors are given the chance to express their opinions. According to the common professional code that underpins journalism routines, powerful actors are the most likely to be given the opportunity to voice their ideas. They are the “primary definers” (Hall et al., 1999) whose utterances journalists, acting “secondary definers”, incorporate into news stories. Elliott, Murdock, and Schlesinger (1986) suggest that the list of powerful persons and institutions is headed by ministers, leading politicians of political parties, top executives of the police department and judiciary system and the spokespeople of accredited pressure groups. In reporting the “Arab Spring”, Turkish newspapers most commonly used direct quotations from leaders in the region, the foreign ministers of the countries in the region, the leaders or the foreign ministers of Western countries interested in the region (especially, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Russia) as well as the Western-world-supported figures of Mohamed El Baradei and Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi of the Muslim Brotherhood. Conversely, among all analyzed newspapers, either there are no quotations from protesters or they are very limited in number. This supports Teo’s argument that quotation patterns reinforce the “systematic silencing of the powerless—the poor, the uneducated, the young, etc”. (Teo, 2000: 18).

In addition, the quotation patterns of news actors differ in accordance to whether pro-government newspapers or newspapers that are not in favour of the government. But these quotations also belong to the powerful persons. Some of these news actors are the president of Turkey-Egypt Business Council, American thinker Noam Chomsky, CIA president Panetta (*Taraf*); Rachid Ghannouchi, the leader of the An-Nahda Party in Tunisia (*Hürriyet*); Rachid Ghannouchi, Fareed Zakaria, Wael Gonim, Mohammad Mursi, and Amr Moussa, the Secretary General of the Arab League (*Sabah*); and Fareed Zakaria and Rachid Ghannouchi (*Zaman*).

If we examine the *content of quotations* we find that they are dominated by “*positive commentary on the protests*” and “*assertions about the demise of authoritarian regimes in the Arab countries*”. In a number of cases Turkey operated as a reference point. Some commentators evoked Turkey to sound a cautionary note. Fareed Zakaria’s (editor at the Time magazine and host of CNN’s Fareed Zakaria GPS) for example, speculated that; “unlike Turkey, the danger here is that Egypt might be like Pakistan, a fake democracy where the real power is held by the generals behind the scene” (*Sabah*, 2011, February 8: 15). This claim became a realistic prediction about the political future of Egypt. On the other hand, Rachid Ghannouchi’s—the leader of the An-Nahda Party of Tunisia— evoked Turkey as a model to be emulated<sup>2</sup>: “We, as the people of Tunisia, see the experiences of Turkey as a model. Especially, during the Justice and Development Party government, democracy and Islam have reconciled. We consider this



reconciliation as a role model for us” (*Zaman*, 2011, February 23: 18). Ghannouchi, sees the “Turkish Model” as a successful combination of Islam and democracy presided over by the AKP government. It should be mentioned, however, that this interpretation is also widely shared by Western media commentators.

### *Lexicalization in the News Discourses*

Turning now to lexical choices, the meaning construction of “*the size and the prevalence of the protests*” and “*anti-Mubarak and anti-Gaddafi stand*” are dominant in all newspapers. To construct the protests as historically significant, widespread and widely supported, newspapers employed the following lexical preferences: *Massive protest; Egypt is uprising; revolution; the rage of the protesters; the waves of rebel (Cumhuriyet); the collapse in Egypt; Nile revolution; secular/religious/wealthy/poor (Egyptian protesters) (Taraf); domino effect; Tahrir victory (Hürriyet); the fire of the rebellion; the joy of victory in Tahrir (Star); public upheaval; public revolution (Sabah); rage the people has won (Zaman)*. Conversely, opposition to Mubarak and Gaddafi was constructed by using lexical preferences such as: *go away—go away; the last trump cards of Mubarak, the streets toppled Mubarak (Cumhuriyet); the end of the bobo doll of the Middle East; the strongholds of Gaddafi have fallen down (Taraf); Gamal, take your father with you and go away; enough is enough Mubarak; God damn Mubarak!; the end of the road; the last pharaoh (Mubarak); Benghazi butcher (Hürriyet); the bluff for chaos (Mubarak); 30-year reign (Mubarak); insanity of power (Gaddafi) (Star); the last shock to Mubarak is by Obama; the death squads of Gaddafi; the last flutters of Gaddafi (Sabah), Mubarak, go away!; the Mubarak era is ending; Gaddafi splits up European Union (Zaman)*.

At the same time *different lexical choices* were also employed to construct different meanings in the news discourses. These were as follows: the guarantee given to Israel (by the Egyptian Army) (*Cumhuriyet*); Egypt’s greatest test with its firm friend (*Taraf*); the man of CIA in Egypt (Omar Suleiman); the silence of Turkey (about Libya) (*Taraf*); Muslim Brotherhood is at the table; “there is no way back” (said by Obama); “there is a storm, you cannot resist” (said by Hillary Clinton for Mubarak); the man who lit the fire (Wael Gonim) (*Hürriyet*); the strongest support for Mubarak is from Israel; The visa granted to Ihvan by the USA; the shadow CIA (Omar Suleiman); the season of freedom; fear of civil war; the solidarity between the dictators (Bahrain—Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) (*Star*); the last shock to Mubarak by Obama; Gonim challenged (*Sabah*); Gaddafi splits up the European Union; Turkey: the role model country; the fear of civil war in Egypt (*Zaman*).

It is seen that both the Egypt-USA and Egypt-Israel “close relationship” are underlined and questioned by lexical choices. The vice-president Omer Suleiman is seen as the “man of the CIA” by both the pro-government newspaper *Star* and by the *Taraf* which is not in favour of the government. In *Taraf*, “the silence of Turkey” in the case of Libya is also questioned. The chance given to the Muslim Brotherhood by the USA, is the other meaning construction made by the lexical choice of both the pro-government newspaper *Star* and *Hürriyet* which is not in favour. Wael Gonim’s active role in calling the protesters is another meaning construction preferred by both the pro-government *Sabah* and the oppositional *Hürriyet*. Lastly, it is important to mention that in the pro-government newspaper *Zaman*, the lexical choice of “Turkey as model” is identified with the AKP government.

### *Overlexicalizations in the News Discourses*

As noted earlier, overlexicalization creates “*over-completeness*” in the news discourse strongly suggesting that no further analysis and interpretation is needed. In this study, the following meaning constructions are realized through overlexicalization: “*the protests*”; “*anti-Mubarak and anti-Gaddafi image and the representation of oppressive regimes in the Middle East*”; “*opponent groups in Egypt—especially the Muslim Brotherhood*”; “*the image of Egypt and Turkey*”.

In all newspapers, the “*protests*” are defined as “*extraordinary protests in the Middle East*”, “*anti-Mubarak protests*”, and “*public upheavals*”. These definitions are structured by overlexical preferences: “The unprecedented massive protests since decades” (*Cumhuriyet*, 2011, January 29: 10); “The massive protests that the Middle East has never seen before” (*Taraf*, 2011, January 29: 2); “Public upheavals spread to Middle Eastern countries after Tunisia and Egypt like a virus” (*Hürriyet*, 2011, February 2: 14); “The people of Egypt continuing the protests despite the threats posed by the government” (*Star*, 2011, February 1: 10); “The protests ending the 30-year dictatorship of Mubarak in Egypt” (*Sabah*, February 15th, 2011: 22); “Anti-regime freedom protests that started in Tunisia and spread to Egypt and Yemen” (*Zaman*, 2011, January 30: 21).

In all the newspapers examined, it is stated that *Mubarak ruled his country for 30 years and Gaddafi for 42 years with an “iron fist”* cementing an image of authoritarian and oppressive governments with a metaphor of an “*iron fist*” that comes down hard on any deviation or dissent. This construction is reinforced by overlexical preferences such as: “Hosni Mubarak—who has been ruling Egypt for 30 years as the president” (*Cumhuriyet*, 2011, February 12: 11); “Gaddafi who ruled Libya for 42 years with his iron fist” (*Taraf*, 2011, February 23: 2); “Hosni Mubarak who ruled Egypt for 30 years with his iron fist” (*Hürriyet*, 2011, February 12: 16); “Gaddafi—the leader of Libya who ruled Libya for 42 years with his iron fist” (*Hürriyet*, 2011, February 19: 16); “Mubarak regime that ruled Egypt for 30 years with an iron fist” (*Star*, 2011, February 8: 10); “The regime that responds the protesters by using snipers” (*Star*, February 21, 2011: 21); “Mubarak who ruled Egypt for 30 years with an iron fist” (*Sabah*, 2011, February 2: 22); “The colonel Muammar Gaddafi, who ruled Libya for 42 years with an iron fist” (*Sabah*, 2011, February 23: 20); “Hosni Mubarak, who is known to be the strongest symbol of status quo in the Middle East and the Arab world” (*Zaman*, 2011, February 12: 21); “Muammar Gaddafi, who lost the control of most regions in his country after severe clashes” (*Zaman*, 2011, February 25: 21).

In both pro-government newspapers and the newspapers that are not in favor of the government, the “*Muslim Brotherhood*” is defined as “*the most significant opposition organization in Egypt*”. The headline in the *Star*, a pro-government newspaper, “The visa granted to Ihvan by the USA” (*Star*, 2011, February 4: 10) constructs the meaning “USA approves the Muslim Brotherhood”. Similarly, Mohamed El Baradei is defined as “an important opponent” in both *Zaman*-a pro-government newspaper and *Hürriyet*, which is not a pro-government with the overlexical preference: “Mohamed El Baradei: a politician known for his secular thoughts in Egypt” (*Zaman*, 2011, February 20: 16), and “El Baradei—the leading man in the opposition” (*Hürriyet*, 2011, January 30: 1). In contrast, *Zaman*, a newspaper owned by Fethullah Gülen community, defines Baradei as “a politician known for his secular thoughts”.

The common overlexical preferences employed across all the news discourses about the *Muslim Brotherhood* are as follows: “The largest oppositional group in Egypt: the Muslim

Brotherhood" (*Cumhuriyet*, 2011, January 29: 10); "The Muslim Brotherhood- one of the most significant opposition organizations in Egypt" (*Taraf*, 2011, February 9: 3); "The Muslim Brotherhood: One of the leading opposition groups in Egypt" (*Star*, 2011, February 3: 10); "The Muslim Brotherhood: The most important opposition organization in Egypt" (*Sabah*, 2011, February 7: 22); "The Muslim Brotherhood: One of the most influential movements in the Middle East and Muslim world" (*Zaman*, 2011, February 5: 21).

In case of the overlexical preferences made for the "*image of the Egypt and the Turkey*", both pro-government newspapers and the newspapers that are not in favor of the government, defines Turkey as a "*role model country*" for the Middle East, Egypt and other Arabs. Common overlexical preferences are as follows: "Turkey is the most suitable model for Egypt (said by NATO) (*Cumhuriyet*, 2011, February 7: 11); "Arabs admire Turkey" (*Taraf*, 2011, February 3: 1); "Turkey offers road map for Egypt" (*Taraf*, February 7th, 2011: 2); "Western world wants to introduce Turkey as a role model country" (*Hürriyet*, 2011, February 8: 16); "Role model country in the Middle East (Turkey)" (*Zaman*, 2011, February 3: 21); "The key actor in the Middle East: Turkey" (*Zaman*, 2011, February 5: 1). It should be mentioned that, *Hürriyet*, which is not in favor of the government, underlines that the "the role model etiquette of Turkey" was given by the Western countries.

### ***Syntax Preferences in the News Discourses***

In analyzing the syntax preferences of news discourses, the use of active/ passive sentence structures are determined. Through the use of active/ passive sentence structures, positive / negative meanings are constructed. This study examines "*which actions of the news actors are represented by active/passive sentence forms*" and "*which meaning construction is realized by these preferences*". "Imperative sentences" also are analyzed. In Turkish grammar, imperative sentences are also used to exercise power. In news discourses of the Turkish newspapers about "Arab Spring", *negative imperatives* were used by Prime Minister Erdogan, by the protesters, by Baradei and by Qaradawi concerning both Mubarak and Gaddafi. The examples of syntactic choices in the examined newspapers are as follows: "Leave the post Mubarak!" (*Cumhuriyet*, 2011, January 29: 10); "Mubarak, go away!" (*Taraf*, 2011, January 29: 2); "Listen to your people's voices" (said by Erdogan) (*Taraf*, 2011, February 23: 5); "Gamal, go away and take your father with you!" (*Hürriyet*, 2011, January 27: 23); "Listen to your people" (said by Erdogan) (*Hürriyet*, 2011, February 2: 1); "Let the army choose its side" (said by Egyptian protesters) (*Star*, 2011, February 1:10); "Kill Gaddafi" (said by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi) (*Star*, 2011, February 23: 10); "Mubarak, go away!" (*Zaman*, 2011, January 29: 1); "If you care about your life, go!" (said by Baradei) (*Zaman*, 2011, February 2: 13).

In the news discourses of the Turkish newspapers about "Arab Spring" protesters are represented through the active sentences which construct a positive meaning. The verbs employed in the active sentences, which include *participated*, *toppled*, *took up*, *frightened*, *joined*, *won*, *united*<sup>3</sup>, all reinforce a "positive image of the protesters", a meaning reinforced by according agency to the protestors. "Millions participated for massive demonstrations" (*Cumhuriyet*, 2011, February 5: 11); "The streets toppled Mubarak" (*Cumhuriyet*, 2011, February 12: 11); "Opposition groups took up the streets for the largest protests so far" (*Taraf*, 2011, February 2: 3); "And people toppled the pharaoh" (*Taraf*, 2011, February 12: 1); "'Jasmin' revolution frightened Mubarak's son away" (*Star*, 2011, February 27: 10); "Thousands joined 'Rage Day' in Libya and Yemen" (*Sabah*, 2011, February 19: 24); "They toppled the 'Green

Book” (*Sabah*, 2011, February 19: 24); “Egypt united” (*Zaman*, 2011, February 5: 1); “The people has won” (*Zaman*, 2011, February 12: 24).

On the other hand *Mubarak, Gaddafi and their state apparatus* who exercise the power and violence over the protesters, were represented through “active syntax” used to mobilize a “negative image”. The verbs used included, *banned, fired, attacked, threw, bombed, acted, used, waged, imposed, and warned* in sentences such as: “Egypt banned the protests” (*Cumhuriyet*, 2011, January 27: 10); “The police fired against the protesters” (*Cumhuriyet*, 2011, January 30: 13); “Mubarak supporters attacked opposition groups in Egypt” (*Cumhuriyet*, 2011, February 3: 10); “The pharaoh threw his own people into fire” (*Taraf*, 2011, February 3: 1); “Gaddafi bombed his own capital city with air jets” (*Taraf*, 2011, February 22: 2); “The police acted violently in Bahrain” (*Hürriyet*, 2011, February 15: 16); “They used grenades against the protesters” (*Hürriyet*, 2011, February 19: 26); “Death squads of the pharaoh spread terror in Egypt” (*Star*, 2011, February 4: 10); “Gaddafi, the leader of Libya, waged war against his own people to maintain his power” (*Star*, 2011, February 22: 10); “The army imposed curfew” (in Egypt) (*Sabah*, 2011, January 29: 20); “Gaddafi’s death squads shoot civilians” (*Sabah*, 2011, February 24: 20); “Egypt banned the protests” (*Zaman*, 2011, January 26: 22); “Suleiman warned” (*Zaman*, 2011, February 10: 23).

## Conclusion

In his groundbreaking study of *News Analysis*, van Dijk (1998b) underlines the “similarities” among discourse structures of the international news constructed by the journalists around the world. He examined a total of 700 news articles about the assassination of Bechir Gemayel in 1982 published in 138 newspapers in 99 countries between September 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> and concluded that “the journalists used similar news discourses while presenting the news”. In addition, he compared the discourses of the newspapers published in first World and third World countries, and in Western and Eastern European countries. More interestingly, he even found similarities between the discourses of *New York Times* and *Granma*, the official newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party. He explained these convergences by arguing that the “*journalistic code for the production and structures of news*” established by the Western media and news agencies had spread to all around world so that a “globally shared code of journalistic practices leads to a standardized description of the events” (Ibid: 130-131).

This study argues that 1) the similarities in the news discourses employed in the six newspapers chosen for study are more significant than the differences that might be expected from their political stances of “supporting or not supporting the government” and 2) news discourses employed by all the newspapers examined in this study is based on the following shared meaning constructions: “*the positivity of Arab upheavals; the negativity of the oppressive regimes in the Middle East and Turkey’s being a role model for the people of the Middle East and Arabs*”.

Previous research on the Turkish press examining the same titles found that pro-government’s newspapers (*Star, Zaman, and Sabah*) and the newspapers, which are not in favor of the government (*Cumhuriyet, Taraf, and Hürriyet*) differed in their columns with regards to “meaning and ideology” (Dağtaş, 2013). A question remains: how can we explain the absence of differences between these two groups of newspapers’ in this present case?

First, we can agree to van Dijk’s (1988a) argument that a Western based “journalistic code” about “international news” has been internalized by the Turkish journalists. But that does

not explain why, in other areas of coverage, there are differences according to the newspaper's political stance. Second, we can argue that because the media have played a historically important role in Turkey's Westernization and modernization project, Turkish journalists are inclined to see themselves as part of a modernizing elite and to view Arab societies as both less developed, and governed by more oppressive (and less "progressive" more "backward") regimes. This embedded "Orientalist" point of view on the part of Turkish media was clearly evident in the coverage analysed here and helps explain its consistency (Dağtaş, 2013; Eldem, 2010). Finally, the dominant news discourse of the Western press not only defines the "*Arab Spring as a positive movement and the regimes in the Middle East as authoritarian*", but also positions "*Turkey as a role model for the Middle East and Arab societies*". This meaning system constructs authoritarian regimes as a negative that has to be overcome by positive action while presenting Turkey as the "solution" to the region's problems of reconciling Islam, modernization and democracy. This, construction, which as we have seen was shared by the Turkish press, has the effect of both essentialising and celebrating the "Turkish Model" and suspending (albeit temporarily) internal differences about its nature, operation and future.

## Notes

- 1 The members and the supporters of the party call "*AK Party*" as a shortening. It means "white and clear" in Turkish. In the international public opinion, it is called "*AKP*" as an abbreviation of the first letters of the "*Justice and Development Party*" in Turkish. Interestingly, in Turkish public opinion, it is also called as "*AKP*" except the supporters and members of the party.
- 2 See the discussion of the link between the "Turkish Model" and the "Christian Democrats" in Kalyas (2012).
- 3 Some parts of these verbs are also used in the headlines. In Turkish press, the past tense forms of the verbs are used in the headlines.

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### **About the Author**

Banu Dağtaş, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor and has been working in the Department of Journalism at Anadolu University since 1990. Dr. Dağtaş has earned her Ph.D. in communication sciences from the University of Anadolu, Turkey, and a graduate degree in political science at Middle East Technical University, Turkey. Her publications focus mainly on news discourse, consumer culture, ideological analysis of the advertisement texts, Ottoman-Turkish modernization, and the press. Her current research focuses on Arab uprisings and their coverage in Turkish media.

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