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Arab Spring in Turkish Daily English Press

KEYWORDS

Arab Spring, Turkey, agenda setting, framing, political sociology

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to present the results of content analysis of depiction of middle-eastern protests often called the Arab Spring in Turkish daily newspapers published in English. Using agenda setting and framing analysis supplemented by George Gerbner's Message System Analysis scheme, 225 articles from published from January to June 2011 in "Hürriyet Daily News" and "Today's Zaman" were analyzed. The article begins with a short presentation of the Turkish press market, after which there is a description of methodology used in the research. Results of the analysis were divided into two parts devoted to quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The mass protests in Middle East and North Africa in the first half of 2011, began with the self-immolation of a street peddler in Tunisia. The success of the Tunisian protests (which ousted the President El Abidine Ben Ali), people who opposed the authoritarian regime in Egypt began to gather in crowds in Tahrir Square in Cairo. Television and internet coverage enabled the citizens of many countries of the region, dissatisfied with their situation, to organize public speeches demanding political changes. With time, this phenomenon of mass civil disobedience, initially described as trouble and turmoil in the region, came to be known in most global media under the positively associated name of "Arab Spring" or "Arab Awakening". Both names were direct references to the 19th-century "Springtime of Nations" and the 20th-century "Autumn of Nations".

This paper presents the results of content analysis of articles about the Arab Spring from Turkish daily newspapers published in English between January and June 2011. Faced by the political revolutions in the Arab world, western publicists began to commonly indicate the present-day political system in Turkey as the model of democracy for the Middle East¹. Simultaneously Turkey, since the Justice and Development Party (AKP for its Turkish

¹ Ghosh, *The Modern Islamist*, "Time International" 2011, No 21 (178), p. 24–32; see also: J. Zdanowski, *Bliski Wschód 2011: bunt czy rewolucja?* [Middle East 2011: Rebellion or revolution?], Kraków 2011, p. 210–215.

acronym) came to power in 2002, boasting of its high economic growth, engaged in a foreign policy indicating its aspirations to expand its influence on the policies of the countries of the region. The sentiments associated with the increased significance of Turkey in the Middle East could be found in 2011 not only in western media but in Turkish newspapers as well.

Studying the opinions on the events of the Arab Spring expressed by Turkish publicists seems interesting also because they are forced to negotiate between the Western and Middle-Eastern cultures: the Turkish perspective combines the view from within the region—the immediate vicinity of the revolution—with a somewhat European and Western viewpoint. One must not forget that this country is a member of the Council of Europe, a long-standing member of NATO, and a candidate for membership in the European Union. Whereas the daily newspapers published in English are a special case in the Turkish press, as the information and commentaries published there may both support and oppose the foreign policy pursued by Turkey.

The first part of the work includes a short characteristic of the Turkish press market. Subsequently, the methodology and specificity of conducted research are presented. The final parts of the paper are devoted to quantitative studies of agenda setting and framing. This quantitative research is supplemented with a qualitative analysis of the methods used by the studied newspapers to illustrate the topics selected on the basis of agenda setting analysis.

Basic information on the Turkish press market

The origins of the Turkish press can be traced to the first part of the 19th century. In 1928, the Governor of Egypt Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa began publishing the newspaper “Vekai-i Missiriyye”, and the first issue of the official Ottoman weekly, “Takvim-i Vekavi”, was published on 11 November 1831². The liberalization of the state economy, carried out by the Turkish government in the 1980s, had a particular impact on the present situation on the press market, leading to the privatization of newspapers and foundation of first large media groups.

Even though the freedom of the press is legally protected, the freedom of speech level is assessed with much criticism by both international commentators and Turkish people themselves³. Even the most recent legal acts do not protect the market from high

² L. Büsra. Ö. Tülü, *History of Turkish Press*, http://marmara.academia.edu/BusraLivan/Papers/199585/history_of_turkish_press [accessed: 15 May 2012].

³ Cf.: A. Szymański, *Między islamem a kemalizmem – problem demokracji w Turcji* [Between Islam and Kemalism – the problem of democracy in Turkey], Warszawa 2008, p. 123–133.

concentration and subsequent oligopolization⁴. The Internet is being censored, and the press can be punished in cases as ambiguous as a “threat to the unity of the nation and security of the state”. Moreover, the last decade showed that there are other methods of pressuring the media as well, e.g. through penalties for tax irregularities. Already in June 2012, more than a hundred Turkish journalists were under arrest or imprisoned on charges of suspected participation in a coup d’état, and a large number of them were being held without charge.

In Turkey, there are two daily newspapers printed in English, namely, “Today’s Zaman” and “Hürriyet Daily News”. Both are sold all over the country and have their head editorial offices in Istanbul. On the other hand, current digital information from Turkey can be found on such websites as “Turkishpress.com” and “Turkish Weekly”.

“Zaman” is a pro-Muslim newspaper published in Turkish since 1986. It is written by supporters of the governing party, who call themselves pro-democratic activists, while the rumours rife in the country say that this press title is financed by the moderate Islamic movement Hizmet, founded by Turkish theologian Fethullah Gülen. Officially, “Zaman” is not affiliated with any religious or political group, but publicists connected with the Gülen movement contribute to both this newspaper and “Today’s Zaman”⁵. Both titles belong to the Feza Publishing media company. The English-language counterpart to “Zaman”—called “Today’s Zaman”—was founded in 2007 and, according to its editor-in-chief Bülent Keneş, one year after its first edition, it reached the highest circulation of all the Turkish press published in English. The publisher takes pride in collaboration with Western dailies, and the ideology of the title is similar to that of “Zaman”, with the selection of topics more suitable for foreign readers.

“Hürriyet” is a liberal-nationalistic newspaper, founded in 1948 by Sedat Simavi, and purchased in 1994 by the Doğan group, currently one of the largest holdings on the Turkish media market. The publicists of this daily oppose the rule of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Some of them hold traditional Kemalist political views, while some profess more reformist values, which sometimes lead to disputes among its contributors. The origins of “Hürriyet Daily News” can be traced to 1961, when the Cevik family of journalists obtained help from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and started publishing the “Turkish Daily News”, then addressed chiefly to the NATO soldiers stationed in the country and foreign diplomats in

⁴ C. Sözeri, Z. Güney, *The Political Economy of the Media in Turkey: A Sectoral Analysis*, http://www.tesev.org.tr/Upload/Publication/67e244dd-5c21-4d34-8361-4c7f3d003140/11461ENGmedya2WEB21_09_11.pdf [accessed: 15 May 2012].

⁵ A. Kuru, *Changing Perspectives on Islamism and Secularism in Turkey: The Gülen Movement and The AK Party*, <http://www.setav.org/ups/dosya/28015.pdf> [accessed: 20 Jun 2012].

Turkey. In 2000, the newspaper was sold to the Doğan Holding group, which changed its name six years later into “Hürriyet Daily News”. In the first decade of the 21st century, it published many English translations of articles from “Hürriyet” and “Radikal”, while the number of pieces prepared specially for this English-language daily gradually increased.

The description of the profiles of selected Turkish press titles presented above may attest to distinct division on that market, associated with the support of various political groups. As demonstrated by the research by Ali Çarkoğlu and Gözde Yavuz⁶, the norm in Turkey is rather high correspondence between the press and political views, and while between 2002 and 2007 the external pluralism waxed, the internal one waned, which led to the homogenization of newspaper reader groups. Regarding readers’ political choices, the daily newspapers like, “Zaman”, conservative titles such as “Milli Gazete” and “Yeni Şafak”, and the Kemalist “Cumhuriyet” were the most monolithic.

Specificity of the conducted content analysis of press

As Bogusława Dobek–Ostrowska points out⁷, political communicating is the intentional sending of messages about politics. Within it, the areas of propaganda, advertisement, and public relations are usually identified. As the analyzed articles explicitly or implicitly presented the views of their authors on the described political events, it can be assumed that the subject of this study contains elements of political communicating. What is more, the analyzed daily newspapers are targeted mainly at foreigners living in Turkey. Therefore, the content they convey creates a certain image of Turkey and international events and may also be part of the country’s international policy. Since the research focused only on the opinions of the publicists, and not their recipients, the employed research technique can be considered as content analysis rather than discourse analysis. Accordingly, what was studied was the “preferential encoding” described by Stuart Hall, and not the possibility of partisan reception, stressed by John Fiske⁸.

Since the publication of the article *The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media* by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972⁹, the order of selected topics and its influence

⁶ A. Çarkoğlu, G. Yavuz, *Press-party Parallelism in Turkey: An Individual Level Interpretation*, “Turkish Studies” Vol. 11 (2011), No. 4, p. 613–624.

⁷ B. Dobek–Ostrowska, *Komunikowanie polityczne i publiczne* [Political and public communicating], Warszawa 2007, p. 131–132.

⁸ T. Goban–Klas, *Media i komunikowania masowe: teorie i analizy prasy, radia, telewizji i Internetu* [Media and mass communication: Theories and analyses of the press, radio, television, and Internet], Warszawa–Kraków 2000.

⁹ M.E. McCombs, D.L. Shaw, *The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media*, “The Public Opinion Quarterly”, Vol. 36 (1972), No. 2, p. 176–187.

on the recipients' interest in these issues enjoys special attention in media studies. Many media scholars, however, including Salma Ghanem¹⁰, noticed that studying the choice of topics by itself is insufficient, as some of the described attributes related to these topics may make the content more visible and memorable. Such features of the way of description can also influence the shift in views and the degree of interest in a given topic. Acknowledging this, a need for a deeper analysis was revealed, one often called second-level agenda setting. It may include, among others, the analysis of framing and priming (that is, the order of features influencing the perception and memory of recipients). There have been various theories of priming, related to cognitive traits and their associated effects, the accessibility of information and its applicability to the knowledge one already has¹¹. Polish media researchers Ewa Nowak and Rafał Riedel¹² underlined the presence of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of priming, associated with the hierarchy of presented topics and the way of description. In their agenda setting and priming studies, Nowak and Riedel investigated which topics were the axis around which the message of the articles was constructed. A similar approach was used in carrying out the presented study.

The subject of description of news articles from both studied Turkish daily newspapers were usually the same events linked to the Arab Spring. In order to find the difference in ordering the described events and issues between the studied dailies, an agenda setting analysis was performed, whereas the framing analysis was conducted to determine the context and way of presenting information. Holli A. Semetko and Patti M. Valkenburg¹³ developed the most often used typology of frames, understood according to Russel W. Neuman as “conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret, and evaluate information”¹⁴. This typology consists of the frames of “conflict”, “human interest”, “attribution of responsibility”, “morality”, and “economic consequences”. In Poland, they

¹⁰ Cf.: M.E. McCombs, *A Look at Agenda-setting: past, present and future*, “Journalism Studies”, Vol. 6 (2005), No. 4, p. 543–557.

¹¹ E. Nowak, *Koncepcja primingu w studiach nad komunikowaniem politycznym* [The concept of priming within political communication studies], “Studia Medioznawcze” 2012, No. 2, p. 117–132.

¹² E. Nowak, R. Riedel, *Agenda Setting, Priming, Framing. Analiza porównawcza telewizyjnych audycji informacyjnych TVN i TVP1 w okresie kampanii przedwyborczych w Polsce 2005 i 2007 r.* [Agenda setting, priming, framing: A comparative analysis of television news programs in TVN and TVP1 during the electoral campaigns of 2005 and 2007 in Poland], “Zeszyty Prasoznawcze” 2008, R. LI, No. 1–2, p. 193–194.

¹³ H.A. Semetko, P.M. Valkenburg, *Framing European politics: a content analysis of press and television news*, “Journal of Communication” Vol. 50 (2000), No. 2, p. 93–109.

¹⁴ W.R. Neuman, M.R. Just, A.N. Crigler, *Common Knowledge*, Chicago 1992. p. 60.

were employed in the research of Marek Palczewski¹⁵, among others. His operationalization was used in carrying out the presented study.

The unit of analysis was an article, which in each case was examined for agenda setting and framing, and also in accordance with a categorization key based on George Gerbner's press analysis scheme¹⁶. The sampling from the issues of "Today's Zaman" and "Hürriyet Daily News" daily newspapers (the only Turkish dailies published in English) was based on the technique of two constructed weeks¹⁷. Since the protests in Tunisia were first mentioned in the Turkish press as late as on 7 January 2011, this date was assumed as the beginning of the analyzed publishing period. Its end was set in early June 2011, on account of the Turkish parliamentary elections which took place on 6 June. The closer was the election date, the more large articles in the studied press titles were about the electoral campaign and the less space was devoted to the political and social situation in the Middle East.

The issues of "Hürriyet Daily News" and "Today's Zaman" contained, respectively, 106 and 119 articles related to the Arab Spring. The issues of the former daily counted 16 pages, and of the latter 19 (20 on Saturdays). Also, "Today's Zaman" published a greater number of short journalistic comments than "Hürriyet Daily News".

The agenda setting and framing analysis of the articles devoted to the Arab Spring

To begin presenting the results of content analysis of Turkish daily press published in English, it is worth mentioning that both "Hürriyet Daily News" and "Today's Zaman" provided information on a broad range of topics, and their journalists often explained the context to the readers by referring to the history of particular countries and events related to them. As journalistic commentaries, both titles allowed various voices to speak, not always concurring with the editors' ideological bias. Such diversification, however, was none too large, so there was no direct criticism of the Prime Minister Erdoğan to be found in "Today's Zaman" nor, similarly, unambiguous support for his policy in "Hürriyet Daily News".

Of 225 analyzed articles about the Arab Spring, the majority concerned the events (68 % of the sample). Less than a fourth consisted of journalistic commentaries and columns, generally placed in separate sections of the daily newspapers. While the topic that was

¹⁵ M. Palczewski, *Koncepcja framingu i jej zastosowanie w badaniach newsów w Wiadomościach TVP i Faktach TVN* [The concept of framing and its use in *Wiadomości TVP* and *Fakty TVN* news broadcast research], „*Studia Medioznawcze*” 2011, No. 1, p. 31–45.

¹⁶ G. Gerbner, *Mass Media Discourse: Message System Analysis as a Component of Cultural Indicators*, in: *Discourse and Communication. New Approaches to the Analysis of Mass Media Discourse and Communication*, ed. by T.A. van Dijk, Berlin–New York 1985, p. 13–25.

¹⁷ M. Lisowska-Magdziarz, *Analiza zawartości mediów* [Media content analysis], Kraków 2004, p. 64–66.

covered the least in the context of the Arab Spring was economics, which amounted to less than 10 % of the sample. Table 1 presents a detailed breakdown of the sample by the types of press publications.

Table 1. Breakdown by the types of analyzed press articles¹⁸

	News article	Journalistic comment	Economic news
HDN (N = 106)	74 (69.8 %)	25 (23.6 %)	7 (6.6 %)
TZ (N = 119)	79 (66.4 %)	39 (32.8 %)	1 (0.8 %)
both dailies	153 (68.0 %)	50 (22.2 %)	22 (9.8 %)

The events associated with the Arab Spring and the Turkish policy regarding the Middle Eastern protests was equally highly publicized by both titles. The topics of the protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria were found on the covers of both dailies¹⁹. In journalistic sections of all analyzed issues, the comments devoted to the Arab Spring also prevailed. With time, these topics gave way to the parliamentary elections in Turkey. Comparing the 7 March issue (median of the random sample) with the 20 May issue (the latest in the sample), the number of articles related to the Arab Spring had dropped by more than a half in both titles²⁰.

The agenda setting analysis involved investigating the topics in regard to which the issues described in a given article were presented. Considering the significant diversity of events (the protests took place in many Middle Eastern countries), the information transfer hierarchy was not measured (they appeared interchangeably in all sections of newspapers, depending on the events occurring on the day of the issue). Instead, the frequency was calculated of more general and yet regularly recurring topic categories. These included the news on the situation of the countries engulfed in the Arab Spring, the issues of the Turkish foreign policy towards these countries, the problems of the Turkish domestic policy, and the issues of the international policy of the Western countries and Israel (whose policies were usually considered identical). The frequency of these topics is shown in Table 2.

The distribution of the topics on which the investigated articles focused was similar in both press titles. The most space was devoted to the situation of the Middle Eastern countries embroiled in the protests. More than a half (63.1 %) of the analyzed articles focused around

¹⁸ In the presented table, N is the number of analyzed press articles.

¹⁹ Articles related to the Arab Spring were found on the front cover of 4 in 16 issues of “Today’s Zaman” and 3 of 15 issues of “Hürriyet Daily News”. Many more texts took the form of a short mention on the cover of a picture introducing a more extensive article. The topic of the Arab Spring also predominated in the international events sections of most issues of both newspapers.

²⁰ As many as 15 articles from the 7 March “Hürriyet Daily News” were devoted to this topic, while on 20 May only 7. It was similar in “Today’s Zaman”, which published 7 articles on the Arab spring on 7 March, and on 20 May only 3.

this topic. Almost every fifth article (both in “Hürriyet Daily News” and “Today’s Zaman”) concerned the Turkish foreign policy. The international policy of Western Europe, the United States, and Israel was usually treated as one and the same and was described and evaluated more broadly by “Today’s Zaman” than by “Hürriyet Daily News” (10.1 % and 7.5 %, respectively). A small group of articles (less than 3 % of the sample) concerning the Arab Spring related to the domestic situation in Turkey and the rule of Prime Minister Erdoğan. Combined, all other issues around which the analyzed articles were focused did not exceed 5 % of the sample.

Table 2. Agenda setting analysis²¹

	Situation in the Middle East	Turkish foreign policy	Turkish domestic policy	International policy of the West and Israel	Other topics
HDN (N = 106)	68 (64.2 %)	23 (21.7 %)	2 (1.9 %)	8 (7.5 %)	5 (4.7 %)
TZ (N = 119)	74 (62.2 %)	24 (20.2 %)	4 (3.4 %)	12 (10.1 %)	5 (4.2 %)
both dailies	142 (63.1 %)	47 (20.9 %)	6 (2.7 %)	10 (16.8 %)	10 (4.4 %)

Table 3. Framing of the articles

	<i>Hürriyet Daily News</i>	<i>Today’s Zaman</i>	Both dailies
frame of conflict	40 (37.7 %)	35 (29.4 %)	75 (33.3 %)
frame of human interest	3 (2.8 %)	3 (2.5 %)	6 (2.7 %)
frame of responsibility	14 (13.2 %)	18 (15.1 %)	32 (14.2 %)
frame of morality	6 (5.7 %)	0	6 (2.7 %)
frame of economy	10 (9.3 %)	9 (7.6 %)	19 (8.4 %)
mixed frames	2 (1.9 %)	3 (2.5 %)	5 (2.2 %)
total framed	75 (70.8 %)	68 (57.1 %)	143 (63.6 %)

To investigate the frames of description of the distinctive categories, a framing analysis was carried out, the results of which were then intensified by qualitative content analysis focusing on the ways of presentation of the problems revealed by the agenda setting analysis.

The frames of interpretation were established for 143 of 225 articles. The association with a given frame was based on a positive answer to at least two of four questions of the frame. Whenever two frames scored more than one positive answer, the predominating frame was selected, whereas the cases of an equal number of indications were considered as mixed frames²². It turned out that the mixed frames of conflict and human interest occurred three

²¹ In the presented table, N is the number of analyzed press articles.

²² As mentioned above, the operationalization was borrowed from the framing analysis by Marek Palczewski; see: *idem, Koncepcja framingu i jej zastosowanie w badaniach newsów w Wiadomościach TVP i Faktach TVN*

times, and once each of the mixed frames of responsibility and economy, and of conflict, human interest, and economy. The frequency of individual frames can be found in Table 3.

In total, there were 581 positive answers (of 900 possible answers for any given frame and 4500 for all frames combined). The frame density for “Hürriyet Daily News” and “Today’s Zaman” was 71.2 % and 56.8 % respectively. The combined frame density in both press titles was 64.4 %, which equals to an average of 3 positive indications per article (of possible 20). Both dailies had similar framing hierarchies. Most articles from the analyzed press titles used the frame of conflict (more than 1 in four), the second most frequent was the frame of responsibility (above 10 % of articles in both daily newspapers), and the frame of economy was the third. Where both titles differed significantly, however, was the frame of morality. Not a single article from “Today’s Zaman” received two positive answers to the questions of this frame at the same time. Conversely, the frame least used by “Hürriyet Daily News” (3 times) was the frame of human interest. The density of individual frames, seen as the number of positive answers to the frame’s questions relative to the total possible positives is detailed in Table 4.

Table 4. Frame density per daily newspaper

	<i>Hürriyet Daily News</i>	<i>Today’s Zaman</i>
frame of conflict	29.5 %	24.4 %
frame of human interest	4.0 %	3.8 %
frame of responsibility	22.6 %	19.7 %
frame of morality	7.1 %	3.4 %
frame of economy	8.0 %	7.4 %

Even though “Hürriyet Daily News” was generally more frame saturated, the density of frames in both dailies was similar. Again, there was a big difference regarding the frame of morality, yet the greatest concerned the frame of conflict. Regarding the remaining frames, the newspapers differed by no more than a few percentage points. The greater framing of “Hürriyet Daily News” in presenting the Arab Spring events may have been related to the way of informing about the conflict. The “Today’s Zaman” described the Middle Eastern protests more often without a clear frame or—considering the foreign policy of specific countries—more articles there had been written from the viewpoint of the frame of responsibility (cf. Table 2). In both titles, the coverage was usually based on quoting one side (a politician,

[The concept of framing and its use in *Wiadomości* TVP and *Fakty* TVN news broadcast research], “*Studia Medioznawcze*” 2011, No. 1, p. 31–45.

protester, or refugee), and merely mentioning the arguments of the other. Quoting both sides was more frequent in “Hürriyet Daily News”. Out of 106 analyzed articles from this newspaper, in 29 (27 %) quotations of at least two sides of the conflict can be found, whereas in “Today’s Zaman” this count is 16 articles (13 %) out of 119.

Table 5. Summary of the agenda setting and framing analyses

	Situation in the Middle Eastern countries	Foreign policy of Turkey	Policies of the Western countries and Israel	Domestic policy of Turkey
frame of conflict	69 (48.6 %)	3 (6.4 %)	0	1 (16.7 %)
frame of human interest	5 (3.5 %)	0	0	0
frame of responsibility	7 (4.9 %)	12 (25.5 %)	11 (23.4 %)	2 (33.3 %)
frame of morality	2 (1.4 %)	2 (4.2 %)	1 (2.1 %)	1 (16.7 %)
frame of economy	10 (7 %)	3 (6.4 %)	1 (2.1 %)	0
mixed frames	4 (2.8 %)	0	1 (2.1 %)	0
no frame	45 (31.7 %)	27 (57.4 %)	6 (12.8 %)	2 (33.3 %)
total	142 (100 %)	47 (100 %)	20 (100 %)	6 (100 %)

Table 6. Summary of the agenda setting and framing analyses for “Hürriyet Daily News”

Data for “Hürriyet Daily News”	Situation in the Middle Eastern countries	Foreign policy of Turkey	Policies of the Western countries and Israel	Domestic policy of Turkey
frame of conflict	35 (51.5 %)	2 (8.7 %)	0	1 (50.0 %)
frame of human interest	2 (2.9 %)	0	0	0
frame of responsibility	4 (5.9 %)	5 (21.7 %)	5 (62.5 %)	0
frame of morality	2 (2.9 %)	2 (8.7 %)	1 (12.5 %)	1 (50.0 %)
frame of economy	7 (10.3 %)	1 (4.3 %)	0	0
mixed frames	2 (2.9 %)	0	0	0
no frame	16 (23.5 %)	13 (52.2 %)	2 (25.0 %)	0
total	68 (100 %)	23 (100 %)	8 (100 %)	2 (100 %)

Table 7. Summary of the agenda setting and framing analyses for “Today’s Zaman”

Data for “Today’s Zaman”	Situation in the Middle Eastern countries	Foreign policy of Turkey	Policies of the Western countries and Israel	Domestic policy of Turkey
frame of conflict	34 (45.9 %)	1 (4.2 %)	0	0
frame of human interest	3 (4.1 %)	0	0	0
frame of responsibility	4 (4.1 %)	7 (29.2 %)	6 (50.0 %)	2 (50.0 %)
frame of morality	0	0	0	0
frame of economy	3 (4.1 %)	2 (8.3 %)	1 (8.3 %)	0
mixed frames	2 (2.7 %)	0	1 (8.3 %)	0
no frame	29 (39.2 %)	14 (58.3 %)	4 (33.3 %)	2 (50.0 %)
total	74 (100 %)	24 (100 %)	12 (100 %)	4 (100 %)

The summary of the frames corresponding to articles on the main topics revealed by the agenda setting analysis is presented in Table 5²³. It shows that the situation of the countries embroiled in protests was usually (in over a half of the articles of this kind) presented from the frame of conflict viewpoint. The Turkish foreign policy was most often described without a frame or using the frame of responsibility. The latter frame was also most frequently used when commenting the policies of Western countries and Israel. Also, when describing the domestic policy of Turkey, it was usually the frame of responsibility or neither of the studied frames.

The described above relationships of the framing of leading topics are similar for both “Hürriyet Daily News” and “Today’s Zaman”, which is shown in Tables 6 and 7. The only significant difference concerned the domestic policy of Turkey (in “Hürriyet Daily News” presented using the frame of conflict, and with the frame of responsibility in “Today’s Zaman”).

Content analysis of the articles about the Arab Spring in “Today’s Zaman” and “Hürriyet Daily News”

The news articles from both newspapers described many Middle Eastern events in a similar way. However, “Today’s Zaman” more often published reports from the event sites and materials based on the statement of one of the sides. Whereas the reports in “Hürriyet Daily News” were slightly shorter, more general, often using foreign press agencies as sources instead of reports of its own envoys. The news in “Hürriyet Daily News” usually did not contain a direct commentary, and their authors’ views were only revealed in the choice of quotations. Both dailies quoted groups of people of similar professions (yet differing in their political views)—the representatives of regimes, protesters, Turkish and Western politicians, as well as local and Turkish analysts (such as political scientists, sociologists, think tank members). In “Today’s Zaman”, the news articles (especially concerned with the Turkish foreign policy and placed on the front page) contained judgments evaluating and usually justifying the actions of Turkish diplomats. The presented below quotations and examples of approaching the most important topics according to the agenda setting analysis illustrate broader trends observed in the qualitative analysis of the whole sample.

Specificity of describing the situation in the countries embroiled with the Arab Spring

²³ Ten articles concerning topics other than the predominating ones (based on the agenda setting analysis) were excluded from this analysis.

In January 2011, the protests forming the phenomenon later called the Arab Spring were described by both press titles with a certain caution, to gain with time a positive response in journalistic comments. To describe them, during the whole researched period, the journalists of both newspapers used vocabulary attesting to a violent overthrow of the existing political and social order, such as *unrest, turmoil, clashes, uprising, mutiny, tensions, and battles*.

While the “Hürriyet Daily News” (as well as the later issues of the other newspaper) stressed rather the peaceful dimension of protests in Tunisia, describing them as “peaceful to a large extent”²⁴, the journalists of “Today’s Zaman” accentuated the negative side of the events, calling them violent protests and describing in detail the “humanitarian crisis and keeping the fragile peace”²⁵. They also enumerated losses, including the number of people killed. The enduring conflicts (such as in Libya), were described as stalemate by both dailies.

The Arab protesters were generally referred to by both newspapers as young, angry, left without choice, unemployed, and internet-savvy. The descriptions of protesters did not appear often: usually, various groups present among the demonstrators were enumerated, which is illustrated by the excerpt from “Hürriyet Daily News” about the manifestation in Tunisia: “protesters, including Islamists, labour unions, and leftists”²⁶. According to the authors in both newspapers, the protests forming the Arab Spring constituted a new era²⁷, an overthrow of the old order, an opportunity of change²⁸.

At the same time, the authors of both dailies—both commentators and authors of news—remarked that overthrowing the authorities does not end the process of changes, and the countries where the revolutions took place still face many challenges. So, “Hürriyet Daily News” wrote that the “fight for Tunisia may be far from conclusion”²⁹, while in “Today’s Zaman”, as a guest commentator, Radosław Sikorski formed an argument that the citizens of the post-revolution countries would have to decide the form of future policy, and that making such decisions is more difficult than resistance against authoritarian regimes³⁰.

The rulers who stamped out the protests were described as oppressing their citizens for decades and unable to change. The tools of that despotism are mass murders, “hydra-headed

²⁴ The claims presented in the following part of the paper are supported with references to the analyzed articles. Since the references illustrate broader trends in the investigated daily newspapers, the notes below are limited to the date of issue and the number of the article within the sample (referring to the order of analysis).

²⁵ “Today’s Zaman” (further referred to as *TZ*) from 17 Jan 2011, art. No. in the sample: 108.

²⁶ “Hürriyet Daily News” (further referred to as *HDN*) from 5–6 Mar 2011, art. No. in the sample: 25.

²⁷ *TZ* from 17 Jan 2011, art. No. in the sample: 107.

²⁸ *HDN* from 4 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 22.

²⁹ *HDN* from 17 Jan 2011, art. No. in the sample: 6.

³⁰ *TZ* from 18 May 2011, art. No. in the sample: 222.

security apparatus”, repressions, tortures, and censorship³¹. The described dictators were, on one hand, unable to hand over power, yet on the other they could draw conclusions from the failures of other oppressors³². In the descriptions of attacks against the protesters in both studied dailies, it was stressed that it was not certain whether the drastic resistance against the demonstrations was organized. People resorting to this kind of violence are frequently called thugs, riot police, civilians shooting guns, or simply masked individuals armed with knives and clubs.

The investigated press also described (often in much detail) the reforms and the attempts to carry them out by the governments of countries engulfed with demonstrations (such as forming the temporary government with the participation of the opposition in Jordan³³), without clearly stating whether the political situation in other countries of the region would change as it did in Tunisia or Egypt.

The role of community websites was also described, how they helped spreading the protests, and how the Facebook portal attained the status of the sphere of public discourse as it provided virtual space for expressing feelings and solidarity with the protesters³⁴. It was not just the protesters’ news that was published in the internet, one of the articles discussed even a statement by the Egyptian military, published on their Facebook site³⁵. It was also noticed that text messages sent through mobile phones were used as tools to inform and prepare the demonstrations.

Foreign policy of Turkey

Based on the news published in both daily newspapers, Turkish diplomacy is shown as sensitive to the problems of the regions, thoroughly analyzing various possibilities³⁶, and actively promoting the stability and interests of the people living in the countries of the region. In doing so, according to the publicists, Turkey cooperates with the countries of the Middle East, as well as with the Council of Europe or the United States. On the other hand, at the level of texts found in the opinion sections and direct assessments in the articles, one may observe opposite evaluation of subsequent actions of the Turkish foreign policy by the publicists of the studied newspapers.

³¹ *TZ* from 17 Mar 2011, art. No. in the sample: 185.

³² *TZ* from 18 May 2011, art. No. in the sample: 219.

³³ *HDN* from 2 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 14.

³⁴ *HDN* from 17 Jan 2011, art. No. in the sample: 4.

³⁵ *HDN* from 22 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 27.

³⁶ E.g., *TZ* from 17 Jan 2011, art. No. in the sample: 107.

Similar to their Turkish-language counterparts—“Hürriyet” and “Zaman”—the studied dailies showed a fundamental difference in the assessment of the current policy of Prime Minister Erdoğan’s government. In “Today’s Zaman”, virtually all published articles supported the policy of the AKP, while the majority of texts found in “Hürriyet Daily News” presented examples of threats to democracy resulting from government activity.

“Hürriyet Daily News” pointed out that the Turkish Prime Minister called for peaceful solutions and for the regimes to bend, and yet attacked the protesters himself³⁷; remained silent when Gaddafi was killing³⁸, and maintained close political relations with highly authoritarian countries such as Iran³⁹. The international policy strategy known as “neosmanism” would be used by some neighbouring countries⁴⁰, while shifting away from the West could have drastic consequences for the Turkish partnership in NATO⁴¹.

The problem of the reaction to the situation in Libya can be used to illustrate the difference between the studied dailies in the assessment of the foreign policy pursued by Turkey. The cautious policy of Erdoğan and Davutoğlu towards the Gaddafi regime was strongly criticized in the comments published in “Hürriyet Daily News”, and the news materials justified the adopted diplomatic policy formulated by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. Conversely, the publicists of “Today’s Zaman” underscored the difference between the situation in Libya and the conditions in Tunisia and Egypt, also providing detailed arguments to support the cautious reaction of the Turkish government to Gaddafi’s actions. It was so both in the commentaries and news articles. They listed, among other things, the sums of money invested by Turkish companies in the country ruled by Colonel Gaddafi.

According to the editors of “Hürriyet Daily News”, it would be desired in the Turkish foreign policy to openly condemn the regimes which brutally crushed the protests. Turkey should also collaborate with Western countries (including NATO, from which it became estranged of late), to monitor the process of democratization of the countries embroiled in the Arab Spring to prevent them from becoming theocracies or autocracies⁴². Still, the publicists of “Today’s Zaman”, while supporting subsequent moves of Turkish diplomacy in their daily newspaper, seemed to be satisfied with the policy aimed at warming relations with Muslim countries and pointing out the mistakes of Israel in its non-democratic treatment of Palestine.

³⁷ HDN from 4 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 10.

³⁸ HDN from 22 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 27.

³⁹ *Idem*, art. No. in the sample: 34.

⁴⁰ HDN from 19 Mar 2011, art. No. in the sample: 72.

⁴¹ HDN from 21 Apr 2011, art. No. in the sample: 93.

⁴² HDN from 5 Mar 2011, art. No. in the sample: 49.

Yet another area of evaluation in the articles from the studied newspapers, linked to the image of Turkey, was the idea of Turkish democracy as the model for the region. The news articles published in “Hürriyet Daily News” reported the Turkish efforts to resolve the crises with dialogue and noted that “Ankara is more and more intensely seeking to increase its role in the region”⁴³. Both titles stressed as well that Turkey is the “only secular republic with a Muslim majority in population”⁴⁴. Also, both daily newspapers published critical words about Turkish democracy (especially in the opinion sections).

In his journalistic commentary on 31 March 2011, Soner Çağaptay stated that the “Turkish model” can be a “slippery slope”, as seen from the policy of the AKP government. He catalogued the moves of the ruling party attesting to the shift in the country’s policy towards religious conservatism: replacing the liberal head of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Turkish – *Diyanet*) with a more conservative one; ousting of the liberal Ayşe Sucu, and using the criterion of faith in the distribution of state offices and signing national agreements. On the other hand, the commentators of “Today’s Zaman” stressed (supporting their arguments with results of sociological surveys) that under the AKP leadership the number of Turkish citizens professing radical religious values had decreased⁴⁵. The publicists of this title were also of two minds about the “Turkish model”, yet rather because of the past than the present political situation in the country. Ali Bulaç, one of its commentators, remarked that the Turkish secularism, contrary to the Western postulates, cannot be a model for the region since it is antidemocratic in practice⁴⁶. “Today’s Zaman” also often recalled the position of the Prime Minister Erdoğan and Minister Davutoğlu, who stressed that Turkey can share the experiences of building a democracy, yet out of respect for the sovereignty of the Arab countries it would not impose any solutions on anyone.

In spite of the distance towards the “Turkish model” presented above, the journalists of “Today’s Zaman” often referred to it and stressed that Turkey is seen by the Western countries as the model for the region. It was shown, for instance, in the choice of headlines for the front page articles, such as “Turkey seen as model when Arab regimes fall”⁴⁷. Statements attesting to the politicians from Tunisia and Egypt following the policy of the AK Party were adduced as well, and it was said that a party of the same name was founded in Yemen. One of the news articles also quoted a Tunisian merchant who said that Erdoğan was so respected in

⁴³ HDN from 17 Jan 2011, art. No. in the sample: 2.

⁴⁴ HDN from 4 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 22.

⁴⁵ TZ from 25 Jan 2011, art. No. in the sample: 142; and TZ from 4 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 115.

⁴⁶ TZ from 22 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 163.

⁴⁷ TZ from 4 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 116.

that country that “whoever he indicates will win the coming elections”⁴⁸. One of the publicists of *Today’s Zaman* concluded his column saying: “Tunisia and the Arab countries will see that the AKP experience is the most reliable way”⁴⁹.

Description and evaluation of the international policy of the Western countries in the investigated articles

Some of the commentaries published in “Hürriyet Daily News” present the Western countries as defenders of their own interests, disorientated by the revolutions, who until recently had still supported the Middle Eastern regimes. In addition, the West cannot accurately diagnose the situation in the Middle East because it is “blinded again by its own fears of the Islamic world”⁵⁰. In one article it was also stressed that the West dichotomizes all Muslims into “Islamists” and “moderates”, and then sees all Islamists as belligerent fundamentalists⁵¹. According to the writers from “Hürriyet Daily News”, the Arab Spring should provide an opportunity to change this policy.

It is not that the role of the United States and the EU countries is shown only as negative in “Hürriyet Daily News”. The reactions of the West are quoted as examples of condemnation of the regimes attacking the demonstrations, and the cooperation between Washington and Ankara in the attempt to resolve the crises in the region is seen as a very beneficial event⁵²: sometimes even as the legitimation of Turkey’s actions. This is why it was stressed in news articles about various moves of the Turkish diplomacy that Prime Minister Erdoğan did something after consulting with President Obama⁵³. What is more, in “Hürriyet Daily News” the Western lifestyle is seen as a value threatened by radical Islamism, and the role of the West can, in some texts, be seen as the export and monitoring of the rules of human rights and democracy, which actually are ideas proposed by those countries.

Stressing of the negative influence of the Western countries on the Middle Eastern situation was commonplace in the journalistic commentaries in “Today’s Zaman”. Ali Bulaç stated that the local regimes supported by the West are remnants of colonialism, and should it serve the interests of the west, it would not refrain from the occupation of countries, just as it took place in Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan⁵⁴. The publicist was also of the opinion that one

⁴⁸ TZ from 7 Mar 2011, art. No. in the sample: 176.

⁴⁹ TZ from 25 Jan 2011, art. No. in the sample: 115.

⁵⁰ HDN from 4 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 22.

⁵¹ HDN from 22 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 37.

⁵² E.g., HDN from 5 Mar 2011, art. No. in the sample: 49.

⁵³ E.g., HDN from 4 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 24.

⁵⁴ TZ from 21 Jan 2011, art. No. in the sample: 115.

of the three main causes leading to the eruption of protests in Egypt and Tunisia was the “humiliation by the West and Israel”⁵⁵. Ibrahim Kalin (also in “Today’s Zaman”) remarked that the Western countries supported autocratic regimes in the region, yet when Hamas was democratically elected, they did not recognize it as it did not fit their pro-Israel regional policy⁵⁶.

Even though there were comments in “Hürriyet Daily News” that Islamism does not necessarily mean extremism, the majority of its commentators still focused on this issue. Conversely, the publicists of “Today’s Zaman” seemed not to notice that the slogans of the protesters had nothing to do with the Western countries and Israel, directly relating to the internal exploitation of the citizens by the national leaders instead.

The approaches of both press titles were broadly discussed, adducing justifications in the form of historical events as well, yet the journalists of “Hürriyet Daily News” could be accused of exaggerating the threat of fundamentalism, and those of “Today’s Zaman” of underestimating the actions and agency of the internal communities of Middle Eastern countries. The publicists of the latter title focused on the negative influence of the West collaborating with Israel. It should also be mentioned, that this statement is a certain generalization, since it has already been highlighted that various views were presented in both daily newspapers. The mentioned trends, however, were the most visible in the analyzed articles, which made them predominate in their newspapers.

Conclusion

The agenda setting analysis showed that the most frequent issues on which articles focused were: information on the situation of countries embroiled in the Arab Spring, the problems of the Turkish foreign policy towards those countries, the issue of the international policy of the Western countries and Israel, and the topic of the Turkish domestic policy. The study of framing revealed that the frame used most frequently by both press titles was the frame of conflict. It was usually used to describe the events of the Arab Spring. The foreign policy of Turkey in both titles was most often presented in relation to the frame of responsibility. The same frame was also used to describe and evaluate the international policy of the West.

When relating the events of the Arab Spring, both English-language Turkish newspapers—“Hürriyet Daily News” and “Today’s Zaman”—underlined the increased influence of Turkey on the international scene. The way the news from the region was

⁵⁵ TZ from 4 Feb 2011, art. No. in the sample: 144.

⁵⁶ *Idem*, art. No. in the sample: 130.

presented was oftentimes similar in both, and the protests in the Middle East were generally seen as an unprecedented opportunity for the democratization of the region. Significant differences between the investigated press titles were observed in the spheres of the image of the ideal Turkish foreign policy as well as the perceived potential threats and opportunities for the countries embroiled in the Arab spring.

The publicists of “Hürriyet Daily News”, critical of the Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, saw his foreign policy as, on one hand, the renewal of bonds with the countries of the region, and as the force to impose conservatism on the other. They also pointed out the inconsistencies of the Turkish foreign policy. Meanwhile, the editors of “Today’s Zaman” defended the moves of the Turkish government in international policy, often supplying arguments to support Erdoğan and Davutoğlu’s solutions already at the level of news articles.

The performed analysis demonstrated that the press also showed, on one hand, the approval of the increase in the importance of Turkey in the region and in the eyes of the Western countries and, on the other hand, the lack of agreement regarding the direction of said foreign policy. The advocates of the AKP rule were more in favour of condemning Israel, reserved attitude towards the imperialistic tendencies of the West, and furthering integration with the Muslim world. Conversely, according to the publicists of “Hürriyet Daily News” and critics of the ruling party, it would be more appropriate for the Turkish foreign policy to promote democracy with the support of Western organizations such as the Council of Europe, NATO, or European Union, and to monitor this process to prevent the solidifying system from becoming autocracies and theocracies.