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## **EXPLORING THE REFLECTION OF THE DEFINITIONAL PROBLEM OF TERRORISM IN PUBLIC OPINION USING WIKIPEDIA DATA<sup>1</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Terrorism is a global issue, particularly after the 9/11 attacks in the United States. Despite the global attention, there is no common definition of terrorism, as what one country defines as a terrorist is considered a freedom fighter by another. However, the impact of a country's attitude towards such organizations on people's perceptions and discourse has not been thoroughly explored. Accordingly, this study examines Wikipedia content related to the People's Defense Units (YPG), an organization recognized as a terrorist entity by some countries but not defined as such by others. Turkish Wikipedia content about YPG, representing Türkiye, which recognizes YPG as a terrorist organization, is compared with English Wikipedia content about YPG, a viewpoint held by countries like the USA and the UK, which do not recognize it as a terrorist organization. Additionally, Turkish and English content related to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), recognized as a terrorist organization worldwide, is also examined using the sentiment analysis. The analysis reveals that the dominant sentiment in Turkish Wikipedia content related to YPG, representing Türkiye that recognizes YPG as a terrorist organization, is negative, while the dominant sentiment in English Wikipedia content is positive. Conversely, the prevalent emotion in both Turkish and English Wikipedia content about ISIS, universally acknowledged as a terrorist organization, is negative. In summary, the study finds that the attitudes and opinions of

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countries towards an organization are reflected in society, and the public's attitude towards the organization in the country they reside in also influences the discourse about that organization.

**Keywords:** Wikipedia, Terrorism, People's Defense Units (YPG), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Sentiment Analysis

## INTRODUCTION

Terrorism stands as one of the most significant challenges confronting our world in recent years, particularly escalating in complexity and global reach following the September 11 attacks in the USA. This multifaceted and globalized nature of terrorism has positioned it as a focal point for the academic community, with the aftermath of the September 11 attacks serving as a pivotal moment in terrorism studies. The volume of academic research dedicated to understanding and addressing the issue of terrorism has steadily risen in the years since 9/11 attacks (Tulga, 2020).

A significant portion of terrorism studies, particularly in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, is dedicated to defining terrorism. Desmarais et al. (2017) note that academic articles published between 1990 and 2015 frequently delve into the characteristics of terrorist organizations and the definition of terrorism. Similarly, Schuurman (2020) contends that terrorism research predominantly centers on defining and conceptualizing terrorism, often relying on literature reviews. The author observes a gradual increase in studies employing quantitative methodologies with the advancement of technology in recent years, alongside a decline in literature-based investigations (Schuurman, 2020). Furthermore, the author asserts that the overreliance on secondary sources in many terrorism studies has long hindered progress in the field and impeded efforts to define terrorism (Schuurman, 2020). However, neither experts, politicians, nor the general public have managed to achieve consensus on which of the numerous definitions of terrorism presented in the literature is accurate. Consequently, the issue of defining terrorism has emerged as a central concern for both the public and academic communities, as highlighted by Locatelli (2014).

In this context, it is feasible to categorize the definitions of terrorism proposed by studies concentrating on the definition of terrorism in academic literature into three fundamental categories. Accordingly, the first category of researchers

defines terrorism as the killing of innocent individuals (Primoratz, 2013). According to Corlett (2004) and Miller & Feltes (2021), the second category of researchers defines terrorism, at least in part, as the killing of civilians or some other group of people who are not inherently innocent. The third category of scholars defines terrorism in terms of its aims and objectives (Schmid, 2005).

However, despite the abundance of literature on the definition of terrorism and the recognition of terrorist groups, there are relatively few studies that focus on the effects of national definitions and the recognition of terrorism and terrorist groups on public opinion. Furthermore, insufficient research has been conducted to determine how a nation's stance toward various terrorist groups influences people's views and discourses in online content.

Therefore, this research focuses on Wikipedia entries about the People's Protection Units (YPG), which is classified as a terrorist organization in some countries but not in others, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which is widely considered a terrorist group. The English Wikipedia material about YPG, which represents the views of countries that do not define it as a terrorist organization, such as the USA and the UK, was compared with Turkish Wikipedia information about YPG, which represents Türkiye, which recognizes YPG as a terrorist organization. In addition, Turkish and English content related to the ISIS, which is considered a terrorist organization worldwide, was also examined using sentiment analysis. Through these analyses, this research aims to elucidate the relationship between governmental stances on terrorism and terrorist organizations and their manifestation in public discourse, particularly in online content generated by the public.

In the subsequent section, a review of academic studies focusing on the definition of terrorism and public perceptions of terrorism was conducted, aiming to elucidate the diverse arguments presented in the literature. The third section outlines the analysis methods employed, accompanied by a succinct explanation for selecting Wikipedia for this study. The fourth section presents the findings derived from the analysis. The discussion section synthesizes the principal findings, emphasizing their alignment or disparities with existing literature. The study concludes with a comprehensive conclusion.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Terrorism is one of the most significant challenges our world has faced in recent years. Particularly following the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, the issue of terrorism has evolved into a more global and intricate phenomenon, exacerbating the problem further (Tulga, 2020). One significant reason behind the deepening of the terrorism problem is the issue of defining terrorism. Since the 9/11 attacks, countries have revised their definitions of terrorism as part of their counterterrorism efforts (Tulga, 2020). However, there exists variation among countries in their definitions of terrorism and the criteria they utilize to delineate it. For example, France, the USA, and the United Kingdom incorporate the element of "act of violence" in their definitions of terrorism, whereas the definitions in the Netherlands and Japan do not encompass such acts (Aven & Guikema, 2015). Similarly, while France and the USA classify terrorism as a "criminal act," Russia and New Zealand do not categorize terrorism as a criminal offense (Aven & Guikema, 2015).

The issue of terrorism, which has evolved into a more complex global concern with countries failing to reach a consensus on a unified definition, remains a focal point for the academic community. Particularly noteworthy is the surge in academic studies on terrorism following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Consequently, thousands of scholarly works on terrorism are produced annually across various regions worldwide (Tulga, 2020). For example, Richard Jackson (2012) asserts that post-September 11, topics related to terrorism garnered widespread attention globally, resulting in the establishment of terrorism programs in universities, a proliferation of think tanks dedicated to terrorism, and a surge in academic publications and initiatives centered on terrorism. Moreover, the author contends that these post-9/11 developments have enriched and advanced the terrorism literature on a global scale (Jackson, 2012).

However, despite the consistent annual increase in the number of academic studies, it is evident that a common definition of terrorism remains elusive within the academic literature. For instance, according to McCormick (2003), terrorism involves the premeditated use or threat of using violence or aggression to achieve political objectives through the apprehension or coercion of a specific audience. Similarly, Aven and Guikema (2015) define terrorism as an act of violence or the threat of violence intended to instill fear in a population and achieve a specific

political, religious, or ideological objective. On the contrary, certain studies provide definitions of terrorism that do not encompass elements such as the "act of violence," fear, or ideology, in contrast to McCormick (2003) and Aven and Guikema (2015).

Some studies utilize open-source datasets to define terrorism. Scholars such as Piazza (2007), and LaFree, Morris, and Dugan (2010) contend that open-source databases offer remarkable opportunities for scholars interested in elucidating the prevalence of terrorism across time and space, as well as in defining terrorism itself. Open-source databases are deemed valuable for defining terrorism, identifying relationship with terrorism, comprehending its nature, origins, impacts on affected populations, and the efficacy of counterterrorism policies (Freilich, Chermak & Simone, 2009). However, the absence of consensus among scholars and policymakers regarding a common definition of terrorism (Freilich, Chermak & Simone, 2009), along with substantial challenges in consistently gathering and reporting accounts of terrorist incidents under any given definition, pose significant hurdles to efforts to quantify terrorism using open-source datasets (Sheehan, 2012; Çubukçu & Forst, 2017).

Some studies in the literature attempt to delineate the goals and objectives of terrorism rather than providing a direct definition of terrorism. However, within the terrorism studies literature, there exists a multitude of perspectives on the objectives of terrorism, reflecting the diversity of arguments surrounding the definition of terrorism. Nevertheless, the prevailing viewpoint regarding the purpose of terrorism in the literature is to instill an atmosphere of fear and terror among individuals in order to achieve the aims of terrorism (Weinberg, 2009; Schmid, 2005; Jones & Fong, 1994; Wessely, Hyams & Bartholomew, 2001). Similarly, Alexander (1976) posits that instilling fear serves as a means for terrorism to attain its political objectives. The author contends that terrorist organizations may achieve their political aims by employing violence against indiscriminate civilian targets to intimidate or instill fear in the public (Alexander, 1976). Consequently, terrorists frequently endeavor to instill a pervasive sense of fear among the populace (Weinberg, 2009).

On the other hand, Weinberg (2009) argues that attracting attention is one of the objectives of terrorism. In this direction, some scholars posit that garnering the attention of the media is crucial for terrorism (Nacos, 2000). Nowadays, it is

believed that terrorist attacks can reverberate across different parts of the world, especially with the advancement of mass media and internet technology (Tulga, 2020). Consequently, not only are the citizens of the country targeted by terrorist attacks affected, but also individuals living far from the attacks experience negative psychological impacts (Braithwaite, 2013). Therefore, the primary goal of many terrorist organizations is to influence the level of media coverage of their attacks (Hoffman, 2006; Jenkins, 1975; Nacos, 2005). Laqueur (1986) suggests that the absence of media coverage of terrorist attacks or the failure to attract the media's attention could nullify the entire purpose of the attack. Additionally, Nacos (2000) argues that terrorist organizations aim to attain significant public recognition and acceptance by capturing the attention of the media.

Some academic studies delve into how individuals define terrorism, suggesting that public opinion on terrorism and people's definitions of it also influence governmental policies (Schuurman, 2013; D'Orazio & Salehyan, 2018). In this vein, Huff and Kertzer (2018) examined how people define terrorism using a combined experimental method. The authors found that people often cite bombings as an example when defining terrorism, and that certain attack methods, such as bombings, are more closely associated with terrorism for individuals (Huff & Kertzer, 2018). Additionally, Huff and Kertzer (2018) state that attacks by terrorist organizations that use religion are more likely to be defined as terrorism by people. Similarly, D'Orazio & Salehyan (2018) discovered that acts committed by Muslims are more frequently classified as terrorist attacks compared to the same acts perpetrated by white individuals. Conversely, Jaroslaw Kantorowicz, Elena Kantorowicz-Reznichenko, and Gerdien de Vries (2023) found that while individuals express concerns about attacks carried out by immigrants, particularly in the Netherlands, as well as by people operating within terrorist cells and motivated by jihadism, they also associate terrorism with such attacks and motivations. Consistent with Jaroslaw Kantorowicz, Elena Kantorowicz-Reznichenko, and Gerdien de Vries, Hewitt (1990) asserts that public opinion towards terrorism and its definition is shaped by complex historical and political circumstances, and that the public's attitude towards terrorism and its definition is influenced by numerous variables.

Finally, Tulga (2020) endeavored to comprehend the definition of terrorism as perceived by individuals through face-to-face interviews with ordinary people as



part of a study focusing on people's perceptions of terrorism. The author concluded that, consistent with the literature on terrorism studies, the definition of terrorism varied among almost every participant, with each having their own unique interpretation of terrorism (Tulga, 2020).

Despite the valuable studies in the literature, the impact of a country's attitudes or definitions towards different terrorist organizations on people's perceptions and discourses has not been fully investigated. Additionally, scholars focusing on terrorism, such as Spencer (2010) and Butko (2009), reveal that terrorism is a phenomenon intricately tied to how it is spoken or written. Moreover, Buzan (2006) and Homolar and Merino (2019) assert that discourse and the examination of this discourse are crucial for understanding various aspects of terrorism and the challenges encountered in defining it.

In this regard, this study scrutinizes online content related to the People's Protection Units (YPG), an organization deemed a terrorist organization by some countries but not defined as such by others. Additionally, Turkish and English content related to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), universally recognized as a terrorist organization, is examined using the sentiment analysis method.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study focuses on examining the impact of countries' definitions of terrorism and terrorist organizations on the discourse used by individuals in the content they create on the internet. To achieve this goal, the study leveraged Wikipedia as a valuable resource. Consequently, the investigation centers on Wikipedia content pertaining to the People's Defense Units (YPG), an organization acknowledged as a terrorist entity by some countries but not classified as such by others. The Turkish Wikipedia content regarding YPG, reflecting Türkiye's perspective that recognizes YPG as a terrorist organization, is compared with the English Wikipedia content about YPG. This perspective aligns with countries like the USA and the UK, which do not categorize the YPG as a terrorist organization. Furthermore, the study extends its analysis to include Turkish and English content related to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a group universally recognized as a terrorist organization. This exploration involves employing sentiment analysis to discern and compare the prevailing sentiments expressed in these sources.

The primary rationale for utilizing Wikipedia in this study stems from its evolution into the foremost online encyclopedia since its inception in 2001 (Lim, 2009). Numerous academic studies regard Wikipedia as one of the most frequently utilized online resources for acquiring reliable information (Greving et al., 2018). Wikipedia encompasses millions of articles covering various topics, with contributions not solely confined to a select group of experts but also extending to individuals from diverse geographical locations (Halatchliyski et al., 2014). In essence, myriad individuals, including experts, contribute to a vast array of articles, substantiating their arguments with citations (Greving et al., 2018). Wikipedia content is prepared by anonymous volunteers residing across the globe, with the aim of providing freely accessible information. Widely accessed by millions of users worldwide, Wikipedia experiences continuous growth both in terms of content and user base annually (Greving et al., 2018). Notably, its content spans over 300 languages, encompassing Turkish and English among others (Greving et al., 2018).

Relevant Wikipedia pages were acquired through web scraping technique. Web scraping is a method commonly employed to extract text, images, links, and data from web pages and databases. However, in this study, only text from Wikipedia was utilized, with images and links excluded from the process. The SelectorGadget tool facilitated access to the necessary codes for text analysis of the retrieved reports. These codes, obtained using SelectorGadget, were then imported into the R programming language using the "rvest" package. Additionally, the HTML extension links were transferred to R, enabling access to the documents slated for analysis.

After accessing the Turkish and English Wikipedia pages about YPG and ISIS using the R programming language, the initial texts retrieved were systematically cleaned. Initially, each uppercase letter was converted to its corresponding lowercase letter, considering that Wikipedia users occasionally capitalize all letters; this step is anticipated to enhance the effectiveness of the subsequent analysis on the text dataset (Tulga, 2022). The data cleaning process encompasses various incremental steps, broadly categorized under two main headings.

The first cleaning step involves the removal of stop words, punctuation, and numbers from the dataset. These elements are deemed irrelevant to the primary analysis and may potentially skew the results. Furthermore, eliminating these neutral



components from the dataset may lead to a reduction in the number of features derived from the samples (Ficamos & Liu, 2016). To eliminate Turkish stop words from the dataset, a list of 223 Turkish stop words compiled by Fatih University is used (Mulki et al., 2023). The "stopwords" and "removeWords" functions within the "tm" package in the R programming language were utilized to eliminate stop words in English content.

During the data processing phase, "letter" and "letters" are treated as separate features. This stage effectively enables the removal of plurals and inflections, a process known as stemming (Tulga, 2022). Subsequently, the unigram (one-word) feature can be lemmatized to streamline the reduction process (Mitts, Phillips & Walter, 2022).

In the second step of the cleaning process, duplicate content from the datasets is eliminated to minimize noise levels (Tulga, 2022). Following the completion of the cleaning step, sentences are tokenized, a process known as tokenization (Harbi & Kamsin, 2021). Lastly, as outlined by Mitts, Phillips, and Walter (2022), this research also produced a unigram (single word) Document Term Matrix (DTM) to gauge the frequency of individual words in the cleaned dataset.

Following the cleaning process, analyses were conducted to comprehend the content of YPG and ISIS English and Turkish Wikipedia pages. Initially, the most frequently used words in the English and Turkish Wikipedia pages related to YPG and ISIS were identified. This information can provide insights into the prevalent topics that individuals frequently discuss and emphasize.

After identifying the most frequently used words, polarity and sentiment analysis are conducted to comprehend the content of English and Turkish Wikipedia pages about YPG and ISIS. Sentiment analysis is one of the most widely used methods to categorize emotions in Wikipedia pages (Tulga, 2022). The primary aim of the sentiment analysis method is to discern the orientation, dominant emotion, and intensity of the opinions expressed in a document (Gezici & Yanikoğlu, 2018). Sentiment analysis is among the most widely utilized and favored Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques (Elkins & Chun, 2019). Referred to as opinion mining in the literature, the sentiment analysis method serves as an effective tool for detecting, modeling, predicting, understanding human preferences and actions (Elkins & Chun, 2019). Pang and Lee (2008) assert that sentiment analysis lies at the intersection of statistics, natural language processing, and

computational linguistics, aiming to detect opinions expressed in selected texts. The primary objective of sentiment analysis is to classify documents based on their polarity, discerning their semantic orientation (Misuraca et al., 2020). The term "polarity" is commonly employed in linguistics to differentiate between positive and negative terms (Löbner, 2000; Giannakidou, 2011).

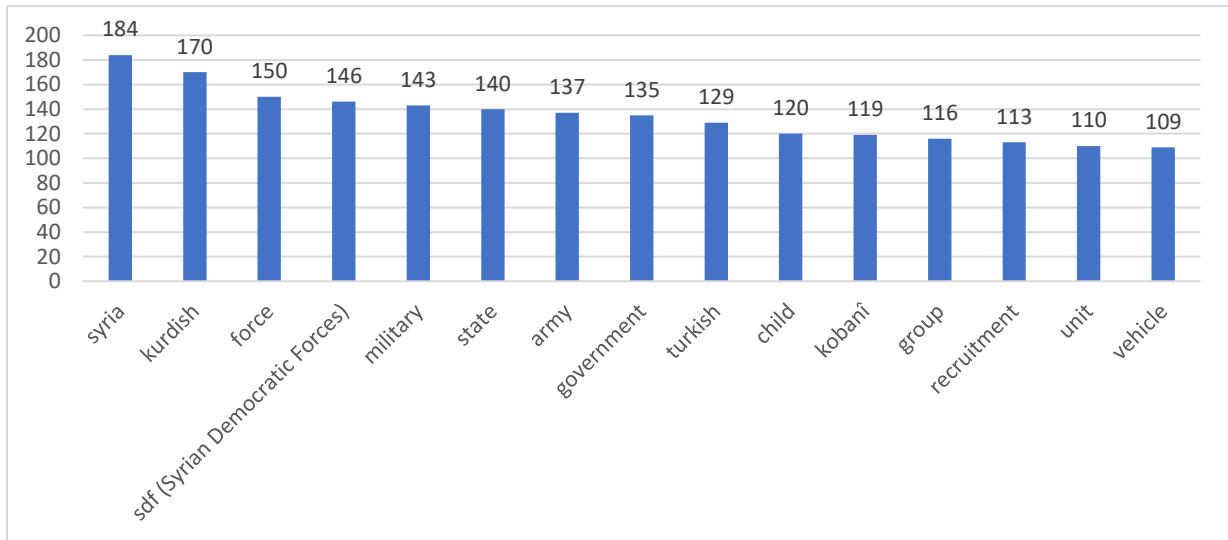
Sentiment analysis can be conducted at various levels of analysis, with three of them being the most commonly used. Initially, sentiment analysis may occur at the document level (Turney, 2002; Pang & Lee, 2008), followed by the sentence level (Hu & Liu, 2004), and finally, at the phrase level (Turney, 2002; Pang & Lee, 2008). Given that this study examines Wikipedia content, the document level is chosen as the analysis level.

The "syuzhet" package is utilized for sentiment analysis, offering researchers a quick means to extract polarity, plot and sentiment data from their text files (Jockers, 2020). Of particular interest is the ability to access the robust polarity and sentiment extraction tool or package developed by the NLP research group at Stanford University (Manning & Kunkel, 2014). The "syuzhet" package encompasses eight emotions: positive, negative, anger, anticipation, sadness, surprise, trust, fear, disgust, and joy (Jockers, 2020). The "Syuzhet" package is used in this study because it supports both Turkish and English, enabling polarity and sentiment analysis in both Turkish and English texts.

To ensure the robustness of the sentiment analysis results, the analyses are replicated by randomly partitioning the words used for sentiment analysis into two groups. This stage is referred to as the "split-half test" in the literature. Comparable results are obtained upon completion of the robustness test, affirming the reliability of the analysis.

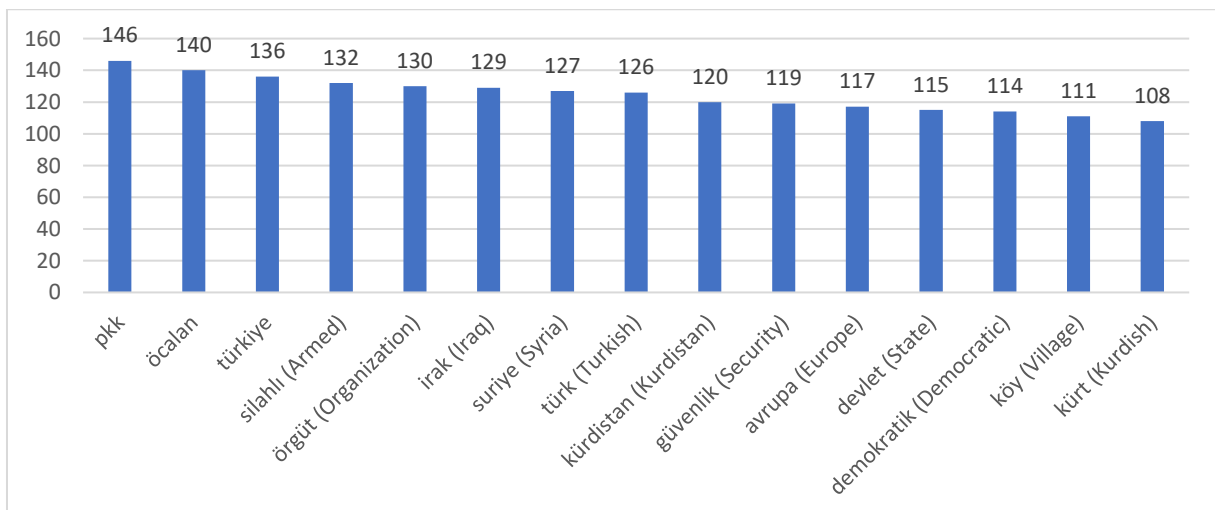
## RESULTS

In the initial phase of this study, which aims to investigate the influence of countries' definitions of terrorism and terrorist organizations on the discourse found in user-generated internet content, the most frequently used words in Wikipedia content about YPG and ISIS in both Turkish and English are found. Identifying the frequently used words offers insights into the overall content themes. To begin, this study identified the 15 most frequently used words in the English Wikipedia articles discussing YPG.



**Figure 1. English Most Used Words related to YPG**

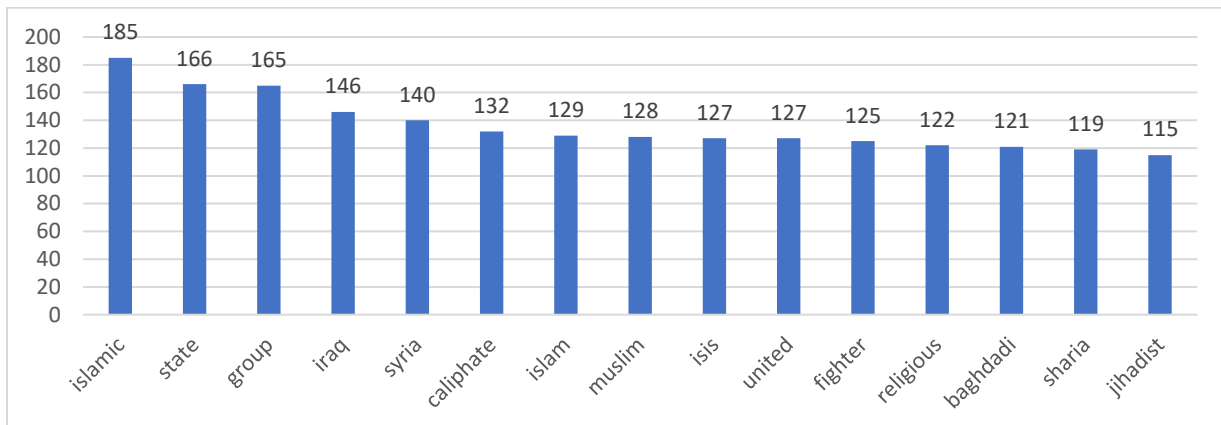
The five most frequently used words in English YPG-related content are "Syria," "Kurdish," "force," "SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces)," and "military." Upon examining the most frequently used words in Turkish content related to YPG, it becomes evident that words such as "Syria," "Kurdish," and "state," which are also prominent in English content, hold significant frequency in Turkish discourse as well. However, in addition to these terms, words highlighting YPG's association with the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) emerge as prominent in Turkish content. Consequently, it was observed that words such as "PKK," PKK's founder Abdullah Öcalan, "Turkey," "Armed," and "organization" ranked among the top five most frequently used words in Turkish content.



**Figure 2. Turkish Most Used Words related to YPG**

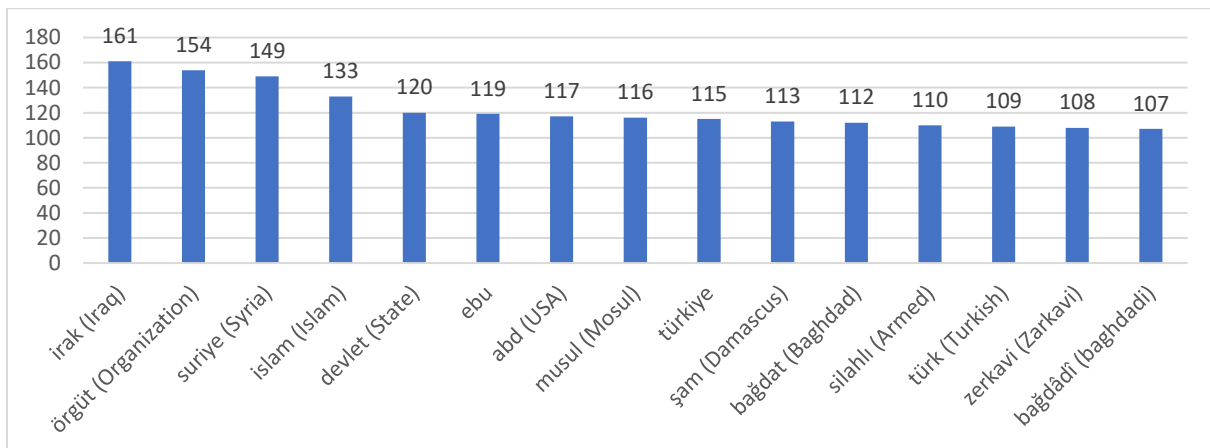
The most frequently used words in English content regarding ISIS include terms like "Islamic," "State," "Group," "Iraq," and "Syria." Additionally, words

associated with religion such as "Jihad," "Sharia," "Muslim," and "Caliphate" are frequently used in English content related to ISIS.



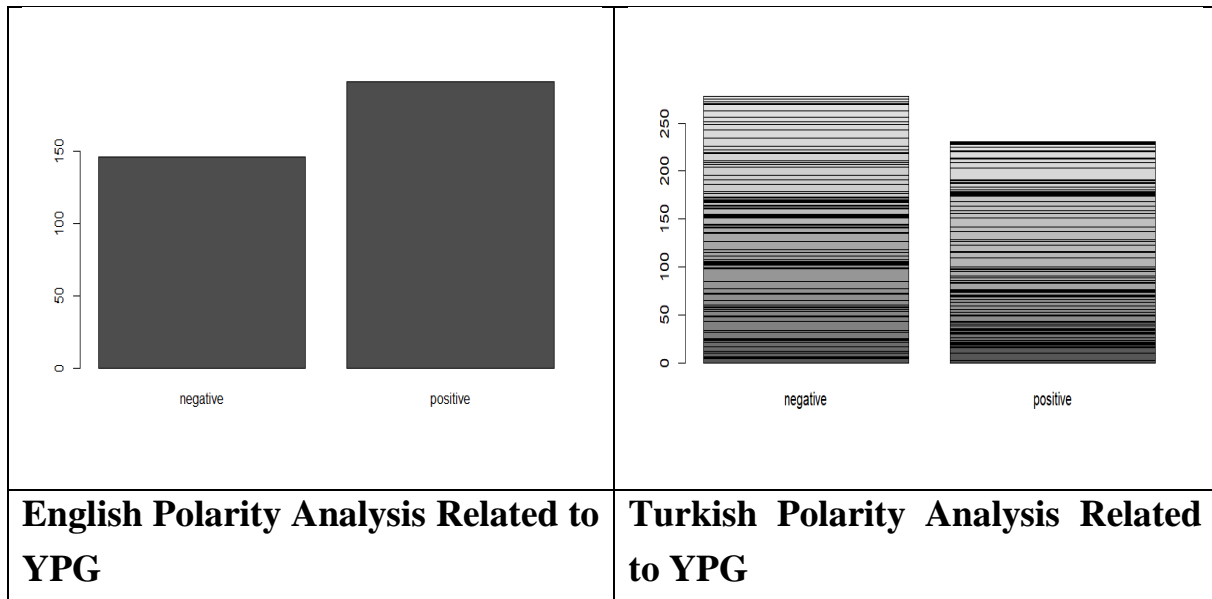
**Figure 3. English Most Used Words related to ISIS**

When examining the most frequently used words in Turkish content, it is evident that terms such as "Iraq," "Syria," "Islam," and "state," which are also prevalent in English content, are among the most commonly used words. Additionally, the term "organization" emerges as one of the top words in Turkish content. Unlike English content, Turkish Wikipedia content generally does not include religiously related terms. Furthermore, "USA" and the names of former ISIS leaders, "baghdadî (baghdadi)" and "zerkavi (Zarkavi)," are notably prominent among the frequently used words in Turkish content.



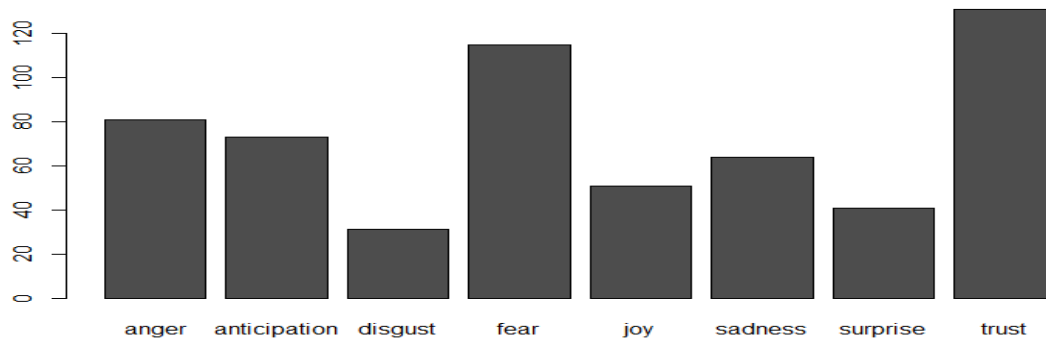
**Figure 4. Turkish Most Used Words related to ISIS**

After identifying the most frequently used words, the study proceeded with sentiment analysis, which constitutes a fundamental aspect of the research. In this regard, the initial step involved conducting a polarity analysis of English content related to YPG.



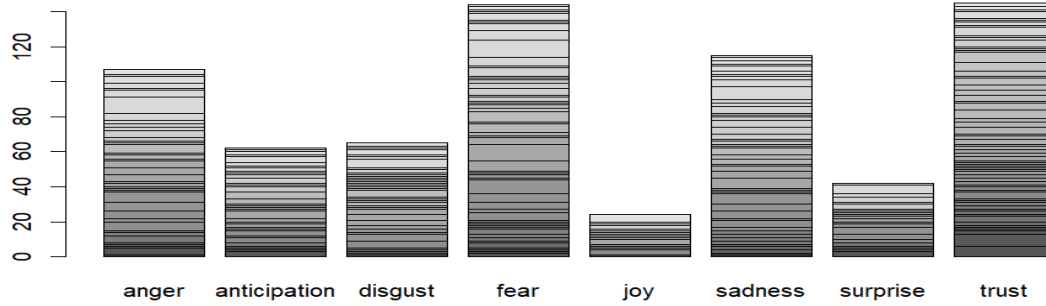
**Figure 5. English and Turkish Polarity Analysis Results related to YPG**

The polarity analysis revealed a predominance of positive emotions in English content related to YPG. Subsequent sentiment analysis indicated that the most prevalent emotion is trust. Additionally, it was concluded that fear ranks as the second most dominant emotion, following trust.



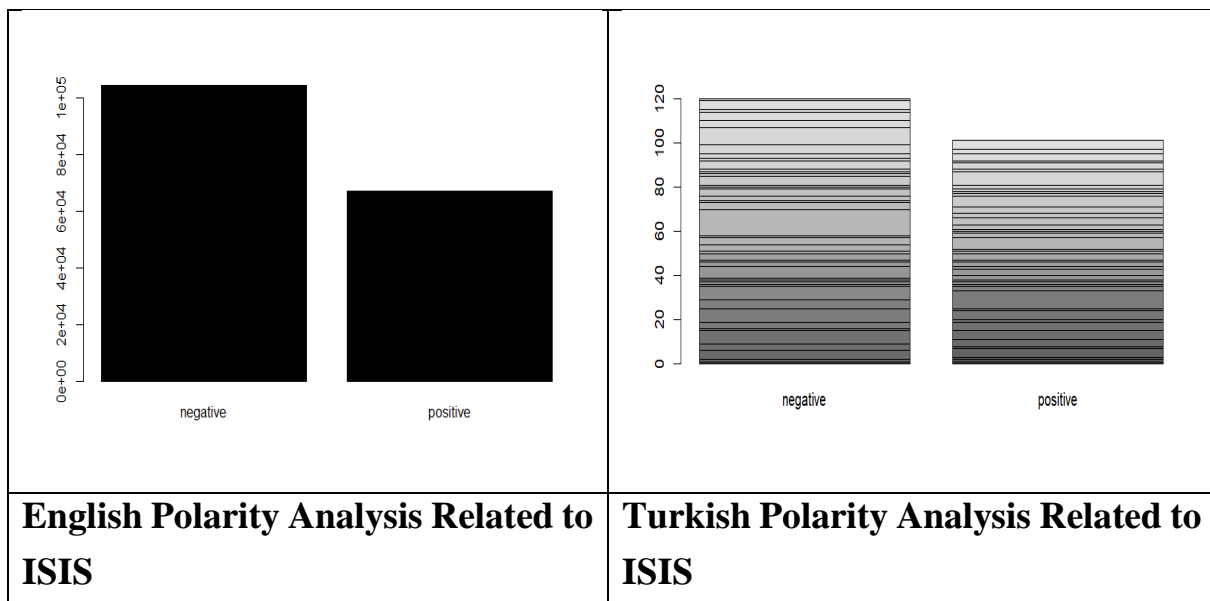
**Figure 6. Sentiment Analysis Results related to English Content of YPG**

However, contrasting with English content, it is observed that Turkish YPG-related content is predominantly characterized by negative emotions. The sentiment analysis revealed that fear emerged as the most dominant emotion in Turkish content, with trust ranking second. Moreover, unlike the English content, Turkish discourse on YPG exhibits pronounced levels of sadness and anger as negative emotions.



**Figure 7. Sentiment Analysis Results related to Turkish Content of YPG**

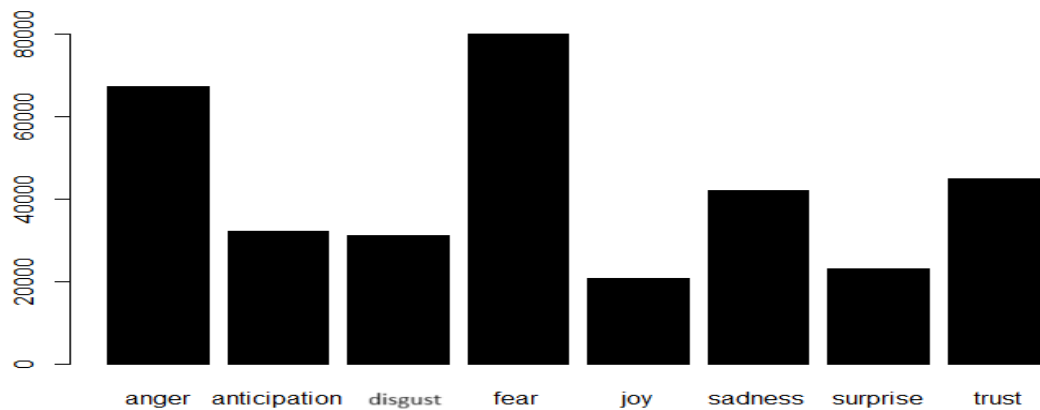
Then, a polarity analysis of Turkish and English content related to ISIS was conducted. As a result of the polarity analysis of ISIS-related content in English and Turkish, it was determined that negative content predominated in both the English and Turkish materials.



**Figure 8. English and Turkish Polarity Analysis Results related to ISIS**

Fear was identified as the most prevalent emotion in English content concerning ISIS, consistent with the findings of the polarity analysis. It appears that fear is followed by another negative emotion, anger.





**Figure 9. Sentiment Analysis Results related to English Content of ISIS**

The sentiment analysis results for Turkish content concerning ISIS align with those of English content. Fear emerged as the most dominant emotion in Turkish content about ISIS, followed by anger. Furthermore, sadness, which is relatively subdued in English ISIS-related content, appears to be comparatively more pronounced in Turkish content.



**Figure 10. Sentiment Analysis Results related to Turkish Content of ISIS**

## DISCUSSION

As a result of this study, which aimed to examine Turkish and English content about YPG and ISIS, conducted to understand the impact of countries' definitions of terrorist organizations and terrorism on the content people create on the internet, several findings were obtained. These findings can be discussed under three main headings.

The first of these main headings concerns the findings derived from identifying the most frequently used words in Turkish and English Wikipedia content about YPG and ISIS. Upon examining the most frequently used words, it was observed that terms highlighting YPG's association with the PKK were prevalent in the Turkish Wikipedia content about YPG. The primary rationale behind Türkiye's classification of the YPG as a terrorist organization lies in its connection with the PKK. This classification is reflected in Turkish content about YPG, where the most commonly used words underscore YPG's identity as a Kurdish armed group affiliated with the PKK. This finding aligns with the official discourse in Türkiye. Salih (2015) asserts that Turkish authorities and official institutions in Türkiye perceive the YPG and PKK as equivalent entities, a perspective that is frequently emphasized.

On the other hand, it was determined that terms associated with the Islamic religion, such as "Sharia," "Jihad," and "Caliphate," are frequently used in the English Wikipedia content about ISIS. However, it was observed that religiously related words are not commonly used in Turkish content. One of the primary reasons for this is the endeavor of the government and religious institutions in Türkiye to distinguish ISIS from the religion of Islam (Salihi & Göksun, 2018; Tulga, 2022). The effort of the government and religious institutions to separate ISIS from the religion of Islam is evident in the Turkish Wikipedia content, where words related to Islam are avoided when describing ISIS.

The second main heading pertains to the findings derived from the polarity analysis of English and Turkish content about ISIS and YPG. While a positive discourse dominates English content about YPG, it was observed that Turkish content about YPG leans towards negativity. Conversely, it appears that the prevailing discourse about ISIS in both Turkish and English content is negative.

The third heading encompasses the findings derived from sentiment analysis. These findings align with the outcomes of the polarity analysis. Consequently, trust emerges as the predominant emotion in English content about the YPG, whereas fear prevails in Turkish content about the YPG. Furthermore, Turkish content exhibits heightened levels of negative emotions such as anger and sadness towards the YPG. The heightened presence of emotions such as anger and sadness in the discourse can be attributed to Türkiye's ongoing conflict with the YPG, which frequently conducts attacks against Turkish soldiers and civilians. This

observation aligns with Türkiye's official stance. Deewanee (2022) asserts that Türkiye's official discourse portrays the YPG as a terrorist organization, positioning it as a threat to both Türkiye and the international community, thus fostering negative sentiments towards the YPG within the official narrative.

In alignment with this finding, it is evident that negative emotions such as fear, anger, and sadness are dominant in Turkish content about ISIS. The primary reason behind this is Türkiye's active military role in the fight against ISIS, where it continues military operations both domestically and internationally. Türkiye perceives ISIS as a significant geographical and military threat, shaping its policies accordingly (Tulga, 2022). The country engages in a multidimensional fight against ISIS (Tulga, 2022). As part of the anti-ISIS coalition, Türkiye co-chairs the Foreign Terrorist Fighter Working Group and provides access to its airspace and military facilities for coalition military operations in Iraq and Syria (U.S. Department of State, 2021). Türkiye officially joined the anti-ISIS coalition on August 24, 2015, with the first joint air campaign carried out on August 28 (Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017). Additionally, Türkiye initiated operations in northern Syria on August 26, 2016, to counter ISIS attacks, halt migration from Syria, and eliminate ISIS elements in the region (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

On the other hand, negative emotions such as fear and anger were prevalent in the English content about ISIS. However, it was concluded that sadness, which is one of the most intense emotions in Turkish content, is relatively low in English content.

While some of these findings are consistent with the results of some studies in the literature, they differ from the findings of some studies. According to Butko (2009), the definitions of 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' are not objective or neutral; rather, they reflect a narrative that challenges the dominant position and geopolitical interests of nations. Through this narrative, governments shape public opinion, leading the public to perceive individuals or organizations labeled as terrorists by the government as threats to their "way of life" and "country" (Balzacq, 2011). Consequently, the public tends to accept the official discourse propagated by the country (Kennedy-Pipe & Rengger, 2006). The findings of this study align with these arguments. Through polarity and sentiment analysis, the prevailing discourse in Türkiye, which categorizes the YPG as a terrorist organization, is

evident in the content individuals produce about the YPG online. It was observed that the predominant discourse in Turkish YPG-related content was negative, characterized by predominantly negative emotions such as fear, anger, and sadness.

Moreover, Bux and Coyne (2009) reported that the predominant public response to the perpetrators of the 2005 terrorist attack in London was one of sadness, fear, and anger. Consistent with this finding, the current study observed that negative emotions such as fear and anger were dominant in Turkish content regarding the YPG, which has perpetrated terrorist attacks against Turkish civilians and soldiers.

However, on the other hand, numerous countries worldwide do not designate the YPG as a terrorist organization. In the English Wikipedia content about the YPG, examined to illustrate this stance, it was observed that the discourse surrounding the YPG was positive, with the predominant sentiment being trust. The significant support provided by the USA to the YPG within the framework of the fight against ISIS plays a crucial role in shaping this positive discourse. This observation aligns with existing literature, where Bjørkheim (2020) contends that the hegemonic discourse on terrorism influences the international community and public opinion. Similarly, in Turkish and English content concerning ISIS, an organization considered a terrorist entity by nearly all countries globally, the prevailing discourse is negative, mirroring the stances of the respective countries, with negative emotions predominating.

Nevertheless, these findings are different from the findings of D'Orazio and Salehyan. The authors discovered that terrorist acts carried out by organizations invoking religion were more frequently categorized as terrorism or labeled as terrorist organizations compared to other such acts (D'Orazio & Salehyan, 2018). However, this study concluded that the primary determinant of people's perceptions of terrorism is the official discourse of countries rather than religion.

Finally, it was observed that sadness was relatively more prevalent in Turkish ISIS-related content compared to English ISIS-related content. The primary reason for this is that Türkiye is in close proximity to the regions where ISIS frequently carries out terrorist attacks, and the country has suffered casualties both domestically and internationally in its military efforts against ISIS. This observation aligns with the findings of Agerberg and Sohlberg (2021). The authors

discovered that the terrorist attack in Stockholm in 2017 had a more pronounced impact on individuals living in close proximity to Stockholm. These residents reported experiencing more intense negative emotions, such as fear, anger and sadness (Agerberg & Sohlberg, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

Terrorism is one of the most significant challenges our world has encountered in recent years. The issue has grown larger, become more global, and become more complex following the September 11 attacks in the USA (Tulga, 2020; Tulga, 2022). Particularly, the impact of the September 11 terrorist attacks on terrorism studies has been profound, leading to a regular increase in academic studies on terrorism in subsequent years. Consequently, thousands of scientific studies on terrorism are generated annually across various regions worldwide. Among these studies, an increasing number in the literature attempt to define the problem of terrorism.

In this direction, it is possible to divide the definitions of terrorism proposed by academic studies attempting to define terrorism into three main groups. In this regard, scholars in the first group define terrorism as the killing of partially innocent people (Primoratz, 2013). The second group of scholars defines terrorism, at least in part, in terms of the killing of civilians or some category of individuals who are not inherently innocent (Corlett, 2004; Miller & Feltes, 2021). Scholars in the third group define terrorism based on the goals and objectives it seeks to achieve (Schmid, 2005; Jones & Fong, 1994).

However, terrorism, being a global phenomenon that is easy to recognize but difficult to define, has led to the emergence of numerous definitions (Prabha, 2000). Moreover, scholars residing in various regions of the world and studying terrorism often define it based on their socio-economic and political contexts, as well as hegemonic discourses (Prabha, 2000). Consequently, scholars interpret terrorism through different lenses, influenced by their interests and environmental experiences (Richards, 2014). Therefore, studies on the definition of terrorism can only go as far as the argument that 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' (Miller & Feltes, 2021). Similarly, countries have not agreed on a common definition of terrorism, and there are differences among countries in their definitions of terrorism and the criteria they use to define it (Aven & Guikema, 2015).

However, the diverse definitions of terrorism found in academic studies and among countries have not hindered research on the definition of terrorism and terrorist organizations; studies pursuing this direction persist. Nevertheless, despite the studies on the definition of terrorism in the literature, the number of studies focusing on the impact of countries' definitions and recognitions of terrorism and terrorist organizations on public opinion is quite limited. Additionally, the impact of a country's attitude towards different terrorist organizations on people's perceptions and discourses in online content has not been fully investigated.

In this direction, this study examines Wikipedia content related to the YPG, a group recognized as a terrorist entity by some countries but not defined as such by others. Turkish Wikipedia content about the YPG, representing Türkiye, which recognizes the YPG as a terrorist organization, is compared with English Wikipedia content about the YPG, a viewpoint held by countries like the USA and the UK, which do not recognize it as a terrorist organization. Additionally, Turkish and English content related to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), recognized as a terrorist organization worldwide, is also examined using sentiment analysis.

The findings obtained as a result of the analysis can be discussed under three main headings. The first of these main headings concerns the findings derived from identifying the most frequently used words in Turkish and English Wikipedia content about the YPG and ISIS. The Turkish Wikipedia content highlighted the YPG's association with the PKK, aligning with Türkiye's classification of the YPG as a terrorist organization. However, terms associated with the Islamic religion, such as "Sharia," "Jihad," and "Caliphate," were more commonly used in English content about ISIS. It was observed, however, that religiously related words are not commonly used in Turkish content. This is attributed to the efforts of the government and religious institutions to distinguish ISIS from the religion of Islam.

The second main heading pertains to the findings derived from the polarity analysis of English and Turkish content about ISIS and the YPG. The polarity analysis revealed that while positive discourse dominates English content about the YPG, Turkish content leans towards negativity. The prevailing discourse about ISIS in both Turkish and English content is negative.



The third heading encompasses the findings derived from sentiment analysis. Sentiment analysis reveals that trust is the predominant emotion in English content about the YPG, while fear prevails in Turkish content. This is due to Türkiye's ongoing conflict with the YPG, which frequently attacks Turkish soldiers and civilians. Negative emotions such as anger and sadness are dominant in Turkish content about ISIS, attributed to Türkiye's active military role in the fight against ISIS. However, sadness, one of the most intense emotions in Turkish content, is relatively low in English content. Türkiye's effective military participation in the war against ISIS, where it conducts military operations both domestically and internationally, is the main cause of this.

While some of these findings are consistent with those of previous studies in the academic literature, others diverge from the findings of existing studies. However, despite these similarities and differences, this study has reached an important conclusion. Through all the analyses conducted, it was found that the discourse of countries toward terrorism and terrorist organizations also influences public opinion, which is reflected in the online content created by the public about such organizations. In other words, as Balzacq (2011) asserted, the official discourse of countries regarding terrorism and terrorist organizations shapes public opinion, leading individuals or organizations labeled as terrorists by the government to be perceived as a threat to their "way of life" and "country." Consequently, the public tends to embrace the official discourse propagated by the country (Kennedy-Pipe & Rengger, 2006).

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