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Uluslararası Medyada Ülkelerin Temsilleri: BBC’de Türkiye Örneği  
**Representations of countries in the international media: The  
case of Turkey in the BBC**

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## Uluslararası Medyada Ülkelerin Temsilleri: BBC’de Türkiye Örneği

### Öz

Çerçeveleme analizi ve derlembilim yaklaşımı kullanan bu çalışma uluslararası medyada Türkiye’nin temsilini Aralık 2016 ve Haziran 2018 arasındaki BBC Haberlerine odaklanarak incelemiştir. Sonuçlar Türkiye’nin BBC Haberler’deki ülkeler arasında 17. sırada yer aldığını ve uluslararası olarak sıklıkla Suriye, ABD, Almanya, Rusya ve Hollanda ile ilintilendirilmiş olduğunu göstermektedir. Sıklıkla kullanılan kelimeler *Türkiye, Türk, Erdogan, halk, Suriye, hükümet, Kürt, Suriyeli, devlet ve darbe* olmuştur. Türkiye etkileyici bir lider (Erdogan) tarafından idare edilen, silahlı Kürt gruplarla gerilim yaşayan, Suriye iç savaşına karışmış, başarısız darbe teşebbüsünden muzdarip olurken Gülen Hareketi’ne saldıran ve bunun da toplumda ağır baskıya neden olduğu bir ülke olarak temsil edilmiştir. BBC’nin özellikle üç haber çerçevesi kullandığı bulunmuştur: çatışma (Erdogan vs. Gulen, Türkiye vs. Suriye, Türkiye vs. silahlı Kürt gruplar), insan çıkarı (terör, savaş ve baskı yüzünden acı çekme) ve sorumluluk (kurtarıcı olarak Erdogan).

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye Siyaseti, Uluslararası Medyada Türkiye’nin (siyasi) Temsili, BBC, Derlembilim, Türkiye.

## Representations of countries in the international media: The case of Turkey in the BBC

### Abstract

Using a framing analysis and a corpus approach, this study investigated the representation of Turkey in the international media by focusing on the BBC News between December 2016 and June 2018. The results showed that Turkey was ranked 17th among countries in the BBC News and was often associated with Syria, the USA, Germany, Russia, and the Netherlands internationally. The frequently used words were *Turkey, Turkish, Erdogan, people, Syria, government, Kurdish, Syrian, state, and coup*. Turkey was represented as a country ruled by an influential leader (Erdogan), experiencing tensions with the armed Kurdish groups, involved in the Syrian internal war, and suffering from a failed coup attempt in which Turkey attacked the Gulen movement, which caused severe oppression in society. It was found that the BBC used particularly three news frames: conflict (Erdogan vs. Gulen, Turkey vs. Syria, Turkey vs. armed Kurdish groups), human interest (sufferings because of terror, war, and oppression) and responsibility (Erdogan as a savior).

**Keywords:** Turkish Politics, Turkey’s (Political) Representation In International Media, Bbc, Corpus Linguistics, Turkey



## Introduction

The media can create and shape politics through the images it portrays, the stories it tells, and the way it represents actors and events. Although one might expect the media to be objective and balanced, it selects or ignores news, decides what is newsworthy, prioritizes certain actors or events, and contextualizes them. Thus, the media plays an important role in shaping mass perceptions of people and countries. One of the methods they use is “news frames” or “framing”, referring to its persistent selection, emphasis, and exclusion of information (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). Previous research showed that conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility are the mostly used news frames (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). In this study, we investigate international media representations of Turkey using these five common news frames and conducting in-depth corpus analysis. News frames, known to influence public opinion, will help us understanding and organizing the flow of information we receive from the international media about the countries such as Turkey. Corpus analysis will reveal many language patterns and associations which help us uncover trends and contexts in representing a country such as Turkey. In this study, we aim to contribute to the research on representation of countries in the international media. In doing so, we narrow down our research to the RSS feeds of the BBC (BBC News - Home) between December 1, 2016 and June 1, 2018, a total of 18 months with a focus on its news related to Turkey.

We gathered data from the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) because it is the world’s leading public service broadcaster. Established by a Royal Charter, the BBC is a public service broadcaster funded by a licence fee paid by UK households (BBC, 2018). We focus on Turkey because we believe it has several characteristics worthy of examining from a political perspective. Turkey is important not only geostrategically but also demographically, economically, and militarily. It is considered to be a bridge between the East and the West and is sometimes called a South-Eastern European country, a Euro-Asian country, or a Middle-Eastern country. It is a secular country and most of its people are Muslim. Its population was around 80,810,525 in 2018 (Turkish Statistical Institute Press Bulletin, February 21, 2018), which makes Turkey the 18th most populated country in the world. Turkey has the world’s 14th largest economy (CIA, 2018a). It is considered one of the world’s economic powers because it is an active member of the Group of 20 (G-20). Turkey has been a member of: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) since 1952, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) since 1948, the Council of Europe since 1949, and the Customs Union with the European Union (EU) since 1996; an associate member of: the European Economic Community (EEC) since 1963 and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) since 1969; and an applicant state for the EU in 1987 (Müftüler-Bac & Stivachtis, 2008). It started accession negotiations in 2005 (Tocci, 2014) but is not yet a member. For



these reasons, an analysis of the BBC's news about Turkey can provide important insights into the country's representation in the international media, help current and future researchers deepen their knowledge of this issue, and open up new areas of research.

We started our research with December 2016 because on December 10, 2016, a twin bomb attack took place near Besiktas football stadium in Istanbul and then terrorists attacked also the famous nightclub, Reina, in Istanbul, on new year's eve 2017. These acts of terror rendered Turkey both close to Western European countries in the sense that they all suffered from terrorism and made Turkey an unsafe Muslim country at the same time, just like the other majorly Muslim countries shaken by violence. Hence, we were curious to see the repercussions of this particular era in the Western European media. Because there was a decrease in the intensity of terror in Turkey and also the early election of June 2018 would overtake the agenda, we finished our research in the beginning of June 2018.

### Previous research

Representations of countries in the international media might be different from those in local media sources. Several scholars state that Western media might portray non-Western countries in unfavourable ways. Among them, Peng (2004) conducted a quantitative content analysis of the general coverage of China that appeared in *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* between 1992 and 2001. The author stated that the amount of coverage of China increased significantly over time but that the content remained negative. Zhang and Wu (2017) focused on the representation of China as it related to news reports about the 'One Belt, One Road (OBOR) Initiative,' which combines the land-based 'Silk Road Economic Belt' and the maritime '21st Century Maritime Silk Road,' between March 2015 and March 2016. They paid attention to the attitudinal meanings and conducted a corpus analysis using the corpus software AntConc and ConcGram and focused on *China Daily* and the *Financial Times*. They found that while *China Daily* used a positive framework, the *Financial Times* used a mixed one. Moreover, the *Financial Times* highlighted China's importance to the global economy but represented the country as authoritarian, militant, and geopolitically threatening.

Another study focused on international representations of Bulgaria through a content analysis, critical discourse analysis and corpus methods (Tarasheva, 2012). This study reported the results of a critical discourse analysis of the country's "bid to join the Schengen zone" by focusing on the BBC website between 2008 and 2011. The author found that the BBC adopted a negative tone towards Bulgaria. Moreover, it represented Bulgaria "as a passive recipient of quite aggressive but



inarticulately voiced measures from the EU (...) [and that] the profile Bulgaria cuts is one of inefficiency, passivity and several negative features of government" (p.1061).

Previous studies of the international media's coverage of Turkey focused mostly on press coverage of Turkey-EU relations. Among them, those studies focusing on the French press highlighted the ways in which Turkey was represented as "the other" and "the outsider" among Western European countries (Çagatay-Tekin, 2008; Aissaoui, 2007), while those studies focusing on the British press highlighted mostly the general "negative" framework of representation. A couple of studies also focused on tourism and Turkey.

Two of those studies gathered data from the British press (*The Guardian* and *The Times*) to examine news about Turkey's accession to the EU. Among these studies, Schneeberger (2009) conducted a content analysis of the news in 2002 and 2007, while Arcan (2012) conducted a critical discourse analysis of the news in 2004 only. Both studies highlighted the *othering aspect* of the used discourse. For instance, according to Schneeberger (2009), the news highlighted a Europeanised Turkey because of its reforms but underlined its differences from the EU. According to Arcan (2012), the news presented Turkey as a non-European place. Schneeberger (2009) showed that the news was also about human rights, Turkey-Cyprus relations, minority rights, demography and the Muslim population, the military, and economic development. Arcan (2012) also discussed news about cultural differences and the (Islamist) prime minister Erdogan.

Another study focused on the representation of Turkey in *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* between September 2004 and December 2005 and examined "the implicit meaning of the news items" (Devran, 2007). Although this study focused on the general representation of Turkey, it investigated Turkey-EU relations in detail because they were intensely covered in the news. This study drew attention to the presence of news items covering such topics as the relationship between Turkey and the EU, various suicide attacks organized by terrorists, the PKK issue, the Cyprus problem, the Armenian genocide claims, the rise of nationalism in Turkey, the pipeline project from Russia to Turkey, Mehmet Ali Agca, the bird flu, the retrial of Orhan Pamuk, the condition of Turkish prisons, the adoption of new penal codes, educational issues, blood feuds, British tourists killed by bomb attacks while visiting Turkish tourist sites, honor crimes, Gallipoli ceremonies, and Lloyd George's attempt to bribe Enver Pasha. According to this study, the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), which had launched an armed struggle against the Turkish government in 1984, was the most-covered topic in the British media.



Another study focusing on *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, and *The Independent*, as well as the Scottish broadsheets *The Herald* and *The Scotsman*, centered on the membership negotiations between the EU and Turkey in 2005 (Bryce, 2009). This study, which drew attention to the exclusionary discourse of the UK newspapers, argued for Turkey's membership because it could set an example for the wider Islamic countries.

Another study, a doctoral dissertation, focused on the representation of Turkey in *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, and their Sunday sister papers between 2007 and 2013 (Bora, 2015). This study reported the results of a quantitative content analysis and in-depth interviews with ten journalists. The author examined 32 major events in detail and worked on representative articles, editorials, and front-page stories. The author found that the coverage related primarily to human rights abuses, press freedom, the Kurdish issue, discussions about Armenian genocide, Turkey's Ottoman heritage, Turkish seculars, the Turkish military, and the Ergenekon / Sledgehammer trials. This study argued mainly that the British papers presented Turkey "as an agreeable, useful yet still inferior 'Model Other' to the EU."

Yet another study was more extensive than those discussed above; it focused on *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, the *Financial Times*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Mirror*, and the *BBC News Online* (Paksoy & Negrine, 2016). This study reported the findings from a content analysis of the news between 1999 and 2006, when Turkey's bid for EU membership was a hot topic. The findings were slightly different from those of the previous studies because they showed that the dailies in consideration represented Turkey as "the positive other." The authors argued that Turkish membership could lead to better communication between the EU and Muslim countries and could benefit the UK in terms of its confrontation with the Franco-German axis in the Union. Hence, according to this study, the British media's support of Turkish membership was strategic and pragmatic.

Moreover, studies of media coverage beyond the main news stories provide information about the British press's representation of Turkey. One of these studies was about travel journalism, with a focus on the cultural representation of Turkey (Hamid-Turksoy, Kuipers, & van Zoonen, 2014). This study reported the results of a qualitative content analysis of the *Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, and the *Mirror* from 2005 to 2010. According to this study, the British press used a positive lens to evaluate Turkey and qualified the nation as stunning, risk-free, exotic, and mysterious. This study also suggested that Turkey was



part of Europe geographically, yet was still the “other” because of its oriental characteristics.

Hamid-Turksoy, van Zoonen, and Kuipers (2014) examined “toyboy stories” in the *Daily Mirror*, the *Sunday Mirror*, *The Sun*, the *News of the World*, the *Daily Mail*, *The People*, and the UK regional press in 2012. These stories were about the relationships between mature British women and the younger Turkish lovers whom they met while on holiday in Turkey . This study found that, as part of romance tourism, Turkey was represented as one of the most popular British tourist destinations, while Turkish men were represented as “foreign, exotic others” who were either “evil con men” or “passive objects of women’s desires.”

### Methods

To investigate the representation of Turkey in the international media, we obtained data from the RSS feeds of the BBC (BBC News - Home) from between December 1, 2016 and June 1, 2018, for a total of 18 months. We exported all the available data and manually sought news about Turkey using the following keywords: *Turkey* and *Turkish*. We also looked for news related to Turkey without using these keywords, such as news about the biggest city, *Istanbul*, and the capital city, *Ankara*. Using the list of countries and territories on the US Department of State website (<https://www.state.gov/misc/list/index.htm>), we coded nouns and their frequencies in our corpus.

We then accessed the whole texts and saved them as .docx and .txt files for further analysis. We coded data according to title, date, theme, and name of the countries other than Turkey. We also created a list of keywords by browsing political science textbooks and Turkish studies and coded their frequencies in our corpus. For corpus analyses, we used a corpus linguistic tool called AntConc (Anthony, 2018).

After identifying major news coverage, we analyzed coded the data following the five common frames. These are conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility frames (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000): 1) *Conflict frame* highlights conflict between individuals, groups and institutions. While highlighting a conflict, news can focus on the disagreement between the participants of the conflict, news can focus on whether one side aims to solve the conflict whereas the other side does not, news can take a side or support a side in its approach, and news can declare a winner or a loser of the disagreement. 2) *Human interest frame* presents events and problems from a human or emotional perspective. In this frame, news can provide a human example for the event and feelings humans experience during the event. News can focus on personal consequences of the events and use images of humans to gain more emotional responses from the viewers. 3) *Economic consequences frame* draws attention to economic aspects of events and problems. While using this frame, news can focus on



economic consequences, profits, losses, and costs. 4) *Morality frame* stresses upon the moral prescriptions. In this frame, news can carry moral messages in the coverage and news can point to deities, religious issues, and ethical behaviors. The last frame, 5) *responsibility frame* presents a person, a group or a government as responsible for creating or solving a problem. In this frame, news can highlight institutional or individual responsibility in the event, news can provide some solutions for the problem, and news can ask for immediate action (p. 95-96).

## Results

### General Findings

To provide a general picture of the BBC's news about the countries, we first looked at all the data. According to the US Department of State, the world contains 207 countries and territories, including the USA. Our analysis showed that the BBC News mentioned 181 of them (87.43%) a total of 20,316 times between December 1, 2016 and June 1, 2018. Turkey was one of these countries, mentioned 348 times (1.71%). Considering names and nationalities (such as Albania and Albanian), the words *Turkey*, *Turkish*, and *Turks* were mentioned 572 times (1.86%) out of 30,800. When the countries and territories were ranked according to their frequencies, Turkey was 17th while the UK was first (Figure 1, Table 1). Out of 36,313 news items on the BBC website between December 1, 2016 and June 1, 2018, 323 items (0.9%) were about Turkey. These findings suggest that the reporting of news related to Turkey was meaningful because Turkey was a relatively important international actor during this period of time.

A closer examination of the data showed that from December 1, 2016 to June 1, 2018, the USA (presumably the most important international actor in the world) appeared 1,473 times in the BBC News. The countries that followed were the UK (1,363 times), Australia (1,156 times), Russia (1,014 times), and China (986 times). The BBC is a British broadcaster and, unsurprisingly, the UK was one of the most frequently mentioned countries in the data.

Russia was among the most frequently mentioned countries because it is the largest country in the world by area; it is also an international actor and one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. China was another often-cited country. Demographically, China is the world's largest country, while economically it is the second largest. China, too, is one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and is one of the main economic competitors in the international arena. Russia and China, as well as India and Pakistan, are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), while Russia, China, India, Brazil, and South Africa are members of the BRICS. (The name of the association is an acronym for its members' names.)





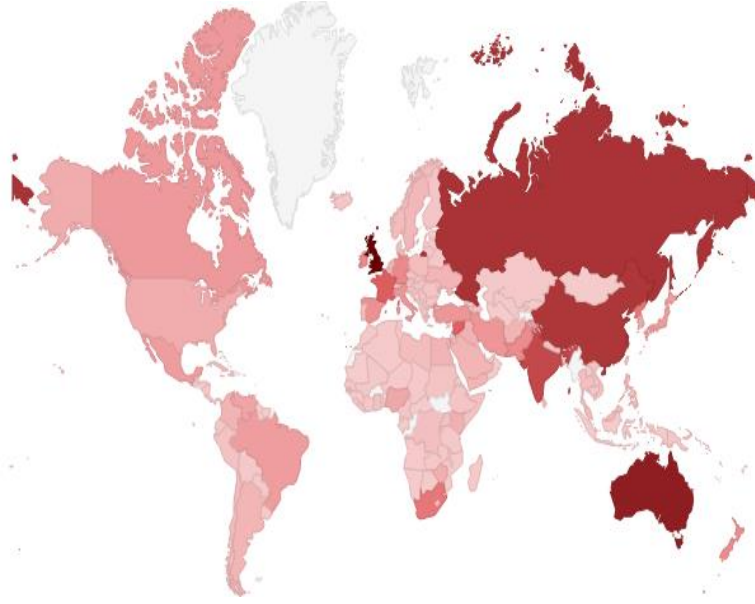


Figure 1. Color-coded frequencies of the countries that the BBC mentioned between December 2016 and June 2018.

Table 1. Top 20 countries that the BBC mentioned between December 2016 and June 2018 according to their frequencies.

	Frequency	%
USA	1,473	7.25
United Kingdom	1,363	6.71
Australia	1,156	5.69
Russia	1,014	4.99
China	986	4.85
India	866	4.26
France	729	3.59
Syria	701	3.45
South Africa	565	2.78
North Korea	564	2.78
Germany	437	2.15
Ireland	427	2.10
New Zealand	424	2.09
Pakistan	409	2.01
Spain	380	1.87
Iran	358	1.76
Italy	353	1.74
Turkey	348	1.71
Canada	332	1.63
Brazil	309	1.52



TOTAL	13,194	64.94
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### Countries in the news about Turkey

After examining the general picture, we focused on the full texts containing *Turkey* and *Turkish*, and compared these findings with those of the whole data. We found that 74 out of 206 countries and territories (36.1%) were mentioned alongside Turkey (Figure 2, Table 2). The most-cited country was Syria (485 times), followed by the USA (298 times), Germany (264 times), Russia (192 times), and the Netherlands (115 times). Iran and France were also common in the whole data and in the data about Turkey. What is interesting here is that some of the most frequently mentioned countries in the whole data were not frequently found in the data about Turkey only. These countries included Australia, China, India, South Africa, North Korea, Ireland, New Zealand, Pakistan, Italy, Canada, and Brazil. Instead, the news about Turkey was highly associated with European countries (the Netherlands, Greece, Austria, Switzerland, Cyprus, Spain, and Sweden) and Middle Eastern countries (Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Jordan), between which Turkey is geographically situated. We will discuss the frequently mentioned countries when we examine the data about Turkey in detail in the next section.

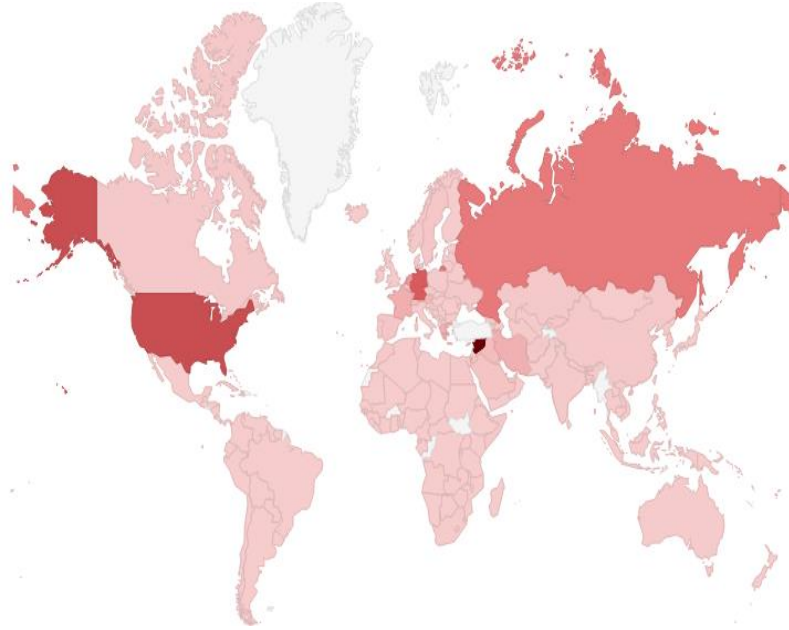


Figure 2. Color-coded frequencies of the countries that the BBC News mentioned alongside Turkey between December 2016 and June 2018.



Table 2. Countries that the BBC News mentioned alongside Turkey between December 2016 and June 2018 according to their frequencies (n > 12).

	Frequency	%
Syria	485	23.19
USA	298	14.25
Germany	264	12.63
Russia	192	9.18
Netherlands	115	5.50
UK	82	3.92
France	68	3.25
Iran	67	3.20
Greece	64	3.06
Austria	49	2.34
Iraq	35	1.67
Qatar	34	1.63
Israel	33	1.58
Cyprus	20	0.96
Switzerland	20	0.96
Saudi Arabia	18	0.86
Jordan	14	0.67
Spain	13	0.62
Sweden	13	0.62

#### Timeline of the news mentioning Turkey

From December 1, 2016 to June 1, 2018, there were 323 news items about Turkey (Table 3). The following four months were when Turkey received the BBC's attention the most: December 2016, January 2017, March 2017, and January 2018 (10.22% of the total news appeared in December 2016, 10.84% in January 2017, 12.07% in March 2017, and 10.53% in January 2018).

Table 3. Number of news items about Turkey per month between December 2016 and June 2018.

	No. of news items	%
December 2016	33	10.22
January 2017	35	10.84
February 2017	15	4.64
March 2017	39	12.07
April 2017	26	8.05
May 2017	21	6.50
June 2017	21	6.50
July 2017	7	2.17
August 2017	6	1.86



September 2017	0	0
October 2017	6	1.86
November 2017	13	4.02
December 2017	10	3.10
January 2018	34	10.53
February 2018	22	6.81
March 2018	15	4.64
April 2018	9	2.79
May 2018	11	3.41
TOTAL	323	100

Using a timeline, we created a figure (Figure 3) to visualize the main themes of the news about Turkey. There was news about local and international politics as well as sporadic coverage of disasters and accidents such as flood and blasts, which we discuss below. There were also sports items related to either the sponsorship of Turkish airlines or politics – e.g., Germany’s outrage over the meeting between Turkish-German soccer players Özil and Gündogan (who were in the main squad of the German national soccer team) and President Erdogan – that the BBC found newsworthy.

A closer examination of the data showed that one of the main themes was Turkey’s struggle with the armed Kurdish groups (PKK, PYD-Democratic Union Party, SDF-Syrian Democratic Forces, YPG-Kurdish Popular Protection Units, and YPJ-Women’s Protection Units) in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. The BBC used the conflict frame in its approach to refer to the disagreement between Turkey and the armed Kurdish groups. The BBC emphasized how Turkey views a connection among all the armed Kurdish groups and considers them terrorists and how the USA and France back the YPG and the SDF in the fight against the IS while the YPG denies any links with the PKK.

Another theme was news related to the Syrian conflict, including the fight with the Islamic State (IS) and the Turkish military operations in, for example, Afrin, a Syrian city, between January and May 2018. This theme is connected with the previous one on the armed Kurdish groups because some of these groups have been active in Syria. In the news on Turkey and the Syrian issues, too, the BBC used the conflict frame in its approach to highlight the opposing interests of the two sides: Turkey vs. armed Kurdish groups in Syria, Turkey vs. the IS. The BBC did not favor the Turkish interests over the Kurdish interests in Syria. However the news covered in detail the detention of the Turkish college students who protested against the Afrin operation in Syria and the reaction of their families and professors.



This in-depth coverage, therefore, highlighted the intolerance of the Turkish government. Also the BBC covered the stories of wives and orphans of Turkish fighters who joined the IS in Iraq and Syria. The BBC used the conflict frame for how Turkey and some of its conservative citizens opposed each other. The terrorist attacks in December 2016 and January 2017 constitute another theme in the BBC news. These attacks included the assassination of the Russian Ambassador Andrei Karlov in Ankara by an off-duty Turkish police officer; a twin bomb attack outside a football stadium in Istanbul, killing 44 people; and, a terrorist attack in a famous nightclub, Reina, in Istanbul. Presenting these news the BBC used the human interest frame and made its followers get united against these acts of terror. In doing so, the BBC used personal stories and photos of those who died and those who survived terror. Photos of Karlov's widow Marina crying during the funeral ceremony were touchy and created more emotional responses from the readers.

PKK							
				PYD			
YPG			YPG		YPG		
stadium attack							
murder of ambassador							
	Reina terror						
terror			terror				
IS			IS				
Syrian conflict			Syrian				
					human	human	
		cooperatio					
opp.	opp.		opp.				
oppression					opp.		
coup		coup			coup		
	militar	military					
		referendum					
			Washington visit				
						election	



disaster/accident				disaster/accident					
			humanity						
	sports		sports			sports			
Dec2016	Jan201	Feb201	March2017	April201	May201	June201	July201	Aug201	Sep201

			PKK						
	PYD			PYD					
			SDF					SDF	
YPG			YPG						
				YPJ					
	IS		IS					IS	
	Syrian		Syrian conflict						
			Afrin offensive						
human rights			human rights						
			cooperation						
			oppression						
			oppression			oppression			
coup						Coup			
	military								
	referendum			referendum					
		Washington visit							
						Election			
			disaster/acci.		disaster/accident		disaster/accident		
gender			gender		gender				



	sports					Sports	
Oct2017	Nov2017	Dec2017	Jan2018	Feb2018	March2018	April2018	May2018

Figure 3. The main subjects of the news between December 2016 and June 2018 (n > 3).

Yet another theme was the proposed change to eliminate the prime minister, the so-called presidential system, for which Turkey went to a referendum and accepted. This referendum and election were protested by many people in Turkey and abroad, including during Erdogan's Washington visit. The BBC used the attribution of responsibility frame, Erdogan was presented both as the person who created the problem in the first place as well as the person who could solve the problem. The tension after the coup attempt led the government to take harsh measures; the BBC covered the coup, including its relation to oppression in general and of the media in particular. According to the BBC, several public servants and journalists were put in jail for "coup links". The BBC used the human interest frame to create empathy and compassion for many people who suffered in the process of disempowerment of *FETÖ-Fethullahçı Terör Örgütü*, the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization.

#### Text analysis of the BBC's news about Turkey

Examination of the data in terms of frequently cited people, countries, and political terms as well as their clusters in the BBC's news about Turkey revealed 149,334 tokens and 9,665 types in which *Turkey* and *Turkish* were the most-cited words (1,868 and 1,414 times, respectively). The words that followed were the Turkish president *Erdogan* (793 times), *people* (507), *Syria* (485), *government* (461), *Kurdish* (459), *Syrian* (392), *state* (348), and *coup* (334) (Table 4).

Table 4. Most-cited nouns except for small words such as *a* and *the*, numbers, and days (Top 20).

Word	Frequency
Erdogan	793
president	675
people	507
Syria	485
government	461
Kurdish	459
Syrian	392
state	348
coup	334
minister	306
Afrin	280



Germany	264
German	256
YPG	254
forces	242
police	237
military	229
party	229
Ankara	214
Istanbul	209

### Persons

In terms of people, we found that (Recep Tayyip) Erdogan (793), Turkey's current president, was the person whom the BBC News cited most as related to Turkey. Erdogan was followed by Gulen (148), Trump (81), (the assassinated Russian) ambassador (80), (Turkish Foreign Minister) Cavusoglu (77), (Syrian President) Assad (55), and (German Chancellor) Merkel (52). We also looked at all the BBC data, including snippets, to compare Erdogan with other political figures. We found that, at number seven, Erdogan was one of the most frequently mentioned leaders, following current US President Trump (3167), French President Macron (227), former US President Obama (210), the Queen of the UK (207), Russian President Putin (198), and UK Prime Minister May (172). This suggests that Erdogan, with 90 mentions, was an important local and international political figure to the BBC.

The results of the cluster analyses of Erdogan and Gulen showed that Erdogan was used in the following clusters: *Mr. Erdogan, Recep Tayyip Erdogan*, and *(Turkish) President Recep Tayyip Erdogan*. Erdogan was also frequently used with the verbs *say*, *tell*, and *accuse*, as in *Erdogan said/told* and *Erdogan accuses/accused/has accused (of)*. Gulen was used in the followings clusters: *Mr. Gulen, Fethullah Gulen, (US-based/Islamic) cleric Fethullah Gulen, Gulen/Gulenist movement, Gulen*, and *the Pennsylvania-based preacher*. Gulen was also used with the verb *accuse* and *influence* as in *(Erdogan) accuses Gulen* and *influenced by Gulen*.

### Countries, nationalities, and ethnicities

Our analyses of nationalities and ethnic groups showed that Turkish (1,414), Kurdish (459), Syrian (392), German (256), Russian (160), and Dutch (144) frequently appeared in the data. Furthermore, our analysis of countries indicated that Turkey (1,868), Syria (485), Germany (264), the USA (263), Russia (192), the EU (169), the Netherlands (108), and the Islamic State (102) appeared often in the data.





Cluster analyses of Turkey, Turkish, Kurd\*, German\*, Syria\*, Russia\*, and US indicated the following common phrases. Turkey appeared in *Turkey's president, Turkey's military, Russia and Turkey, (South-) Eastern Turkey*, and the metaphorical *Turkey says*, while Turkish clustered around *Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkish government, Turkish soldiers, Turkish military, Turkish troops, Turkish media*, and *German-Turkish*.

Kurd\* appeared in the following phrases: *Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Kurdish fighters, Kurdish militants, Kurdish forces, Kurdish autonomy, banned Kurdistan (party), pro-Kurdish*, and *Syrian-Kurdish*. Syria appeared in *Syrian government, Northern Syria, Syrian rebels, Syrian army, Syrian observatory for human rights, Syrian border*, and *Free Syrian (Army)*.

Cluster analyses also showed that German was frequently used in *German-Turkish, German government, German officials*, and ... *accused Germany*, while Russia appeared in *Russia and Turkey, Russian ambassador, Russia and Iran, Turkey and Russia*, and *Russian President*.

### Cities

In addition to persons, ethnicities and nationalities, and countries, we conducted frequency and cluster analyses on cities. We found that Afrin (280), Ankara (214), Istanbul (209), Washington (71), and Bab (70) were frequently mentioned in the BBC News' items related to Turkey.

Cluster analyses of the Turkish cities Istanbul and Ankara and the Syrian city of Afrin indicated that Afrin clustered around *Afrin region, Afrin operation*, and *(Kurdish) enclave of Afrin*, while Ankara appeared in *the Capital Ankara* and *bombing in Ankara* as well as in metaphorical expressions such as *Ankara said* and *Ankara considers*. Istanbul appeared in *Istanbul nightclub (attack kills...)* and *BBC News Istanbul*.

### Discussion and Conclusion

By investigating the representation of countries such as Turkey in the international media, such as BBC, this study adds to the knowledge about the relationship between the media and politics. Using corpus linguistics techniques, we analyzed the words in the BBC News' full texts about Turkey between December 1, 2016 and June 1, 2018 – a total of 18 months. In addition to *Turkey, Turkish*, and *Turks*, the words that the news cited most about Turkey were *Erdogan, Kurds, Syria, coup, terror, Gulen*, and *military-related* words. We found that Turkey was represented as a country: under the control of a highly influential leader (Erdogan); experiencing tensions with the armed Kurdish groups inside and outside its borders, leading to Turkey's involvement in the Syrian internal war; and, suffering from a failed coup attempt of which Turkey accused the Gulen movement, which caused severe oppression in society. We found that during the time period of our research the BBC used particularly three news frames: conflict (Erdogan vs. Gulen, Turkey vs. Syria, Turkey vs. armed Kurdish groups), human interest



(sufferings because of terror, war and oppression) and attribution of responsibility (Erdogan as a savior). The other two frames, economic consequences and morality, were not used by the BBC in its coverage of Turkey.

We now examine the frequently observed words and phrases in the data. The BBC News frequently mentioned Erdogan for the following reasons. He had been the leader of the AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, the Justice and Development Party), which had formed Turkey's single-party government in 2002, after Turkey observed a series of governments created by coalitions among parties for decades. He was the prime minister from 2003 to 2014. In 2014, he became Turkey's first directly elected president, while in 2018, after a constitutional change, he was elected the first executive president. Because of his long-term leadership and the constitutional changes he proposed, Erdogan was a very important political figure, both domestically and internationally. Therefore, the BBC used attribution of responsibility frame for Erdogan. We hypothesize that he will remain a representative figure of Turkey in the international media, such as the BBC, in the years to come.

It is not surprising that the word *Kurd* appears frequently, as Kurds constitute a significant population in both Turkey (19%) and Syria (9.7%). There are other ethnic groups, such as Circassians, Lazs, Albanians, and Bosnians, but Kurds form the largest ethnic group in Turkey. Because Kurds live in several neighbouring countries, including Iraq, where they form 15-20% of the population, and because they do not have an official homeland (CIA, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c), Turkey is sensitive about Kurdish separatism. Having suffered from the fight with the PKK for over three decades, Turkey has been closely watching the armed Kurdish groups (PKK, PYD, SDF, YPG, and YPJ) in Syria and Iraq (Parlar Dal, 2016). The BBC used the conflict frame for the Kurdish issue and highlighted the disagreements between Turkey and the armed Kurdish groups. Kurds will always be covered in news about Turkey, particularly as long as the turmoil in the Middle East continues and the armed Kurdish groups are in the political arena.

The *coup* and (*Fethullah*) *Gulen* were also hot topics in the BBC News in the period from December 1, 2016 through June 1, 2018. Once close allies, the AKP government now considers the Gulenists to be terrorists and officially called it the *FETÖ*, a terrorist organization. It has oppressed members of the Gulen movement, particularly after the failed coup of July 2016 (Taş, 2018; Öktem & Akkoyunlu, 2016). Because the Gulen movement has been active for several decades, both in Turkey and internationally, its disempowerment is a daunting task for the AKP government. The BBC used the conflict and human interest frames and covered how the AKP government and Gulenists opposed each other and how the process related to the disempowerment of



the FETÖ led to an oppressive atmosphere in Turkey. Therefore, we expect that the international media, such as the BBC, will cover the process.

The BBC's discourse on Turkey is somewhat different from that of the Turkish media and the Turkish government. Firstly, although the EU, the USA, and Turkey consider PKK to be a terrorist group, the BBC News did not clearly declare it to be a terrorist organization. According to the BBC, PKK is "an armed group fighting for more Kurdish autonomy" and a "Kurdish militant group." Although Turkey argued that PKK, PYD, and YPG are closely linked, which led Turkey to justify the Euphrates Shield operation in Syria in 2016 and Operation Olive Branch in Afrin in Syria in 2018, the BBC News highlighted how those Kurdish groups denied such connections and allegations. Secondly, although Turkey's press unanimously argued that Fethullah Gulen was behind the coup attempt in 2016, either as the mastermind or, at least, as one of the main figures, according to the BBC, Gulen's presence behind the coup was an allegation rather than a fact. Thirdly, the terrorist attacks – particularly in Turkey's largest city, Istanbul, and capital, Ankara – were one of the main themes of the BBC's coverage of Turkey. Meanwhile, the Turkish media covered this news but focused on its international connections. In recent years, Islamist extremists have attacked European cities such as Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Manchester, Barcelona, and London. Therefore, the BBC's coverage of the terrorist attacks in Turkey can be evaluated from two different perspectives. On the one hand, through news of the attacks, the BBC situated Turkey close to the European countries because of the similarities of the attacks. On the other hand, the coverage of the attacks presented Turkey, which had been one of the hottest destinations for British citizens, as a dangerous country to visit.

Our study differs from previous studies on Turkey's representation by the international media, and particularly by the British press, because of its scope of interest, its time limit of research, its methods, and the general message it conveys. One of the main differences is that previous works seem to have focused on Turkey's representation during its negotiations for full membership in the EU, during a period when Turkey's membership was a hot topic in both Turkey and the EU countries. On the other hand, the present study focused on *all* very recent news about Turkey, at a time when Turkey's membership attempts are no longer a hot topic. This can also be observed in scientific studies of Turkish politics. For example, a bibliometric analysis of political science publications about Turkey covered in the Web of Science showed that the scientific articles from the 2000-2010 period were mostly about Turkey-EU relations, while the articles from the 2011-2016 period were mostly about Turkey's domestic politics and the rule of the AKP (Cansun and Arik, 2018).

Another difference is that previous works focused mostly on the meanings of news, representative articles, content, and critical discourse analysis,



while we used AntConc, a corpus linguistic tool, to give us a detailed vision of the BBC's position vis-à-vis Turkey. Also, our work covered some detailed information about Turkey, such as its relations with other countries and its president's relations with other presidents, while such information is missing from previous works. We believe that a complete picture of a representation of a country should cover all the news about it, in relation to news about other actors and events.

According to the literature, the British media took either a positive or a negative approach towards Turkey. They perceived and made this country get perceived as "the other" (Schneeberger, 2009; Arcan, 2012; Bora, 2015; Paksoy & Negrine, 2016). However Turkey was serving as a "model" for the Islamic world. Yet our study focusing on the recent representation of Turkey argues that the BBC now portrays Turkey even more negatively as a one-man ruled, internally unstable because of the coup plot, bogged in conflict in Syria, and unable to resolve its Kurdish problem.

In this study, we analyzed data from the BBC website but did not collect data from the BBC network as a whole. Although we do not expect to find a very different picture of Turkey in other BBC sources, such as TV news and radio, there could still be some information which may provide additional insight into the BBC's representation of Turkey. Future research can focus on this issue. Moreover, we believe that the recent tensions in the region and in Turkey make the country go through particularly rough times. Therefore, we think that a similar study in a few year's time is needed in order to see if the BBC perceives Turkey in any better ways.

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