

The 2014 Turkish Municipal Elections Under the Impact of the December 17 Process

17 Aralık Sürecinde Türkiye’de Yaşanan 2014 Yerel Seçimleri

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ÖZET

Siyasal iletişim süreci siyasal aktörler tarafından belirli amaçlara yönelik olarak geliştirilen çeşitli iletişim tekniklerinin kullanıldığı bir iletişim sürecidir. Özellikle seçim dönemlerinde daha çok ön plana çıkan bu süreçte farklı iletişim araçları kullanılmaktadır. Bu iletişim araçlarından biri de yazılı basındır. Araştırmanın amacı; 30 Mart 2014 yerel seçim sürecinde yazılı basında yer alan haberlerin, özellikle Cemaat-Hareket (Hizmet) Ak Parti ilişkilerini ne şekilde yansıttığıdır. Farklı siyasal eğilimler gösteren beş gazete seçilmiş ve seçimlerden önceki otuz gün boyunca sayfalarda yer alan haberler; türü, niteliği ve anlamsal açıklığı yönünden incelenmiştir. Yine gazete haberlerinin siyasi olayları yansıtmada düzeyi nitel içerik çözümlemesi ile karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz edilmiştir. İncelenen gazete haberlerinden elde edilen veriler ışığında, gazetelerin benimsediği ideoloji doğrultusunda haberleri vermeye çalıştıkları net bir şekilde görülmüştür.

ANAHTAR KELİMELER

Türk Basını, Medya önyargısı, Gülen (Hizmet) Hareketi, Ak Parti, 17 Aralık Operasyonu

ABSTRACT

During the course of a political communication process, political actors employ various communication techniques which are developed towards various goals. Particularly election times see a concentration and polarization in political communication actions on various media, but the press maintains still a most strategic role. The aim of this study is to explore the potential of the Turkish press for the projection of the relations between the Ak Party and the “Hizmet Cemaati - The Community of Service” as it was covered by the headlines on political events during the elections period. Five newspapers with differing political stances were chosen

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and their news coverage of the last thirty days before the elections was studied in relation to their genre and type, attributes, and definition of meaning. Then, the news coverage was qualitatively content analyzed in comparison to each other. The obtained data was put to qualitative content analysis used for an analysis of the attitude that the Turkish press presented on the relationship of Ak party- "The Community "after the "December 17 operations" in light of the political communication. The analysis exposed clearly that each newspaper was occupied to cover the news according to her engaged ideology and political stance.

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KEY WORDS

Turkish journalism, media bias, the Gülen (Service) movement, the Ak Party, December 17 operations



1. Introduction

The Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP*), or the Ak Parti (the White Party) as preferred by her adherents, was founded in August 14, 2001. Among their founders were names like Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül and Bülent Arıncı. The ideological and cadre foundation of the party was laid according the religious-right *National View-line* which had spawned a series of political parties like the *MNP, MSP, RP and the FP* in the last 40 years of Turkish politics but also included experienced names close to Turgut Özal, the founder of the early Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi-ANAP) placed in the center, and politicians from the traditional center-right *The Justice Party (Adalet Partisi-AP)* and it's successor the *Doğru Yol Partisi (True Path Party)* but also from the the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi-MHP*) more from the far right, and even some social democrat politicians.

Although the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi-RP*) under the leadership of Erbakan succeed to lead a coalition government for nearly one year, it could not avert the fate of her preceding National Order Party, (*Milli Nizam Partisi-MNP*) National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi-MSP*) parties of the “National View” tradition and was toppled by the February 28, 1997 “postmodern coup” and was subsequently shut down by the supreme court in January 16, 1998. As the successively founded Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi-FP*) was also closed down in 2001, the reformist wing of the party -whose leadership candidate Abdullah Gül had lost the leadership race by hair’s breadth to the candidate of the traditionalist wing- choose not to join the following offspring party, the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi-SP*) and instead founded their own party, the *Ak Party* with the joining of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who was released from imprisonment. Under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan whose popularity originated from his successive terms as the mayor of İstanbul and with his personal popularity rising, his party easily came to power in the following general elections.

Shortly after founding, the AKP participated in the November 3, 2002 general elections and achieved with 34,63 % the greatest vote, resulting in the 58th AKP Government of the Republic of Turkey with Abdullah Gül as Prime Minister. Since Erdoğan could not participate in the elections because of his conviction, a constitutional change with the support of the main opposition party CHP (Republican People’s Party) was necessary to make him eligible by a renewal election in Siirt. 4 days after the resignation of the Gül administration,

Erdoğan started his administration. To get rid off the traditional harassment by the secular elites, he declared that he "toke out his *National View* shirt" and defined his party's political stance as "conservative democrat" (www.radikal.com.tr, The New York Times).

The Ak Party achieved a victory with 41 % vote at the 2004 municipal elections, 38,8 % at the 2009 general elections and improved to 43,3 % in the 2014 municipal elections.

The Ak Party's success was not without some political crises. On the eve of the presidential elections in 2007, the party was target of wide-spread "Republic Meetings" organized by some organisations, which was followed by the "April 27 e-memorandum" of the military - a politically accusing and threatening memo on the official web site of the General Staff of The Armed Forces. The Ak Party nominated Abdullah Gül as presidential candidate. The main opposition party CHP boycotted the election sessions in the National Assembly basing on the rationale that "at least 367 deputies have to be present" at the plenary session for presidential elections and subsequently applied to the Constitutional Court for nullification of the election. As the Constitutional Court nullified the election, the Ak Party went to early elections in July 2007 that produced a 46.58 % victory.

After the general elections, the CHP boycotted again the plenum session for the presidential election, however, this time the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) decided to end the crisis and attended to the session and even nominated a candidate of the party. The candidate of the AKP, the foreign minister and vice Prime Abdullah Gül was elected (August 28, 2007) as 11th President of The Republic of Turkey. These successive gains prompted the Chief Prosecutor of The Supreme Court (High Court of Appeals in Turkey) Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya on March 14, 2008 to take action on charge of "the Justice and Development Party becoming the focus of actions against secularity" and demanded the permanent closure of the party and further the political banishment of 71 persons for 5 years, the President of The Republic Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan included. On July 30, 2008 the decision was declared that 6 members of the Supreme Court's 10 members had voted for the closure of the party, 5 members voted for the stoppage of financial aid to the party. As the Supreme Court's President Haşim Kılıç voted against the verdict, the required absolute majority of 7 votes had not been achieved and the party was not closed.

The constitutional referendum of September 2007 enabled the election of the President by the people, another referendum in September 12, 2010 made another fixes to the constitution.

A convention of the HAS Party (People's Voice Party)-another offspring of the National View movement- decided in 2012 to "dissolve the party on grounds of integration" with the Ak Party, its leader Numan Kurtulmuş along with some other party members joined the party.

The general elections on 12 June 2011 brought the Ak party a record-victory with a share of 49,9 %.

The roots of the *Gülen movement* began with the appointment of its founder Fethullah Gülen as an imam to the city of İzmir. Gülen gave free courses in Quran seminars which included moral and ideological inspirations, he gave sermons in many cities to mediate his thoughts to the masses and it was the youth that attended his sermons during these years that formed the core of his movement in later years. During the 1970'ies, Gülen's conversation gatherings transformed into conference series, and he initiated "Noor camps- camps of light" for children of low income families which laid the foundation of the educational activities of the movement and the generation to be called "the Golden Generation". Gülen's editorials for the *Sızıntı* magazine suggested his sympathisers to open educational institutions which prompted some businessmen to establish student homes and facilities for students with insufficient means. These were the first educational activities of the movement.

The year 1989 saw the expansion of the Friday sermons to the Valide Sultan Mosque in İstanbul which expanded the circle of recognition and sympathisants much more. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, trusts and corporations with informal relations to the movement started private schools first in the Turkic Republics of Middle Asia, then in the countries in the Caucasus and the Balkans, followed by schools in wider Asia and Africa. These schools which were established by different Turkish entrepreneurs in various places in the world are called the Gülen/Hizmet Schools after their common source of inspiration and include pre-school up to university education. The actual number is estimated as more than 2000 in 160 countries in the world, all are legally/organisationally independent from each other. The schools are enrolling students by exams, and they are known as preferred particularly in the Middle Asian Turkic countries by the children of elites and bureaucrats. Bright students who are without the sufficient means are given education grants.

Known as the Gülen Movement or the *Community*, the movement is also called in recent times as "Hizmet", (the Service). The movement excelled in Turkey and throughout the world particularly by its educational institutions at levels of preparatory courses, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and universities. Other institutions known or rumored in relation with the movement include media outlets, private hospitals, and finance institutions, enterprises of various fields and also foundations and associations operating in different areas as dialogue between religions and cultures, charity and help organisations. As the Gülen movement started with preparatory courses and schools, teachers, students, doctors, academics, journalists, businessmen and traders seem to be presented more throughout the movement. The movement has numerous organisations operating in the media sector. The first offspring was in 1979 the monthly *Sızıntı* (The Emanation) magazine. In 1986, the daily *Zaman* was procured shortly after its start. As of 2013, the newspaper was the best selling daily of Turkey with a circulation exceeding 1 million. The *Zaman* is issued in 35 countries and 10 language editions. Along the *Today's Zaman* in English language, the television channel *Samanyolu Televizyonu* has been started in 1993. The Mehtap Tv (cultural themes), Yumurcak Tv (children), Irmak Tv (religious programming), Küre Tv (web-tv), Ebru Tv (English), Hazar Tv (Azeri), Dünya Tv (Kurdish) and many other television channels and also radio stations are making movement oriented broadcasting over the satellite. It is rumored that also the daily *Bugün* and the television channel *Kanaltürk* have among their owners adherents to the movement. Among numerous magazines are *Yeni Ümit* (theology) and *Aksiyon* well known. One of Turkey's largest news agencies the *Cihan Haber Ajansı* (CHA) feeds this media network with news.

From on 1994, Fethullah Gülen had, as the honorary head of the "Journalists and Writers' Foundation", meetings with the Prime Minister of the time Tansu Çiller, other political party leaders, leaders of religious minorities in Turkey, and with Pope John Paul II in 1998, in relation of the dialogue of religions and cultures approach. Forums like the "Abant Platform", "the Medialog Platform", "Women's Platform", and "Platform for Intercultural Dialogue" have been formed by the foundation from the end of the 1990'ies on and organised national and international activities.

Some persons who parted from the movement, have voiced sharp accusations like "building formations within the state" and "collaborating with the CIA", however, after the "December 17, Corruption and Bribery Operation", the Ak Party government accused the "Community" of "building a parallel or-

ganisation within the state". While spokespersons like Fethullah Gülen himself, his lawyers, the Journalists and Writers Foundation made statements that denied these accusations, some personalities who in the past had been near to Fethullah Gülen like Ahmet Keleş, Selim Çoraklı, Latif Erdoğan and others supported the accusations. The accusations went into details that the "Community" had millions of members with many of them inside the police organisation, the juridical organisation, that the members donated a 5 % to 20 % of their income to the community" etc. Erdoğan used many expressions during his election campaign that targeted the Community: "false prophets", "false saints", "hollow fake scholars with empty hearts, empty minds", "they made a nasty plot against the national will", "parallel construction", "we will come into your den", "organisation", "assassins", "leeches", "virus", "network of treason", "agent", "terror organisation", "The state never allows and will not allow infiltrations aimed to paralyse his body", "First, these have three important characteristics: they do *takiyye* (shia term of hiding intentions), they do lie, they do defamation, and as the consequence of the three, they do instigation, they do malice, these have exceeded the Shia. The Shia can not compete with them." "The Community is a "threat to national security". "I have been deceived by the Community over and over again". "This parallel organisation has recorded deputies, journalists, businessmen, artists. They are blackmailing by audio and video recordings. They try to draw everybody to their side. Don't take part in the efforts of these tape mailers to redesign the politics, to betray Turkey". "I call on the innocent ones in this construction. The parallel construction has made up a green passport for him. He could not have this passport obtained, he is elementary school graduate. Those people which you name *hodja* (master), you name *elder* (big brother, big sister), are in an open and clear betrayal against you and their own country. They have exploited your pure and innocent feelings to plot against your country. The chart of the organisation is in our hands. It begins with the 'Universal Imam', below are the 'Continental Imams', 'Imams of each professions'... Things you couldn't believe nor imagine..." "They have made their calculations on a return to Turkey like that of Humeini's." "He prepares cassettes for blackmail."

After a long and close cooperation era that lasted for years, the Community and the Administration had achieved together an important success particularly in the ending of the military tutelage (guardianship) by way of the judiciary. The Community has assumed important duties with all its sympathisants and its media in raising the votes of the AKP and passing over critical referendums. On the other hand, the administration had presented always a positive look on people close to The Community in means of assignments to significant posts in

bureaucratic ranks. The Turkish Language Olympics organisations of the Community hosted ministers and even the Prime Minister himself as guests. The children of many deputies have their children in schools related to the Community. The Community enjoyed much growth during the 12 years of AKP administration and became a big social and economical power which incited uneasiness among other sections of the traditional base of the AKP. However, it must be remembered that it was only five months before their split that the Prime minister gave an example of their friendly relations with the Community by saying "we gave everything they wanted". It can be said that in the last couple of years, the social and economical power which the Community gained nationally and internationally, associated political power and this caused a distance between the Community and the administration. The first discord surfaced as the Community expressed open disapproval with the *Mavi Marmara* humanitarian aid ship to Ghaza. However, it was not until the MİT (National Intelligence Organisation) crisis that the relations came to a breaking point. An attempt on February 7, 2012, to bring the MİT undersecretary to trial by the prosecutors was taken as an act of hostility by the Prime minister. The reaction of the Prime Minister marked a "point of no return" in the relations and brought out in November 2013 the conclusion about the closure of the preparatory courses which were seen as the vital spot of the Community. In December 17, 2013, the police launched a long-planned corruption operation which made much impact on the political agenda of the country. Many people including children of cabinet ministers were arrested, four ministers had to resign due to implication. Gülen's imprecation on the corrupt people was the first issue on the agenda. And afterwards, Gülen's peace letter was not accepted by the Prime Minister.

Erdoğan's initial reactions to the December 17 incident showed immediately the same routine "plotting of foreign powers" declaration pattern -he directly accused the US ambassador- ; he also stated that Germany and France were envying the growth rate of Turkish economy and particularly a big airport for 60 billions (TL) to be built (Laçiner, 2014:5). The government immediately removed the police officers, prosecutors and justice officials from their posts and went on to change the law regulating the appointment of prosecutors and judges, thus effectively halting new operations. The Prime then placed the Community entirely onto the target and began his election campaigns with the theme of "the parallel construction that infiltrated the state and attempted to overthrow the legal government". This strategy found resonance at the voters. Intervention to the state by the judiciary did not appeal to the citizenry. In addition to his

negatory talk, the Prime Minister went on to demand from the students staying at the houses, dormitories, these receiving education in the preparatory courses and schools of the Community that they leave these institutions. The Prime minister made suggestions to foreign officials that the Community schools outside to be closed down. The bank and the media outlets known to be related to the Community have been subjected to state sanctions to impinge on them economically. Bureaucrats rumored to be affiliated with the Community are being removed to passive posts. With all the social and financial power they attained and the global status they built with her schools outside, time will tell to which degree the Community will be affected from this situation.

During the election campaign period, various recordings after recordings which could force the administration and the Prime Minister were webcast on the internet. The administration reacted by frequently stating that the Community tried to redesign the politics by the illegal recordings. Not only the prosecutors and judges who served on the Ergenekon, Balyoz, and Kafes trials were purged out, the revision of the rulings was brought into question with the accusation that "the army of the nation was ambushed".

Although the election results could be called a victory for the administration, the December 17 era has left its undeniable marks. Recordings presenting corruption accusations and manipulations of the press, controversial government administrations towards the police and the judiciary, closure of social media sites like twitter and youtube, the legislature for the internet and the new law of *High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK)*, that all have negatively impacted the democratic image of the administration inside and outside. The Community also lost much of her former positive image and arrived at a suspect and controversial situation in the eyes of the society (Ete, 2014).

Erdoğan regarded the elections almost a means for acquittal for the administration and attached great significance to it. He gave full support to his incumbent candidates who were esteemed successful and in İzmir -a traditional stronghold of the main opposition party CHP- he named one of his successful ministers Binali Yıldırım who -although did not win the election- achieved his highest vote ever in this city.

The Ak Party had campaigned with "fighting the parallel construction", "completing the resolution process" and "sustaining the work -the administration, -the service" themes at the election arenas. Kurdish politicians were prevented from joining the anti-Ak Party front by promoting the perception of the

Community's hold-back stance in the Kurdish issue, its role for the 2009-2010 KCK (Koma Civaken Kurdistan) arrests, the uneasiness of Kurdish political actors from the Community, the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) leader naming December 17 as a 'coup', that anti-government undertakings targeted the Resolution Process (Dalay, 2014).

Method

A Month-long news coverage of the March 30, 2014 local elections on a sample consisting of important Turkish newspapers with different ideological stances, have been content analysed. Frequency and chi square analysis have been conducted on SPSS 15.0 statistical application.

Berelson defined (1952) content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" which mostly has been used simply "to determine the relative emphasis or frequency of various communication phenomena" (Kerlinger, 1973) while the relationships of these can be used to "describe the communication, draw inferences about it's meaning, or infer from the communication to it context, both of production and consumption" (Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Fico F. G., 2005). Content analysis enables to understand and analyse text content. The content can be words, meanings, images, symbols, thoughts, themes or any conveyable message. The text can be as any written, visual or otherwise communicating utterance. These are newspaper-magazine articles, announcements and advertisements, speeches, official documents, film or video recordings, musicals, pictures, dressings or artwork (Neuman 2002:310).

2. Press Coverage of March 30 Elections

March 30 elections have been done under considerable tension and polarisation and actually in a referendum atmosphere. The news coverage of the newspapers Hürriyet, Sözcü, Star, Yeni Şafak and Zaman have been content analysed to find out the focus of support.

Of the 183 news stories that were studied as related to the issue, most news stories were on the Sözcü with 57 news stories, followed by Zaman with 36 news stories, Star 35, Yeni Şafak 30 and with Hürriyet 25. Most issue related news coverage was in the period between March 1 to 7 with 32,8 % of the coverage.

Table 2.1 Distribution of News Coverage according to Newspapers

<i>NEWSPAPER Name</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Sözcü	57	31,1	31,1
Star	35	19,1	50,2
Hürriyet	25	13,7	63,9
Yeni Şafak	30	16,4	80,3
Zaman	36	19,7	100,0
<i>Total</i>	<i>183</i>	<i>100,0</i>	

57,4 % of the news that was related to *the Community and the AKP* was covered on the first page while details of them were continued inside.

Table 2.2 Kind of News Coverage

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
News	159	86,8	86,8
Reportage	10	5,5	92,3
Editorial	14	7,7	100,0
<i>Total</i>	<i>183</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

While 159 of the pieces that were issued during the election period were news stories, 10 were interviews and 14 were editorial. 48,3 % of the news were printed on the upper part of the page. 20,2 % of the news covered the whole page, 54,4 % were half side and 22,4 % were quarter sized. 99,3 % of the news issued pictures, 94,0 % were color pictures, 6 % were black and white.

Most emphasized topics in the news were *the internally and externally supported coup attempt of the Community against the administration* with 39 %, followed by *corruption allegations of bureaucrats and businessmen close to the administration* with 27,9 %, *bribery allegations of ministers and their children* with 6,7 %, *information about recordings of cabinet members* with 6,1 %, *designing the politics with recordings* with 5,4 %, *operation to the Community* with 4,9 %, *Community members infiltrating the state* with 3,4 %, *internet restrictions* with 2,7 %. Other topics were negatory slogans towards the Community like "the preacher lobby", "false prophet", "assassins" etc., news criticising Gülen's life in the US and criti-

cizing slogans towards the opposite side like "the partisan/pool media", the alleged recordings of the phone conversation between the Prime Minister and his son "clear out the moneys at home".

62,6 % of the news coverage was about the Community-Ak Party relations. Of these, 35,5 % supported Ak Party 16,4 % supported the Community while 10,4 % criticised both Ak Party and the Community. 37,7 % of the news appeared impartial.

Table 2.3 Supported Party in the News

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
AKP	65	35,5	35,5
The Community	30	16,4	51,9
Impartial	69	37,7	89,6
Criticises both sides	19	10,4	100,0
Total	183	100,0	100,0

In the December 17 operation news coverage, 43,7 % of the news stories defined the situation as "a coup to the AKP", 35,5 % as "a corruption and bribery operation" while 13,1 % appeared impartial. Of the news coverage dealing with the recordings which targeted the administration, 36,6 % showed a negative stance while 37,7 % were positive and 13,9 % were impartial. In the news stories which covered the recordings against the Community, the closure of the preparatory courses, the banks and firms under investigation (tax, license etc.) of the businessmen related to the Community.

Table. 2.4 How is the stance of the news towards the interventions through assignments in the judiciary and the police?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Positive	43	23,5	23,5
Negative	118	64,5	88,0
Impartial	22	12,0	100,0
Total	183	100,0	100,0

As we looked on the news towards the interventions through assignments in the judiciary and the police, we saw that 23,5 % of the news stories viewed it positive while 64,5 % viewed it negative and 12 % were impartial. The community's infiltration into the state was seen in 73,9 % of the news as negative. 58,5 % of the news stories included a kind of comment while 41,5 % did not comment. When support for a party was asked openly or implied, this was with 63 % the AKP, with 30 % the CHP, and with 5 % a party which was strong in a region. The most mentioned party name in news coverage was that of the AKP with 41 %, the Community in second with 34,4 %, and the CHP in third place with 8,2 %. Positive prejudice was seen 54,5 % for the AKP, 14,5 % for the CHP while the Community received 30,6 %.

Crosstab analysis showed a significant difference between the newspapers. The most news on the first page was covered by Zaman, followed by Yeni Şafak and Star. The most whole-page news was given by Sözcü. Sözcü covered all of the news photos in color while Star and Yeni Şafak gave 90 % in color photos. Most black and white photos were given by the Hürriyet. Most coverage against the Community was made by Yeni Şafak and Star. These newspapers have not given a single news story against the administration. Most numerous negative news coverage was made by Zaman and Sözcü, while the Hürriyet made more coverage against the Community and lesser against the administration. While the Zaman covered the corruption in the administration, businessmen in public tender implications, the internet restrictions, the operation against the Community, she never made a negative news story against the Community whose speaker she was. Zaman also made not a single positive news for the administration. Although scarce, Sözcü did make negative news against the Community. Yeni Şafak and Star gave full support of the administration in all their news coverage. The newspaper with the most impartial news coverage was Hürriyet. Sözcü criticized both sides although the administration at most. Zaman and Sözcü defined in all news stories relating to the December 17 operation as "corruption", Yeni Şafak and Star defined it as a coup against the administration. Hürriyet approached this event with a 90 % impartial coverage and emphasized in 10 % the "corruption" theme. Zaman and Sözcü made positive coverage about the recordings against the administration and devoted more than 33 news stories to these events. Yeni Şafak and Star did not mention them in a single news story while Hürriyet criticized the illegal obtainment of the recordings and tried to stay impartial in most of her news coverage in this issue. The closure of the preparatory courses of the Community, the investigations that were started into firms and the bank which were men-

tioned in relation to the Community were covered entirely negative by the Zaman while Yeni Şafak and Star saw it as entirely positive and the Hürriyet maintained impartiality. Sözcü presented a generally negative stance in this issue. The Zaman again completely opposed to the intervention of the administration into the judiciary and the police by legislative regulations, also Sözcü and Hürriyet showed in general a negative view in relation to these actions. Although Star generally maintained her pro-administration stance in this issue, in some news stories she took a negative stance towards these actions. Yeni Şafak maintained a pro-administration stance and tried to present a kind of impartial balance on such issues.

Sözcü showed partial resistance to "the Community infiltrating into the state" issue while all newspapers appeared entirely against it. Zaman appeared to be fully content with the idea and did not view it as a problem. While Sözcü gave full support to the CHP in all their news coverage and opposed the AKP; Star and Yeni Şafak completely supported the AKP, criticized most the Community and partially the CHP. Maintaining impartiality through most of her news coverage, Hürriyet supported at two instances the CHP and at an instance the AKP. Although not bold and clear, the Zaman appeared giving support to CHP, BBP and the MHP. As the Zaman gave in no means support to the AKP, she covered news "suggesting voting for the strongest party except the AKP in the region". While the news coverage with the most commentary was given by the Sözcü, close rates were also presented by the Zaman, Yeni Şafak and Star. The least comment in news coverage was found in that of the Hürriyet.

3. Conclusion

The news coverage of the Turkish press during the March 30, 2014 elections showed clearly the impact of the December 17 operations in their biased presentation far from journalistic principles. The Zaman, Yeni Şafak, Star, Sözcü and Hürriyet newspapers gave in general the news stories of their own reporters.

Zaman and Sözcü maintained their anti-administration oriented news coverage throughout the corruption cases after December 17, while the Hürriyet represented a more principled journalism. The Hürriyet did not omit news against the administration and thus maintained an opposition towards the administration although not a hard one. The Zaman accounted much of the accusations by the Prime Minister and of the pro-administration media and gave answers to them.

The Hürriyet, but particularly Zaman and Sözcü placed full emphasis on the corruption operations. The newspapers close to the Ak Party -the Star and Yeni Şafak- covered them in accordance to the discourse of the administration as a Community operation against the Ak Party which aimed the redesigning of the national politics. Yeni Şafak and Star did not cover the anti-administration recordings issue or news critical to the administration. All newspapers except the Hürriyet maintained entirely biased news coverage and so took sides for their respective parties. While Sözcü placed herself closer to the CHP, the Zaman took a position that sometimes approached the CHP but appeared particularly close to the other right parties except the AKP. The Star and Yeni Şafak put journalism in clear support of the AKP. ©

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