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Faculty of Humanities

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Master's Thesis

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Supervisor: Mgr. Karel Černý, Ph.D.

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Statement

I hereby declare that I have written this diploma thesis solely by myself and I agree with its eventual publication in print or electronic form. All sources and literature have been properly cited. This work has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague, July 23rd, 2021   Alper Çakır

Abstract

Protests have been important social phenomena for the wider Middle East, especially since the Arab Spring, with the potential to achieve dramatic change. Understanding the nature of uprisings in the region is important for our understanding of the present and the future. To this end, this thesis tried to make sense of the dynamics and processes that led to the emergence of three protests in the region, the 25th of January Revolution in Egypt, the Syrian Uprising, and the Gezi protest. It tried to analyze the different aspects in which they were comparable. Furthermore, it tried to analyze their representation in the media by uncovering the differences and similarities between the discourse of two Turkish newspapers, Sabah and Cumhuriyet, in their columns and news reports regarding these instances of protests. Critical discourse analysis was used alongside comparative case study to see the differences between social reality and the discourse of the newspapers. Also, the thesis tried to explain the discrepancies and commonalities between the discourse of the newspapers. When the protests were compared with the help of the existing literature, it was seen that the protests had some similarities in the aspects such as causes of protest, the performance of the protestors, and state reaction. Moreover, it was found that there were some inconsistencies in the overall discourse of the newspapers and the columns of some journalists when they were dealing with different cases, as well as differences in discourse between the two newspapers. Finally, it was argued that the difference and inconsistency of discourse of both newspapers, with regards to each case, can be explained by the ideological and political positions of the newspapers to some extent.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Comparative Case Study, Arab Spring, Egypt, Syria, Gezi Protests, Turkey, Journalism, Sabah, Cumhuriyet

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1.INTRODUCTION

The decade of 2010s has been labeled as the decade of protests since there has been a huge increase in the number of social movements in the entire world. The Middle East was perhaps the region that was the most affected by these waves of protests and social unrest as the Arab Spring that started in 2011 spread all across the region swiftly and with grave consequences. Even though not considered to be part of the Arab Spring, Turkey experienced one of the biggest protests in its history in 2013 when Gezi Protests began as an environmentalist sit-in escalated into a nationwide protest wave. Arab Spring is still relevant after a decade from its emergence and so are Gezi protests since all of these protests greatly shaped the countries they took place in and their effects are still visible. To this end, the dynamics and features of these protests must be studied and analyzed to better understand the contemporary social and political dynamics that are at play in the wider Middle East. The most crucial aspect in this quest will be studying the media representations of these instances of protests, which are crucial for creating and shaping public opinion on these protests. Mass media has been a decisive factor in the fate of protests and social movements in the modern world (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986: 72). This factor is apparent to all parties involved in the instances of protests, whether they be protestors themselves, the state, or the non-participants. For this reason, mass media and protests have an intertwined relationship as mediums such as newspapers become the arena in which the social representations of the different sides of the revolutionary conflict clash with each other (Alexander 2011). Focusing on the discourse of different newspapers, and comparing them, both with the social reality and among themselves, would allow us to see how the protests are constructed in the mass media and what differences lie in the discourse of newspapers coming from different ideologies or positions. This study will bring together a triangular comparative analysis on different protests in Egypt, Syria, and Turkey as well as the critical discourse analysis of two Turkish newspapers regarding the said

instances of protest, to have a better understanding of the protests in the wider Middle Eastern region and how they are constructed in the mass media.

Since the research design intended in this thesis is a pretty novel both in the selection of cases and newspapers, the existing literature is pretty scarce. Nevertheless, some valuable studies acted as guidelines and inspiration for this thesis. Banu Dağtaş intended to uncover the similarities and differences in the discourses of 6 different Turkish newspapers regarding their news reports on the Egyptian revolution. She concluded that the discourse of these newspapers, despite their ideological and political differences, were quite similar. She claims that this similarity can be explained through the fact that Turkish journalists internalized Van Dijk's (Van Dijk 1988). the conception of internationally shared western journalism codes, which produce similar discourses on foreign news (Dağtaş 2013: 30). This thesis intends to add more layers to the existing valuable study of Dağtaş, by analyzing the columns of these newspapers and adding more cases, one foreign and one domestic.

The other existing study which was inspirational for this thesis was conducted by Naeem Afzal and Minah Harun, who studied the depiction of Libyan and Syrian uprisings in the Saudi Arabian and Pakistani media. After having concluded that the news reports were again quite similar in their discourse like Dağtaş did, they argued that the critical discourse analysis should be used as an 'in-depth tool' for analysis to uncover more differences in the discourse of the newspapers which might be caused by their ideologies (Afzal and Harun 2015: 251). This inspired the design of this study to take it one step further and deeper by introducing other theoretical and methodological approaches.

2. METHODOLOGICAL SECTION

The main aim of this thesis will be to uncover the differences and similarities between the discourse of two Turkish newspapers, Sabah and Cumhuriyet, in their columns and articles regarding three different instances of protest and uprisings in the wider Middle East. These newspapers were chosen because they represent two opposite camps in Turkey, both politically and ideologically which would allow us to see how the ideology and position towards the state might affect the discourse of these newspapers. The uprisings chosen for analysis include the 25th of January Egyptian revolution, the Syrian uprising, and the Gezi Protests. The reason why these cases were chosen lies in the fact that they happened in geographically and culturally adjacent countries, within 2 years. For the Egyptian case, news reports and columns are written between 25.01.2011 – 12.02.2011 will be analyzed. These dates were chosen because the 25th of January marks the beginning of the revolution whereas the 12th of February is one day after the resignation of Mubarak, allowing the newspapers to react to his departure. Similarly, 18 day period between 29.05.2013 – 16.06.2013 was chosen for Gezi Protests as these dates include both the beginning of the protests and the forceful evacuation of the protestors from Gezi park, which was a crucial moment in the protests. Finally, the period between 15.03.2011 and 02.04.2011 was chosen for the Syrian uprising because the 15th of March is the day when the protests escalated and 18 days from that day made sense for the uniformity of the periods. Unfortunately, for Sabah newspaper, the news reports and columns taken from the paper's website will have to be used as opposed to the print-based versions of news reports and columns from Cumhuriyet newspaper. This difference was caused by the archival defects of the newspapers as both of them lacked the other form. However, since all of the news printed in Sabah of the day will also be published on the website, it won't make much of a difference.

The thesis will benefit from qualitative research methods to reach its aims. Two main methodological approaches, critical discourse analysis, and comparative case study will be

employed to have a healthier understanding of the topic. Comparative case study will be used since it is vital to dedicate a large part of this analysis to the comparison of these different protests, as it is only then we can uncover the differences and similarities in the discourse of these newspapers. As for the discourse analysis, as the name suggests, it is necessary to have the tools to construct a proper discourse analysis of the two newspapers we intend to compare. These two methodological approaches will provide the necessary means to tackle the main research questions of this thesis which are:

- What are the similarities and differences between these protests? In which ways they are comparable?
- Is there a significant difference between the discourse of these two newspapers when it comes to interpreting the same instances of protests?
- How does their discourse differ or not, internally, when it comes to interpreting different protests in different countries?
- How can these differences, or lack of them, can be explained by ideological and historical perspectives?

Answering these questions above is only possible with having a good understanding of the two methodological approaches through closely examining the existing theoretical literature regarding their practice.

3. THEORETICAL SECTION

- **3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis**

The primary datum of this thesis and its research topic will be the columns and articles published in Sabah and Cumhuriyet newspapers. Analyzing their discourse and what they imply in different cases will be done through using different methods of critical discourse analysis. Many scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Theeuwen Van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, and others have laid down the basic principles of discourse analysis in their works. Furthermore, there are a number of scholars like John E. Richardson and Gerlinde Mautner who focused on the critical

discourse analysis of newspapers. The works of these scholars will provide valuable sources for this thesis in terms of methodology. Before going deeper into the critical discourse analysis of newspapers, defining what critical discourse analysis is and explaining why it is the form of discourse analysis required by this research is necessary.

Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak defined critical discourse analysis as 'language as social practice' (Faiclough and Wodak 1997: 258). This approach adds a social context layer to the analysis of discourse. According to Ruth Wodak, critical discourse analysis is interested in the relationship between language and power (Wodak 2001: 2). Wodak further elaborates this position in his work with Michael Meyer by arguing that critical discourse analysis is mainly interested in analyzing structural relationships of power, dominance, and control which are manifested in the language (Wodak and Meyer 2013: 10). Social mobilizations and protests are domains where these structural relationships are challenged and therefore these structural relationships become more visible. The discourse of newspapers regarding protests is directly in the scope of critical discourse analysis as it involves the relationships of power dominance and control in the domain of media. Another prominent scholar of critical discourse analysis, Teun A. Van Dijk, sheds light on the position of critical discourse analysis as a practice. Van Dijk argues that critical discourse analysis emerged as a reaction to the asocial and uncritical discourse analysis of the 60s and 70s. Furthermore, Van Dijk argues that critical social analysis is dissident research by character as it aims to uncover social inequalities and types of dominance while resisting them at the same time (Van Dijk 1999: 1). Indeed, when dealing with instances of social mobilization which can turn into revolutions, it is necessary to focus on the aspect of dominance and inequalities in the discourse of newspapers, as they represent more than just means of mass communication.

When involved in critical discourse analysis, it is important to emphasize that discourse isn't just a mere reflection of social realities but an active agent in their construction. Norman

Fairclough argues that it is important to see the relationship between discourse and social structure as dialectical in order to avoid the common mistake of overemphasizing, on the one hand, the social determination of discourse, and on the other hand the construction of the social in discourse (Fairclough 1992: 65). This is most relevant when the aim is to analyze the discourse of newspapers regarding the instances of social mobilization as there is a reciprocal relationship between protests and how they are represented in the newspapers. People are the main actors of social uprisings and the main recipients of the newspapers' discourse regarding the instances of social mobilizations they choose to participate in or not. Furthermore, newspapers have a key function in the daily interpretation and reproduction of social reality in society and this function might explain why certain newspapers adopt a certain discourse regarding the instances of protests. Norman Fairclough suggests a three-dimensional conception of discourse which includes text, discursive practices, and social practices (see the model below). According to Fairclough, analysis of the text deals with the description whereas the analysis of discursive practice and social practices respectively deal with interpretation and explanation. Fairclough asserts that description and interpretation aren't meant to be separated as they overlap in some ways (Fairclough 1992: 73-199). This model proposed by Fairclough is fundamental to critical discourse analysis as it elaborates how these dimensions relate to each other. There is a link between the text and the social reality which is the discursive practice.
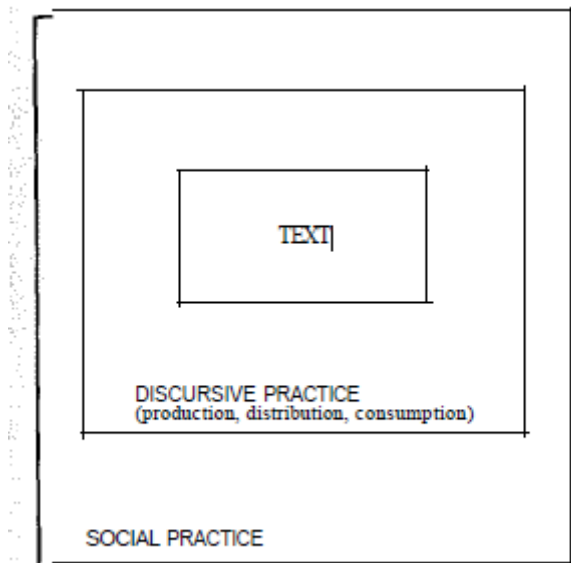
Figure 3.t   Three-dimensional conception of discourse

Interpretation of social reality and its reflection in the text is a compact process in the sense that all of these three dimensions shape and get shaped in return by each other. This holds true especially in the context of social movements and the discourse of newspapers as there is a day-to-day reciprocal relationship between the protests and the newspaper texts that cover them.

Another aspect to consider when dealing with the critical discourse analysis of newspapers is framing. According to Robert M. Entman, framing is selective and it focuses on some aspects of any perceived reality through problem definition and casual interpretation. Entman identifies four locations in the communication process: the communicator, the text, the recipient, and the culture (Entman 1993: 52-53). The inclusion and exclusion of certain aspects of social reality by the communicator in the text change the opinion of the recipient about the social reality in the cultural context that encompasses all of the elements above. This inclusion and exclusion are done through the binary of 'us' vs 'them' as Van Dijk's scheme of 'the ideological square' comes into effect. In this scheme, the objective is to emphasize our good qualities and their bad qualities while simultaneously de-emphasizing their good qualities and our bad qualities (Van Dijk 2011: 396). Newspapers are one of the main communicators of the framing process of social reality even though their monopoly is being challenged by social

media, especially in the 21st century. Richard Kielbowicz and Clifford Scherer claim that modern mass media plays a decisive role in the life or death of social movements (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986: 72). Protests are highly complex and controversial instances of social conflict with many different actors and the framing of newspapers greatly affects the opinion of the public and even consciously or unconsciously leads their readers to one of the opposing camps. Pauline Ketelaars adds that news focus on different frames and issues of the protest can be a decisive factor for people when they decide to protest or not (Ketelaars 2017: 484). For instance, a newspaper focusing solely on police violence or the rampant nature of the protestors can spark or extinguish the flame and legitimacy of the social movement in the eyes of their readers. To this end, the framing of both newspapers chosen for this study is one of the major parts of critical discourse analysis in this context.

Final, but perhaps the most pivotal, aspect of the critical discourse analysis of the two newspapers in this study will be the ideological aspect. Even though objectivity is an allegedly universal code in journalism, newspapers adhere to certain social groups and ideologies that are evident implicitly and explicitly in their discourse or their reader base. Ideological backgrounds of the newspapers shape their discourse on different social phenomena and any critical discourse analysis attempt should consider this aspect. John E. Richardson suggests a materialist approach to newspapers and their discourse as he argues that the real historical actors and their interest must be acknowledged in relation to the discourse produced by the newspapers and for whom these discourses are produced (Richardson 2006: 147-148). Discourses of newspapers on any given social phenomena would only make sense when the position and ideological camp of the newspaper are understood with the social phenomena they cover. Ideology is one of the most decisive links between social practice and the text. If, for example, the ideology of a newspaper is parallel to the ideology of the local ruling groups, it would surely

affect the discourse of the said newspaper and its approach to a local protest challenging the local ruling group.

- **3.2 Comparative Case Study**

Comparing different protests from different countries requires a multilayered approach as the dynamics and backgrounds that result in these protests have various aspects that can be similar or different in each case. Charles Tilly argues that street protests are contentious performances that follow similar scripts but they also leave room for differentiation in each case (Tilly 2008: Preface). For this reason, all demonstrations are different and similar at the same time (Sabucedo et. Al. 2017: 705). This study will try to compare three instances of protests in three different countries in order to make sense of the similarities and differences between the discourses of the newspapers chosen. To this end, it is logical to compare three specific aspects of these protests to have the basis of comparative analysis which will enable us to interpret the discourse of newspapers regarding these protests. These three aspects will be causes of protest, the performance of the masses, and state reaction. The first two aspects will give us a chance to compare the 'why' and 'how' in each protest, whereas the third aspect will enable us to see and compare the reactions of the other actor, mainly 'the state' in these protests. These aspects are especially relevant as they are also the main points of focus in newspaper coverage regarding the protests.

Causes are perhaps the primary aspect to focus on when studying protests as they are the fuel of social mobilization that leads to uprisings. Protests and street movements are characterized by the causes that drive people to voice their grievances in a collective manner. Charles Tilly claims that there is a causal coherence between different protests, meaning that the causes that lead people to protest are similar (Tilly 2008: 206). This holds true especially for the protests that are adjacent in space and time. The three protests chosen for this study took place between 2011-2013 in coherent geography called the Middle East. According to an

extensive study of 843 protests worldwide, the main grievances of the protests that took place between 2006-2013 can be distinguished under four headings: 488 of these protests were related to the issue of economic injustice, 376 were related to the failure of political representations and political systems, 311 were related to the issue of global injustice and 302 were related to the violence of rights of people (Ortiz et al. 2013: 14). Of course, these labels are too narrow to categorize the grievances of the people involved in the protests chosen for this study. However, this table demonstrates how the protests that take place in different places and times can have similar causes. There is a growing tendency to approach the protests of the 21st century as an ongoing cycle of global protests (Mendoça et al 2019: 5). This approach can be useful when dealing with protests that take place in countries that are geographically and culturally close to each other, especially when the protests are consecutive in time. The link and the so-called domino effect between different protests of the 'Arab Spring' and 'Gezi Protest', with a stretch, will be also discussed in the respective part of the thesis.

As for the performance aspect, it introduces the perspective of cause interpretation on the part of the protestors. Jeffrey Alexander argues that social facts or causes aren't adequate to analyze a protest without studying the representation of these social facts in the performance of the protestors (Alexander 2011: 3). This performative approach puts the protestors and their narrative in the center of the focus. Of course, it is no easy task to compare different protests with performative narratives because social movements are made up of many different actors and groups which have different grievances and narratives. However, there are instances of unity in the narrative of the protests that stand out. Charles Tilly's argument that contentious performances follow similar but different scripts should also be elaborated in order to make sense of what defines the characteristics of the performance.

Tilly claims that the nature of contentious performances depends on the regime's character, political opportunity structure, and availability of models of claim-making (Tilly 2008: 198).

Having a healthy comparison between the performance of the protestors in each case is only possible through properly analyzing the factors mentioned above. These factors determine the differences and similarities between the performance of the protestors in different cases. Finally, the stage of the performance and how the stage is used should be demonstrated to make better sense of the performance of the protestors. According to Asef Bayat, contentious politics take place mainly in the urban setting, or the 'street'. Bayat argues that streets are the main stages where the authorities are challenged through acts of active use of public space, as opposed to the passive use that was designated, and expected, by the authorities (Bayat 2013: 11-12). Indeed, 'occupying' the public space was one of the main performative characteristics of some of the protests involved in this thesis. The term 'occupy' was used on many occasions by the protestors themselves and 'to occupy' represents a rupture from the norm. Charles Tripp argues that streets and squares become sites for confronting the state through defiant acts of presence and there is a constant challenge between state and society over the means to use public space (Tripp 2013: Chapter 2). This means that the conflict between the authorities and the society over the use of public space doesn't arise in the instances of protest but it is always there.

The final aspect of comparison between the protests is the state reaction. Protests are open acts of defiance towards authority which takes the form of the state in the three protests chosen for this thesis. State reaction to this defiance greatly affects the path of the protests whether it be brutal repression or a call to consensus. States don't only define the fate of the protests by reacting to the initial moment of defiance, but the nature of the state and its former practices shape the way people imagine resistance in the first place. This means that the characteristics of the protest are *a priori* determined by the state, even before the state acts upon the protest directed towards itself. According to Charles Tripp, the violent legacy of colonial times shape the organization and imagination of power in the Middle East, even after the

withdrawal of the physical presence of imperial power. Indeed, violence is the primary pattern of resistance in the Middle East as violence is the first and most apparent dimension of the power of state apparatus (Tripp 2013: Chapter 1). This approach might be useful in understanding how and why state reactions developed the way they did in the three instances of protest. However, caution is necessary as the presence of colonial legacy and the violence level of state reactions isn't common in all countries or protests involved. Another point to focus on should be the way states perceive and label the protests and the protestors which is another dimension of state reaction. Jeffrey Alexander argues that revolutionary conflicts are a stage for clashes between not only social groups, but also social representations. This takes the form of clashing binaries which revolve around the dichotomy of 'the sacred' and 'the profane' in different aspects. This form of classification and degradation of the other is practiced by each social group involved in the revolutionary conflict (Alexander 2011: 14-18). Legitimization of the acts of the protesting crowds or the reacting state can only be done through the delegitimization of the other which constitutes the discursive aspect of the conflict. This discursive conflict is the fight for the opinion and support of the non-participating social groups which are potential participants of the conflict at hand.

4. COMPARISON OF PROTESTS

As mentioned in the previous methodological and theoretical chapter, the first task of this thesis will be to have an extensive comparison of the three protests chosen for this study. The main aspects of comparison will be causes of protest, the performance of the masses, and state reaction. Of course, expecting a full consensus over the analysis of the three aspects of these protests is unrealistic. Anne Applebaum notes that different protests in different countries in the Arab Spring should be analyzed within their own context as each protest had its own narrative and impact (Applebaum 2011). However, this chapter will bring together arguments that are commonly pointed at by scholars as well as interesting and challenging interpretations

in the margins. Deep analysis of each aspect of each case, let alone each case as a whole, has the potential to be the sole focus of a thesis or study dedicated to these instances of protests. This chapter will try to give an overview analysis of each aspect through the study of existing literature and interpretations. These analyses will be put to use in the conclusion section of each aspect where the actual comparison will be made. To build our comparison on a solid basis, causes of protest will be the first aspect of comparison as it will enable us to lay down background analysis for each of the protests.

4.1 Causes of Protest

- **4.1.1 25th of January Egyptian Revolution**

Mass protests that started on the 25th of January 2011, in Tahrir Square, Cairo marked the beginning of the end for the 30-year-old Mubarak rule in the country. Seen as one of the most stable and powerful states in the Middle Eastern region, the fact that Mubarak's long-lasting regime was toppled by angry masses in 2011 was a surprising event that requires thorough study. However, it must be clarified that the element of surprise doesn't lie in the fact that there were major protests, but in the momentum gained by the 25th of January protests to overthrow a deeply rooted state elite that enjoyed highly centralized power. Indeed, protests and strikes caused by a number of grievances were always there in the Egyptian case even before 2011. These grievances can be summed up under socioeconomic and political headings.

Economic grievances of the common people were one of the major reasons why people took to the streets on the 25th of January. Hazem Fahmy claims that socioeconomic decay in the country led to the poverty that disabled common Egyptians to have a decent life (Fahmy 2012: 350). This appears to be true as 'Bread' was one of the most striking slogans of the masses gathered in the Tahrir square. It should be noted, however, that these economical hardships weren't equally experienced by all of the strata of the society, which was an indicator of the

deeply rooted socioeconomic inequalities in the country. Most scholars agree that when looked at the figures such as GDP, unemployment, or growth rates, the neoliberal policies implemented in the last period of Mubarak rule did well on paper economically during the global economic crisis that emerged in 2008 (Roccu 2013: 103), (Korotayev and Zinkina 2011: 60), etc. Even though this was the case in the figures, the economic reality experienced by the masses told a different story. This gap between experienced reality and the figures on paper can be explained by the deeper move towards a neoliberal free-market economy, privatization, and lack of regulations that was the name of the game in the last decade of Mubarak rule (Fahmy 2012: 361). Common people were left exposed to the economic hardships created by the neoliberal global crisis. Roberto Roccu argues that neoliberal policies implemented by Mubarak rule led the middle and lower classes to economic desperation. Moreover, he claims that 'adala igtimaya' (social justice) was one of the important messages of the masses, which calls for the redistribution of wealth (Roccu 2013: 2-4). Another indicator that doesn't reflect socioeconomic reality was the figure of unemployment. 2010 figures show that Egypt was doing rather well in terms of unemployment in the statistics (Korotayev and Zinkina 2011: 64). The reality, on the other hand, was completely different. Many Egyptians were forced to work in precarious jobs that didn't provide the means for a dignified life. Galal Amin notes that prior to 2011, people with esteemed diplomas were employed in low-end jobs that were beneath their level of education and the fact that these people weren't counted among the statistics of the unemployed was misleading (Amin 2013: Chapter 1). All these factors combined added to the frustration of the masses, especially when their economical miseries were untold at the political level, which led to the explosion on the 25th of January

Aside from the socioeconomic grievances of the people, political problems constituted one of the major causes of why people took to the streets in large numbers on the 25th of January, 2011. Alienated and excluded from the political domain for decades, Egyptian people

brought the struggle to the street level, where they manifested their grievances and anger. Socioeconomic problems that were discussed above had a reciprocal relationship with the problems and structure of the political domain. Angela Joya claims that in Egypt, the neoliberal economic policies were accompanied by strict authoritarianism while these policies enabled the development of a 'crony' capitalism in the country (Joya 2011: 367). It goes without saying that corruption and nepotism are the biggest characteristics of crony capitalism, especially when it has the backing of a highly authoritarian state, as was the case in Egypt. The political mechanisms that ensured the neoliberal course of the country built a network of benefitting elite, at the expense of the people, of which the military was a big part (Joya 2011, Fahmy 2012), etc. These were accompanied by Mubarak's reluctance to do away with the state of emergency which went on for 30 years and constant exclusion of the opposition parties from different domains of the political stage (Lesch 2011, Fahmy 2012). There is much to write about each of these factors and how they contributed to the growing anger of the masses. However, for the sake of this thesis, it will have to suffice to just mention them shallowly. Last but not least, one of the major causes of the 25th of January revolution was years and years of the brutality of the police force, which became the security apparatus of an elite that was straying away from its people. Fahmy argues that the 'State Security Agency' or 'SSA' became the main axis of domestic security, with increased responsibilities and jurisdictions that reached unprecedented levels under Mubarak rule. Brutal activities of the SSA, especially in the fight against religious extremists, created an environment of police brutality which affected regular citizens and their freedom as well (Fahmy 2012: 358-360). According to Al-Aswany, the police brutality experienced under Mubarak rule combined with other elements such as corruption and a decreasing standard of living made the 25th of January revolution inevitable (Al-Aswany 2011).

- **4.1.2 Syrian Uprising**

The story of the Syrian uprising began with a similar, long-lasting authoritarian rule which was the case in Egypt and the 25th of January Revolution. Syrian uprising that began on 15th of March 2011 marked the 40th year of the al-Asad dynasty, passed on from father to son at the beginning of the millennium. Having inherited the seat of the presidency after the death of his father, Hafez al-Asad, Basher al-Asad was ruling the country over a decade when the Arab Spring made a stop in the Syrian territory. Exactly one decade after the Syrian uprising, the country is still in full-fledged civil war, which claimed the lives of thousands of people and displaced many more from their homes. The fact that the conflicts in the Syrian territory are nowhere near the end after a decade implies that the problems that caused the Syrian uprising were deeply rooted and hard to fix. These problems can be analyzed under four different sections: Political, demographical, socioeconomic, and geographical.

Starting with the problems in the political domain only makes sense in the Syrian case as the outburst of the masses was directed at a political will that had been around for nearly 40 years. Even though the face of the regime changed in 2000, the surname remained the same, which meant that any failure to break away with the past would add to the frustration of the masses. Hinnebusch and Imady argue that even though Bashar al-Asad's rise to power was accompanied by optimism in terms of political and economic reforms, the reality didn't fit the expectations as the reforms implemented by Bashar al-Asad only paved the way to the massive conflict between the society and state (Hinnebusch and Imady 2018). It should also be noted that the regime inherited by Bashar al-Asad came with a lot of baggage, which might provide some explanation for his failures. Adham Saouli claims that story of Bashar al-Asad's rule can be traced back to the tragedies of the Ba'thist state-building that started way before he came to power. According to Saouli, Bashar al-Asad's initial liberal stand didn't last long as he became aware of the vulnerabilities of the regime he inherited, mainly political and economical

corruption as well as regime dissolution (Saouli 2017: 24). The fact that the whole uprising began with a response to the imprisonment and alleged torture of minor students for drawing political slogans on the wall gives an idea about the fragility and vulnerability of the regime. Indeed, the regime struggled to contain the uprising and quickly referred to police brutality and repression. Hof and Simon argue that the heavy-handedness of the regime caused the uprising to spread and also led to its militarization (Hof and Simon 2013: 1). All these factors combined, it can be said that Syria's state apparatus was far from a well functioning and legitimate form of government, which could react to other underlying problems and grievances of the people.

The second problem that led to the Syrian conflict was demographic as sectarianism was a major fuel to the conflict, which is apparent when different camps and alliances of the civil war are examined. Syria's demographics are as heterogeneous as it gets since the country is home to many ethnic and religious identities such as Arabs, Kurds, Alawi, Sunni, Shia, Christians, and more. Fabrice Balanche claims that this demographic heritage was a direct result of the Ottoman Millet system, which was further put to use by Hafız Esad as a 'divide to rule' policy. Furthermore, he argues that the underlying sectarianism was both one of the causes and consequences of the initial uprising (Balanche 2018: 11). As a result of the political determination of external agents before independence and the complex nature of the region, Syria has always been a hotbed of potential sectarian tendencies. Furthermore, with a direct role of the French mandate, the Alawite people began to hold more power through armed forces, which didn't match their demographical proportion (Hof and Simon 2013: 8). This was clinched further when Hafız Al-Asad seized power, opening a chapter of minority rule in Syria. However, Christopher Phillips states that the 'ancient hatreds' narrative is a gross oversimplification of the roots of the Syrian conflict, as he argues that the dynamics of the were much more complex. He claims that the existing sectarian tendencies were solidified by the politicization of sects which has been encouraged by the ruling elites since the state's creation.

Furthermore, he claims that Syrians have multiple identities and we have seen the mobilization of different levels of identities during the course of the conflict, whether they are related to a class, tribe, or religion (Phillips 2015: 371).

This leads us to the third major grievance of the people that took to the streets in Syria which was the economic problems that led to serious socioeconomic inequalities. Badr Rahimah Argues that it is misleading to reduce the Syrian conflict to the sectarian roots as this approach tends to overlook the class aspect of the conflict (Rahimah 2016: 169). Indeed, the economical problems constituted a harsh reality for the underprivileged of the Sunni society, regardless of their sects. Rahimah claims that in the pre-uprising Syrian context, the class resentment that arose out of economic realities was directed to the upper-classes of different sects, which further fueled the sectarian tendencies between different parties (Rahimah 2016: 176). Regardless of their rationalization, the economical realities of the pre-uprising Syria can be attributed to the transition from a Baathist central economy to a neoliberal and globally integrated economy. Shamel Azmeh claims that the rapid integration to the global economy was highly rushed and carelessly planned, which resulted in the destruction of the economical sectors such as small manufacturing which were previously important segments for the economic development of Syria. Furthermore, the ruling elite failed to protect the vulnerable lower classes and address the structural problems of the Syrian economy (Azmeh 2014: 21). Other factors such as rising unemployment and destruction of the agricultural sector also exacerbated the situation, paving the way to the escalation of the Syrian uprising.

The last major cause of the Syrian uprising is the drought between 2006 and 2010, which is also linked with the economical vulnerabilities of the Syrian people. Marwa Daoudy argues that water scarcity and the droughts alone weren't sufficient to trigger to 2011 uprising. However, she also states that the droughts brought about emphasis on land resources and water, which reflected the socioeconomic inequalities and worsened them in turn (Daoudy 2020: 12).

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Also, it is important to state that the country experienced several droughts since the 1980s while the drought of 2006 was the worst according to DW (DW xxx). Moreover, droughts aren't endemic to Syrian territory as other countries in the region were also hit by the drought of 2006, which didn't experience uprisings after the drought. Francesca de Chatel brings another explanation by arguing that it wasn't the climate change or the drought that led Syrians to the streets, but it was the neglect of the government and their failure to protect its public by adapting to the changing environmental and economical realities (de Chatel 2019: 522). This is highly parallel to the government's stance and performance in the economic realm, which stemmed from the same political and social shortcomings of the Syrian regime before the uprising in 2011.

- **4.1.3 Gezi Protests**

Gezi protests started in Turkey in May 2013, 2 years after the series of uprisings called the Arab Spring when an environmentalist sit-in at Taksim square turned into a nationwide mass protest that was perhaps the biggest social uprising in the history of the Turkish republic. The protests were perhaps the first instance of major conflict between the state and society in the 12-year rule of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Environmentalist groups were trying to prevent the destruction of the Gezi park that is located at the heart of Taksim square when the police forces violently intervened. After the violent intervention, events escalated quickly as many people from different cities and social groups joined the protests which lasted for 3 months. The protests that were born out of environmentalist activism blossomed into a more complex and multi-layered social uprising that had many different causes and social groups involved. The major causes of Gezi protests can be summarized under political, and socioeconomic headings.

The main source of the political grievances of the masses can be explained by the rising authoritarianism of the JDP, which repressed and alienated many different social groups up

until 2013, despite the fact that the party and Erdoğan came off as a liberal and democratic camp at the beginning of their political journey in 2002. Erdem Yörük argues that this authoritarian turn can be explained by the strategic nature of JDP's initial liberalism and democratic stance, which were ways of harnessing the support of leftist and liberal circles in order to beat the Kemalist legacy. Once the Kemalist legacy was beaten, JDP dropped the liberal and tolerant policies of its earlier ruling period and began to implement Islamist conservative policies in an authoritarian political setting which was led by Erdoğan's strict leadership (Yörük 2014: 420). The most striking example of this increasingly authoritarian and conservative rule was the constant intervention on secular lifestyle, especially through limitations and taxation on alcohol. Meyda Yeğenoğlu claims that Erdoğan's patronizing rule, as well as his moralist and Islamist discourse on everyday matters such as smoking, alcohol, number of families children, should have, abortion and many more were the immediate targets of people's discontent (Yeğenoğlu 2013: 2). All these daily interventions added to the increasing discontent of the people, especially the secular groups. Çağlar Keyder depicts Gezi protests as a manifesto of rejecting to live under the rule of an authoritarian, self-appointed father of the nation (Keyder 2013). Indeed the decision to destroy the Gezi park was a purely unconsulted one, which represents the increasing self-entitlement of the government to privatize public assets in order to shape the public space in any way they like (Iğsız 2014: 27). This self-entitlement found the body in the personal leadership of Erdoğan, which was in total control of every aspect of Turkish politics and social life, including public space. Furthermore, this also signaled the overly centralized form of governing under the rule of JDP, which was swiftly becoming a one-man regime. Another sign of growing authoritarianism was the use of counter-terrorism laws, which were amended by JDP in 2005, for the repression of the society and any potential source of dissent. Aslı Iğsız argues that as a result of the amendments of 2005, the counter-terrorism courts and operations were overpowered, which carried out numerous investigations and house

raids on students and activists without insufficient evidence gathered (Iğsız 2014: 30). This increasing crackdown tendency on potential dissent is also evident in the definition of terror and terrorist, in the eyes of the state. At various times, Erdoğan and other government figures have referred to the protestors of the Gezi protests as 'terrorists'. Increasing surveillance and pressure from the government led to the explosion of public reaction experienced in the Gezi uprising.

The second major cause of the Gezi protests was the neoliberal policies of the JDP government that led to the socioeconomic inequalities and grievances that found a voice in the uprising. JDP came to power after the brutal economic crisis of 2001, which was a traumatic experience in the collective memory of the people. In fact, the crisis paved the way to landslide JDP victory in the 2002 elections, in which the people ruled out the major existing parties because of the collapsing economy (Erensü and Karaman 2017: 24). With neoliberal policies and influx of foreign investments, the Turkish economy grew exponentially and JDP seemed to have delivered the promise of economic stability and prosperity, at least on paper. Erdem Yörük and Murat Yüksel argue that the fortunes generated until 2013 only benefited a handful of capitalists and some portion of the upper-middle classes while the real wages of the lower classes declined significantly (Yörük and Yüksel 2014: 108). The economic growth experienced in the statistics didn't improve the livelihood and purchasing power of the lower classes. Studies have shown that more than half of the protestors were coming from either formal or informal working classes, which reflects the economic and class dimension of the Gezi uprising (Yörük and Yüksel: 2014; Konda: 2013). Another point strongly linking the neoliberal policies of JDP and the Gezi protests is the dimension of privatization, which is one of the main characteristics of the JDP rule. Privatization was in every aspect the dominant policy as many factories, public spaces, and state institutions were privatized prior to 2013. Yörük argues that this also meant the increasing pressure on organized labor, which suffered from

privatization and subcontracting practices (Yörük 2014: 109). The fact that both are victims of privatization policies is another important dimension that linked Gezi as space to the protesting masses. Despite differences in economic conditions and standard of living, middle classes along with working classes were out in the streets for their 'right to the city', as well as opposing the policies of commodification and privatization (Kuyumlu 2013).

- **4.1.4 Conclusion**

It is debatable whether the Gezi protest was part of the series of uprisings called the Arab Spring or not since the protest was 2 years after the Arab Spring and Turkey's demographics are different from the countries involved in the Arab Spring. However, there are some undeniable similarities between the three cases, which demonstrate that there is a degree of relevance between these instances of protests. Major similarity points that stand out are the common grievances such as authoritarianism, neoliberal policies, and increasing socioeconomic inequalities. This is not to argue that these grievances were endemic to the region, but to point out some of the common grounds for protests. Out of the three cases, the Syrian case seemed the most problematic prior to the uprising, as troubles like drought and extremely heterogeneous demographics added to the common causes of all cases.

Authoritarian policies and a strong security apparatus were common for all three cases. The authoritarian ruling figures and circles in Egypt and Syria were much older than the one in Turkey at the time of the protests in each country and Erdoğan's government was a democratically more legitimate one when compared to the Mubarak and Al-Asad. Mubarak was reigning for 30 years and Asad inherited the rule from his father where Erdoğan's JDP was a brand new political party with huge success in elections. Another distinction here lies in the fact that, unlike Al-Asad and Mubarak, Erdoğan represented the relatively conservative part of

the society, which poses a contrast between the cases. From the perspective of demography, Al-Asad had the most challenging position as a ruler, when compared to other countries. Corruption and political alienation of people were all part of the grievances that led to these instances of protests in all of the cases.

As for the economic aspect, all of the countries were on their way to integration into the global economy through neoliberal policies after the beginning of the millennium. The degree of success of these policies was discussed above, however, it should be noted again that in all of the cases the vulnerable classes suffered under these neoliberal policies, which was an important factor that drove them to the streets. Both in Egyp and Turkey, economic growth and improvement seemed good on paper but they weren't experienced by the lower strata of the society as the deepened socioeconomic inequalities constituted a major source of grievance for the protesters. As for the Syrian case, it was even debatable whether the Syrian state achieved an economic improvement even on paper, however, surely, the state was unable to protect the lower strata of the society in the transition period and the extreme droughts of 2006 made things much worse. After a thorough analysis and comparison of each case, it is time to take a look at the performance of the masses and how they asserted their claims.

4.2 Performance of the Protesters

- **4.2.1 25th of January Egyptian Revolution**

When people took to the streets in Egypt in 2011, they weren't acting out of instinct or pure anarchy but they had a vision of their society and how to achieve that future through their performance in the street. Jeffrey Alexander argues that the 25th of January revolution was carried out by people who had a national revival in their minds and they had the plotline drawn in their vision (Alexander 2011: 28). Especially the 6th of April Youth Movement formed in 2008, which spearheaded the revolution and contentious performances behind it, had

experience in civil disorder incidents as they organized many strikes and sit-ins prior to 2011. Saouli argues that the demonstrators refrained from using violence, repressed certain religious or political beliefs, and stuck to certain slogans in order to bring down Mubarak in the most effective and peaceful way. He defines this intentional suppressing of certain emotions, slogans, and actions as 'collective restraint' which was an essential tool to bring down the Mubarak regime (Saouli 2015). Indeed the protestors refrained from using violence throughout the revolution in order to avoid further clashes between the security forces and the demonstrators. There were some cases of self-immolation as were in Tunisia and the Jasmine revolution. However, unlike the Jasmine revolution, Farhad Khosrokhavar argues that self-immolation wasn't a trigger strategy in Egypt as the element of surprise waned out. Instead, the protesters strategically linked the revolution to a place, which was the Tahrir square (Khosrokhavar 2012: 177). Asef Bayat argues that streets are the main stages where the authorities are challenged through acts of active use of public space, as opposed to the passive use that was designated, and expected, by the authorities (Bayat 2013: 12). The fact that Egyptian protestors chose to 'occupy' Tahrir square represents the determination and scale of their demands. Finally, an apparent aspect of the 25th of January revolution is the usage of mobile phones and social media which had a huge impact on sparking the revolution and ensuring the continuity of the protests. Radia Kesseiri states that when the Facebook page of the 6th of April Youth Movement is examined, usage of spoken Egyptian instead of Modern Standard Arabic suggests that the movement deliberately utilized social media to revolutionize the usage of Arabic in order to invite people to the streets. She also asserts that the protests in Tunisia and Egypt demonstrate how social media transformed the politics of the region (Kesseiri 2015: 243).

Slogans and the discourse of the protestors are other important aspects of protests that reflect the performance of the masses. According to Saouli, Silmiya (Peaceful), was one of the slogans that appealed to the Egyptian protesters most in the revolution of 2011 (Saouli 2015:

739). This slogan echoed throughout the revolution represents its peaceful nature and the people's desire for it to remain so. As mentioned in the previous chapter, 'Bread' was a crucial slogan at the beginning of the revolution, among others such as 'Freedom', 'Dignity and 'Justice'. According to Fahmy, this represents the initial stance of the protestors and how it evolved over time from a demand for reform to a total transformation of the regime and ousting of the president (Fahmy 2012: 349). This transformation is evident in, perhaps the most popular slogan of the revolution, 'Eş-şaab yurid ıskat'en-nizam', which can be translated to 'People want the fall of the regime'. This slogan was also used in the Jasmine revolution and it was written on the walls and the banners in many different languages in the Egyptian revolution. Khaled Al Masaeed argues that the usage of different languages, especially English, clearly demonstrates that the Egyptian protestors addressed an audience bigger than their government, as they tried to make their voices heard to the rest of the world (Masaeed 2013: 3). The fact that this slogan was the most used of all, and the one that is translated to most languages, demonstrates its centrality to the claim-making and discourse of the protestors as well as their tone and overall performance in the said claim-making.

- **4.2.2 Syrian Uprising**

The performance aspect of the civil uprising phase of the Syrian conflict is much different from the other two cases as the conflict is still ongoing in the form of a civil war, a much more brutal and longer-lasting outcome than either Egypt or Turkey. Jasmine Gani argues that social movements behind the protests prior to March 2011 were scattered, small scale, nonviolent and limited in their claims until the violent crackdown from the government brutalized the masses and transformed their claims (Gani 2015: 131-132). This was evident in the minor attempts on the part of people to bring the Arab Spring to Syrian territory, with calls from various social media groups for demonstration failing to attract big numbers of people. There are several reasons why the Syrian case didn't pan out as the other protests in the Arab

Spring but turned out to be a violent and seemingly never-ending story. According to Gani, one of the primary reasons for this was the unavailability of previous episodes of contentious politics or protests which crippled the performance of the protestors and the state alike since both camps didn't have the culture or experience to produce or react to protests and contentious politics in a proper way (Gani 2015: 135-136). In less fancy words, Syrian protestors were very amateur in organizing and generating mass support for the protests, before the violent crackdowns, and the state was amateur in handling these instances of protests as its repressive reaction led to the widespread protests that turned into a civil war. Another reason why the performative capacities of the masses were crippled lies in the fact that the public spaces were much more restricted by the Syrian state when compared with the other countries of the region. Ziad Adwan claims that it was impossible for Syrian protestors to occupy main squares or places, unlike Egypt, as two attempts to do so in April 2011 ended up in massacres when the state violently intervened (Adwan 2017: 18). This is a crucial point as it greatly undermined the visibility and popularity of the protests in the earlier phase. Aside from the negativities, social media was again a positive tool for the emergence and the documentation of the protests, which was an important point since the media coverage was either non-existent or very limited in the Syrian uprising. Social media played an important role in the protests as it was a crucial medium in exchanging information. However, it should be noted that there were also some negative aspects of social media as some scholars argue that it was subject to constant state and secret police surveillance which was hazardous for the protest (Ahmad and Hamasaeed 2015: 46).

As for the slogans and claims of the masses, again the slogan 'Eş-şaab yurid ıskat'en-nizam' (People want the fall of the regime) was very central to the protests as the imprisonment of teenagers who wrote this slogan on the wall was the escalation point for the whole uprising. Furthermore, slogans like 'peaceful', 'death but not humiliation', or a number of different slogans calling for the ousting of the president are similar to the Egyptian revolution. An

interesting side of the slogans used in the Syrian uprising is the bashing of foreign intervention and praising the external media agents at the same time. The protestors chanted 'Not Iran, Not Hizbullah' or 'Go to Iran Bashar' was used alongside the chant 'O Jazeera, you have become greater now' which refers to Al-Jazeera media organization based in Qatar (Athamneh and Sayej 2013: 186-187). Finally, Salwa Ismail claims that the protesters used unifying chants in terms of identity to combat the attempts of the regime to provoke sectarian differences (Ismail 2011: 543). Some examples of these slogans were 'We demand freedom, all of us. Muslims, Christians, Druze and Alawis alike' and 'Not Sunni and not Alawi, we want freedom'. Some of the slogans were also written in foreign languages such as English, French, and German which demonstrates the aim for universal recognition and support.

- **4.2.3 Gezi Protests**

The performance of the protestors in Gezi park was a rather ambiguous one as the protests emerged out of an environmentalist sit-in, which didn't reflect the characteristics and the agendas of the masses as a whole. To this end, the solely environmentalist sit-in that was prior to the mass protests will be ignored as it is not in the scope of this study. The use of social media was an apparent aspect of the Gezi protests which owed its emergence and escalation to the use of social media for information spreading and showing the initial police brutality on the peaceful environmentalist sit-in (Odabaş and Reynolds-Stenson 2018: 390). What is interesting about the performance of the Gezi protestors is the fact that their resilience was unexpected. Arzu Öztürkmen argues that Turkey had a long history of protests and civil unrest prior to Gezi, but the generation that fueled the Gezi protests didn't have its share of this heritage since the 90s and 2000s were calmer compared to the other times. However, when the youth participants of Gezi didn't back down against harsh repression from the police, it shocked the older generations who perceived them to be spoiled and passive (Öztürkmen 2014: 41-44). Indeed the young protestors of the Gezi were in the front lines of the protests even in the face of danger

despite never having witnessed police brutality or collective action. According to Turan and Özçetin, the demands of the protestors and their performance always remained reasonable and generalizable despite violent crackdown from the police forces (Turan and Özçetin 2019: 205). These participants were also keen on keeping things peaceful, as a study conducted on the number of tweets posted during Gezi protests showed that the number of tweets that called for caution and peace overwhelmingly outnumbered the tweets calling for more aggression (Demir et. al 2020: 8). The protestors generally saw the minor instances of violence as provocations, either from the state or other political agents who will benefit from the radicalization of the masses. Another aspect of the Gezi protest was its obvious spatial link with the Gezi park located in Taksim square as protestors used the term 'Occupy Gezi' frequently on their banners and on social media. However, this spatial link became something bigger when the government forces 'retook' Taksim in the later stages of the protests, triggering the spatial upgrade which meant that other cities and spaces were used by the protestors throughout Turkey (Öztürkmen 2014: 58).

'Everywhere Taksim, Everywhere Resistance' was the slogan that referred to the spatial upgrade mentioned above and it was one of the most used slogans throughout the protests. According to Örs and Turan, this spatial solidarity wasn't limited to Turkey but it was of universal characteristic as many references to other uprisings in other countries such as Egypt, Greece, or Brazil were made during the protests (Örs and Turan 2015: 454). This slogan also demonstrates the fact that the protests were about much more than resisting the intervention to the public space, which was the initial grievance of the environmentalist groups. Another slogan that suggests the same was 'This is just the beginning, the struggle will continue as it was commonly used by the protestors in an attempt to show the government that the masses are determined to resist the restrictions and interventions. Finally, the most interesting aspect of the slogans in Gezi protests was the 'excessive use of humor' as opposed to the excessive use of

violence by the police. Slogans such as 'Down with some things!' or 'Tayyip, winter is coming!' and many others were frequently seen on the banners or the graffitis throughout the protests. Mahiye Seçil Dağtaş claims that humor in the context of Gezi was a form of dissent designated to make use of the absurdity of some oppressions and situations which arouse during or before the protests (Dağtaş 2016: 29). The fact that such slogans came up by the generation which was deemed apolitical and spoiled might result in a misinterpretation of its political value. Ahmet Güven argues that the humorous discourse used in Gezi was a novel one compared to the discourse used by either different governments or conventional opposition groups in Turkish history (Güven 2014: 27).

- **4.2.4 Conclusion**

In various aspects, the contentious performances of the masses in all of the cases were very similar as Tilly would have it in his claim that street protests follow similar scripts (Tilly 2008). In all of the cases, the protestors were aware of the need to be peaceful and reasonable, since practicing civil disorder is a vulnerable process with a lot at stake. Even though the initial intentions were so, it wasn't possible to remain peaceful, especially in the Syrian case as the protests evolved into a devastating civil war. In the Turkish and Egyptian cases, there were some instances of violence on the part of the protestors but they didn't reflect the attitude of the masses as a whole and were rather minor. Another characteristic that was similar in all cases was the usage of social media and its functions. The protestors used Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms to gather support for their causes, exchange and spread information, share moments of protests in order to encourage non-participants to join, and document police brutality for external or internal support. Of course, the efficiency and the impact of social media useage aren't the same in each case. However, it was definitely a central performative aspect in each protest. Finally, discourse and slogans of the masses were similar in each case as they emphasized similar grievances or expressed anger towards ruling figures, calling for their

resignation. There were some shared slogans between the Egyptian and Syrian protestors and their tone through the later phases of the protests became more and more aggressive. In the Turkish case, however, the emphasis was on humor rather than aggressivity, which might tell us a thing or two about the degree of frustration or level of polarization compared to Egypt or Syria.

As for the differences, occupying the squares or certain urban places weren't common in all of the cases as the attempts to do so in the Syrian uprising were crushed heavily early on by the state. In Egypt and Turkey, Tahrir and Taksim squares were central to the protests in each country. However, their role in the uprising is quite different. As discussed in the cause comparison section, in Gezi protests the people were initially resisting the transformation of the public space that was called Gezi park, which gave its name to the whole protest. In the 25th of January revolution, however, Tahrir square was designated to be the contentious stage of the protests because of its centrality and symbolism as well as the practical meaning of its occupation. Self-immolation was another difference between the performance of the masses in three cases as it was only utilized in the 25th of January Revolution in Egypt. After the analysis of the performance of the masses in each case, state reaction to these contentious performances should be compared.

4.3 State Reaction

- **4.3.1 25th of January Egypt Revolution**

Hosny Mubarak and the Egyptian government were taken by surprise when the protestors took to Tahrir square to demonstrate on the Police day. Their social media networks and past experiences gave the protestors the secrecy they needed to have the element of surprise on their side. Shafeeq Ghabra argues that the lack of preparation on the part of the regime resulted in the harsh repression of the protests and police brutality, the only way to deal with a

protest the government was prepared for (Ghabra 2014: 206). Indeed the regime brutalized the masses and killed several protestors and they cut down the internet, a means of communication that was crucial for the masses gathered in the streets. However, protestors found alternative means of communication and the revolution grew day by day (Eltantawy and Wiest 2011: 1216). On the third day of the protests, president Mubarak tried to calm the masses by saying that he wouldn't run for another term of presidency. It is unsure whether this speech would have been enough to calm down the protestors and make them leave the streets if it wasn't followed by an attack conducted by Mubarak loyalists, targeting the protestors. Ghabra claims that if the president had pledged to stop the state violence and agreed to step down, the revolution wouldn't have unfolded the way it did (Ghabra 2014: 208). All of this hypothetical debate aside, harsh repression and police brutality claimed the lives of at least 846 civilians and thousands injured, in the 18 days of unrest (BBC News 2011). It is important to note that this death toll was reached despite the fact that the stance of the military was ambivalent, meaning that they didn't push for the harsh repression of the masses (Gani 2015: 136).

Another very important parameter of state reaction is the discourse of the state and its figures towards the protests and protestors. According to Jeffrey Alexander, the Mubarak regime once again reproduced the moral binary codes that classified the protests and protestors as 'instigators', 'spies', 'uncalculated', 'irrational', and 'dangerous while the regime and the state was the opposite of all these labels (Alexander 2011: 15-16). These moral binary codes acted as a prior justification of the harsh repression of the protests that were about to come and depicted the repression necessary. Deepa Anagondahalli claims that Mubarak held on to the discourse related to the binary codes of 'instigators' and 'foreign' in his speech on the 28th of January, as a response to the protests. Furthermore, in the same speech, Mubarak used the denial strategy by blaming 'some political forces' and resisting 'forces outside the nation'. Anagondahalli asserts that Mubarak's second speech was a stage to a shift in tone as he changed

from someone in an absolute power position to someone more responsive to the protestors' demands (Anagondahalli 2013: 242-244).

- **4.3.2 Syrian Uprising**

The aspect of state reaction in the case of the Syrian uprising is surely among the main factors which led to the radicalization and militarization of the conflict which eventually turned into civil war. The imprisonment of teenagers who drew political graffiti's on the wall in Deraa represented the characteristics of years of oppression and political censorship of the state and its secret service 'Mukhabarat'. Despite this, the regime tried to soothe things through certain concessions which found the form of removing the governor and some other officials in Daraa after the imprisonment of teenagers which increased the heat of the uprising. However, this didn't prevent the conflict from escalating as the police brutality and harsh repression increased. Gani argues that for the Syrian regime, harsh repression was the only way the Syrian regime knew how to deal with protests, which was caused by the lack of contentious political experience of the country. Furthermore, unlike Egypt, the relationship between the army and the ruling elite exacerbated the situation further as top Syrian military officers pushed the political regime for harsher repression of the opposition (Gani 2015: 136). The fact that occupying the squares was an impossible method for Syrian protestors because of instant intervention by the state that resulted in massacres gives an idea about the extent of the violent repression (Adwan 2017: 18). As for internet censorship, the Syrian state constantly used bans and surveillance as tools of repression even before the Arab spring. During the uprising, the regime blocked and censored countless websites, including Facebook and Youtube, to prevent the spread of information. Furthermore, even traditional media agents and journalists were subject to these censorships (Al-Saqaf 2016). The death toll of the civil uprising phase of the Syrian conflict is thought to be more than 2000 civilians and many more injured.

When the discourse of the state in the Syrian uprising is examined, a tone similar to that of Egypt is observed. According to Emma Lundgren-Jörum, the Syrian regime and Bashar al-Asad's underlying discourse was built on the claim that the uprising was part of a conspiracy against Syria. The terms 'imperialistic interests', 'Western intervention' and 'unbowing Syria' were used by Al-Asad in many instances of his speeches (Lundgren-Jörum 2012: 19). Another tendency was to condemn the protestors as violent terrorists who were aiming to bring chaos to the country (Lundgren-Jörum 2012: 20). Furthermore, Athamneh and Sayej claim that the discourse of Al-Asad was totalizing and unchanging, regardless of which phase of the conflict he was delivering the speech in, mainly holding on to the labels such as 'saboteurs' or 'conspirators' and denying any legitimacy to the protests and the protestors (Athamneh and Sayej 2013: 174).

- **4.3.3 Gezi Protests**

The fact that the story of Gezi protests began with unnecessary and excessive use of force on a peaceful environmentalist sit-in gives an idea about the state repression and police brutality that followed through the later stages of the protests. According to a KONDA survey conducted in 2014, half of the respondents said that the reason they joined the protests was because of their anger and frustration at the initial police violence (KONDA 2014). Indeed the reaction of the state to the protests was firm and aggressive from day one, even in the environmental sit-in phase. Atak and della Porta argues that Gezi protests were the start of the zero-tolerance policy towards civil disorder and steering away from the consensus-based handling of the protests, which became one of the major characteristics of the relationship between the state and the 'street' in the aftermath of Gezi (Atak and della Porta 2016: 621). At times, the police violence got so bad that people were hoping for the interference of the army, which was mostly passive with the exception of some very minor and isolated cases of tensions

with police forces for brutalizing the people (Cumhuriyet 2013). Indeed, Burak Kadercan states that one of the interesting findings of the Gezi protests was seeing how the military was erased from the political scene (Kadercan 2013: 1). As for internet censorship, there were no confirmed practices on the part of the state. However, some allegations regarding slowing down the internet or the use of jammers were made throughout the protests (Sözcü 2013). Overall, Gezi protests claimed the lives of 8 people, one of whom was a police officer, and left thousands of people injured (BBC News 2018).

Erdoğan's constant referring to the protestors as 'terrorists' was mentioned in the cause comparison part of the thesis. In addition to this, the theme of conspirators and foreign intervention was again dominant in the discourse of the regime towards Gezi protests. Taptuk Erkoç demonstrates that from early days on, Erdoğan labeled the protestors as 'looters' and 'servants of foreign agenda' as well as constantly saying that the whole protest is a coup attempt towards himself (Erkoç 2013: 45). The term 'looter' was later embraced by the protesting masses themselves in an attempt to undermine Erdoğan's manner of insulting and labeling the protestors. Another point to be stated is the government's support for police violence in their discourse. The Turkish government and Erdoğan greatly praised the police violence and deemed the police performance as 'epic' and 'just' (Atak and della Porta 2016: 620). There were some government figures who tried to adopt a more consensus-based and friendly discourse towards protestors but they were lost among the majority of the hostile speeches and declarations made by the regime.

- **4.3.4 Conclusion**

In all of the cases, police brutality and excessive use of force were present. However, it should be noted that the degree of police violence and the number of civilian causalities were completely different. Syrian state by far employed the most brutal repression on the protests, which was followed by Egypt. Even though the police brutality in Gezi protests was very central

to the state reaction as well as the popularization of the protest, the level of police violence and the number of causalities were very low compared to the other two cases. Another similarity between the three cases was the discourse of the state and the labeling of the protestors. In all cases, the regimes invoked similar terms such as 'foreign agents' and 'provocateurs'. Asad and Erdoğan gave no quarter to the protestors in their speeches and always remained aggressive in terms of discourse. However, Mubarak's discourse was more ambivalent as he invoked the terms mentioned above but never seemed to join in on labeling the protestors as 'terrorists'. In the end, he had a much softer and more consensus-based discourse when compared to the other two leaders.

As for the differences, the position of the military was the main aspect where the difference affected the outcome, especially in the level of violent repression. In the Syrian case, full-fledged support and pressure of the military to exert harsh repression on the protesters resulted in the most brutal crackdown on the protestors among the three cases. The position of the military was more ambivalent in the Egyptian case, which didn't prevent the violence but perhaps prevented its prolongation. In the Turkish case, the military was mostly passive but observant as its minor tensions with the police might have prevented the conflict from getting more violent. Finally, there were different practices on internet censorship among the three cases. In Syria the government restricted or surveilled several social media sites and had the harshest and longest restrictions, In Egypt, there were softer restrictions on social media and the internet even though the government applied a hasty and amateur intervention on the internet during the revolution. In Turkey, it is still debated whether there were some restrictions or attempts to slow down the internet during the Gezi protests.

The three aspects analyzed throughout this chapter, causes of the protests, performance of the masses, and state reaction constituted the comparison part that enabled us to answer

certain questions regarding these protests. These answers will be put to use in the next section, which will attempt to analyze the discourses of the two newspapers regarding these three cases.

5. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE NEWSPAPERS

This chapter will be dedicated to the critical discourse analysis of the two Turkish newspapers, Sabah and Cumhuriyet, on the three cases of protests evaluated in the previous chapter. The evaluation of the previous chapter will make it possible to see whether the differences in the discourse of the newspapers regarding these protests are parallel to, or suitable with the social reality. Two types of material will be used for the critical discourse analysis: news reports and columns. These materials will be evaluated in terms of framing and overall discourse. In the aspect of framing three main points will be analyzed: labeling the protestors and the state figures, usage of violence by the protestors and the state, grievances of the masses. Van Dijk's scheme, 'the ideological square' will be put to use in the framing aspect to see how the texts that are analyzed are deliberately emphasizing the good or bad qualities of whom they perceive to be 'us' or 'them' if that is apparent in the discourse (Van Dijk 2011). Furthermore, binary codes and moral classifications were also used by Jeffrey Alexander in his analysis of the Egyptian revolution (Alexander 2011). The overall discourse aspect will be especially important in the columns as they tend to be more extensive than news reports.

Firstly, an internal discourse comparison of each newspaper will be done separately. Secondly, the cross-comparison of both newspapers regarding their discourse on each case will be presented. Finally, the findings will be explained through the light of ideology and their reflection on the discourses of the newspapers regarding each case of protest.

5.1 Sabah

- **5.1.1 25th of January Egyptian Revolution**

Between the dates of 25.01.2011 – 12.02.2011, there were 31 news reports about the 25th of January revolution that were found eligible to be analyzed. The news reports that were left out were either about the direct statements of foreign politicians and presidents or they were about international relations and didn't say anything about the aspects of the protests that were evaluated in this thesis.

Firstly, all of the news reports that referred to the masses in the streets used the words 'demonstrators' except for one news report which called them 'militant groups' (Sabah 2011c). There were three different news reports which emphasized their determination of the protestors (Sabah 2011a, 2011p, 2001s). Furthermore, one particular news report praised the atmosphere in the Tahrir square, referring to it as the 'Republic of Tahrir' which resembled an enclave of freedom, because of its friendly and peaceful atmosphere (Sabah 2011ac). The only negative labeling on the protestors was the lootings which were mentioned in several news reports (Sabah 2011b, 2011i, 2011k, 2011m, 2011p, 2011r). When news reports referring to Hosny Mubarak are analyzed, an opposite practice of labeling can be found. Mubarak is depicted negatively in almost all of the news reports analyzed, apart from those who were neutral by nature. One news report emphasized the fact that Mubarak defended the harsh police repression of the protests while another news report underscored the possibility of Mubarak committing bloody massacres on his own people in order to keep his seat (Sabah 2011f, 2011j). One other news report emphasized the fact that Mubarak's stubbornness was preventing him from stepping down, while another used the headline 'disappointment' when he announced that he wouldn't resign on the 10th of February (Sabah 2011aa, 2011ae). Finally, in two news reports, Mubarak's personal fortune was said to be around billions of US dollars, comparing the figure

to the GDP of Egypt in order to emphasize the level of corruption and greed of the Mubarak family (Sabah 2011o, 2011u).

Another aspect to analyze is the news reports that are dealing with violence, either on the part of protestors or the police and the supporters of Mubarak. There were 16 news reports referring to the usage of violence. 6 of them were on part of the protestors while the others were committed by the police or the regime supporters. One important finding here is the fact that in all of the news reports involving violence, police or regime supporter violence came first with the exception of one news report in which the police were said to react to the aggression of the protestors (Sabah 2011e). The violence of the protestors was mainly framed as stone-throwing or looting (Sabah 2011b, 2011e, 2011g, 2011i, 2011k, 2011m). On the other hand, violent practices of the police in the news reports involved pepper sprays or water cannons except for some deadlier cases in which one news report stated that the police executed an unarmed and yielding protestor while another reported that the police shot one protestor in the head (Sabah 2011 ab, 2011h). There was one report which stated that police used live ammunition on the protestors (Sabah 2011i).

As for the aspect of grievances of the masses, there were 5 news reports related which were found eligible for the analysis. Freedom (Sabah 2011h, 2011v) and poverty (2011e, 2011f, 2011c) were the two main grievances that were reported. Finally, it is important to state that the news reports emphasized 'poverty' as a social fact and took it for granted in the text while 'freedom' was mentioned as part of the claim and discourse of the protestors.

Other miscellaneous findings are as follows. Three news reports made references to the practices of censorship. Two of them dealt with the ban of Al Jazeera media agency (Sabah 2011n) and its arsoning by the supporters of the regime (2011z). Another one was about cutting the internet altogether (Sabah 2011p). One interesting report was about the distinction between the army and police forces in the eyes of the protestors. The news report stated that the masses

demonstrated their love for the army while chanting 'police are the men of Mubarak' (Sabah 2011l). Another news report stated that one police officer removed his uniform in order to join the masses (Sabah 2011b). Finally, one particular report was about self-immolation practices among some protestors (Sabah 2011c).

As for the columns regarding the Egyptian revolution of 2011, there were 5 pieces written by 5 different columnists which were relevant for this study. In terms of overall discourse, all of the columnists were anti-Mubarak but two of them were hesitant to be pro-revolution as they were cautious of the next regime to emerge out of the protests. Having labeled Mubarak as a despotic leader, Mehmet Barlas was the most skeptical columnist as he argued that the anger of the masses and the revolution will bring about another despotic leader. Furthermore, he stated that looking for a solution in the streets is a sign of desperation (Barlas 2011). Another columnist who was skeptical of the outcome of the protests was Hasan Bülent Kahraman, who labeled Mubarak as a dictator who sat on top of a regime that lost its legitimacy a long time ago. Kahraman, nevertheless, depicted the Tunisian revolution as poison ivy, which is about the spread all across the region. Finally, he was supportive of Muslim Brotherhood which he saw was the only positive way out of the protests (Kahraman 2011). Columnist Erdal Şafak was in between the skeptical and pro-revolution columnists as he argued that Mubarek is gone for sure but there can either be the outcome of 'revolution' or 'coup d'etat', stating that the former would be the best for Egypt and its people (Şafak 2011). As for the pro-revolution columnists, Mahmut Övür claimed that the people are rightful in their demand for freedom and in their ways of expressing it. He argued that one of the potential outcomes of the protest can be a democracy that encompasses the values of religion and laicism. He also labeled Mubarak as a dictator (Övür 2011). The final columnist who was the most supportive of the revolution was Tulu Gümüştekin as who claimed that the dictatorship regime will have to collapse against the legitimate and reasonable demands of the masses. Furthermore, she also asserted that the

acts of looting were done by provocateur ex-convicts who were released by the regime in an attempt to delegitimize and radicalize the protests (Gümüştekin 2011a).

- **5.1.2 Syrian Uprising**

There were 18 news reports about the Syrian uprising that were found to be eligible for analysis between the dates of 15.03.2011 and 02.04.2011. Both the count of news reports and columns about the Syrian case suffered in that period, compared to the Egyptian Revolution, because the foreign news in Turkish media was dominated by the military intervention in Libya and Fukushima nuclear disaster to some extent. Nevertheless, there were sufficient news reports for a proper analysis.

There were 11 news reports in which labeled the protesting masses in the street, 9 of which referred to the masses as protestors. SANA, the Syrian Arab News Agency, was the source for the remaining two news reports, which labeled the masses as either provocateurs or armed protestors (Sabah 2011af, 2011al). Furthermore, in two news reports, there was an emphasis on the acts of arsoning of the protestors, which burned the statue of Hafez al-Asad and one party building on fire on two different occasions (Sabah 2011am, 2011ap). In terms of labeling the regime of Bashar al-Asad, labels and framing of the news reports were either neutral or positive. 6 news reports emphasized the possibilities of reform and openness to dialogue on the part of the state and al-Asad, whether it be new reform packages or releasing the political prisoners (Sabah 2011aj, 2011ak, 2011al, 2011an, 2011ap, 2011ay). No negative labeling was found in the news reports that were referring to state figures or the regime. Finally, there were 5 news reports which referred to and labeled the regime supporters demonstrating on the streets (Sabah 2011am, 2011ao, 2011as, 2011al, 2011av). Three of these reports emphasized the carnival-like and peaceful nature of these demonstrations and massive support from the people, especially women (Sabah 2011as, 2011al, 2011av). Two of them, however, emphasized the clashes between the regime supporters and protestors (Sabah 2011am, 2011ao).

In the aspect of violence of protestors or the police, there were 10 news reports that referred to violent incidents. As mentioned above, the violent incidents related to the protestors or the supporters of the regime were reported in 3 different news reports. As for the police violence, the news reports reflected the brutality of the repression bluntly. There were 8 reports regarding the state violence in the Syrian case and 7 of them reported that the police were firing live ammunition at the protestors, killing a large number of people on each occasion (Sabah 2011ah, 2011ak, 2011al, 2011am, 2011ar, 2011at, 2011az). The remaining news report on state violence stated that the police used tear gas on the protestors (Sabah 2011av).

Finally, the grievances of the people that were found in the news reports were 'freedom' (Sabah 2011ak, 2011ar, 2011av), 'state of emergency law' (2011ar), and 'avenging the blood of the martyrs' which can be translated into a grievance as 'police and state brutality' (2011ak). Another demand of the protestors that found a place in the news reports was 'al-Asad family should leave the country' (Sabah 2011am). One interesting finding was the news reports that emphasized the state's approach to the demands and grievances of the people. Two of the reports stated that state figures, al-Asad and one of his advisors, were positive and understanding towards the demands of the people (Sabah 2011ak, 2011an). Finally, it should be noted that none of these grievances were embedded in the text as a social reality, which suggests that the grievances of the masses weren't taken for granted in the news reports

As for the columns, there were no pieces written about the Syrian uprising, in the period that was covered for the news reports because of the reasons mentioned above. However, for the sake of this paper, 3 columns published in Sabah between 23.04.2011-14.05.2011 were chosen for analysis. Tulu Gümüştekin was one of the columnists that wrote about the Syrian uprising, as she did for the Egyptian revolution. In her piece, she labeled the Syrian regime as totalitarian and highlighted the fact that the reforms promised by Bashar al-Asad never took place. Finally, she claimed that the very brutal initial reaction of the state towards the protests

reflected the unwillingness to change the nature of the regime (Gümüştekin 2011b). The other two columns were written by Ufuk Ulutaş, who had a more pro-regime tone when compared to Gümüştekin. In his first piece, he labeled Bashar al-Asad as a reformist president with a leader personality, as well as claiming that he is respected among many strata of the society. Furthermore, he argued that the initial protests weren't targeting him. Finally, he stated that al-Asad shouldn't resist and lead the reforms, otherwise he would end up like Mubarak (Ulutaş 2011a). In his second piece, Ulutaş went on to claim that Bashar al-Asad is willing to go through with the reforms that would please the people but his inner circle won't let him. However, he didn't deprive al-Asad of culpability as he argued that he was at fault for bringing together the said inner circle in the first place (Ulutaş 2011b). Overall, even though neither of them opposed the masses in their discourse, two different columnists had completely different positions regarding Bashar al-Asad, as Ulutaş was much more optimistic and supportive towards al-Asad when compared to Gümüştekin.

- **5.1.3 Gezi Protests**

There were 32 news reports that were found to be eligible for analysis between 29.05.2013-16.06.2013. Of course, there were many other who referred to the protests since it was a national agenda. However, they were either about the declaration of politicians or certain other figures.

There were several terms used by the news reports, in terms of labeling the protestors. Out of 16e news reports which labeled the masses, 6 used the term 'protestors' (Sabah 2013a, 2013b, 2013k, 2013o, 2013r, 2013af) 3 used 'demonstrators' (2013d, 2013e, 2013f), another 3 used 'marginal groups' (2013h, 2013ab, 2013ac) and 4 of them used the term 'provocateurs' (2013m, 2013s, 2013v, 2013z). There were other negative aspects emphasized such as the protestors damaging public property (Sabah 2013k), a hospital, and beating a teacher whom protestors thought to be undercover police (2013o). One striking negative labeling was found

in the news report which stated that the protestors have been drinking (Sabah 2013f). However, there were some news reports with positive emphasis as they reported incidents like protestors cleaning up the area (Sabah 2013r), giving bagels and flowers to the police (2013u), praying on Friday (2013y), and protestors helping a wounded police officer (2013af). In terms of labeling the regime or state figures, there was the only emphasis on police forces and their actions. The fact that this was a protest on Turkish soil might explain the lack of labeling practices on the regime or state figures since they would be out of place in the national context. As for labeling the police, there were 3 news reports that involved such a practice. One of the news reports stated that police helped a wounded protestor (Sabah 2013d) while another claimed that the citizens supported the police and expressed their anger at the protestors in one instance (2013g). One negative emphasis was made in a news report which stated that some police officers, which the report stated were suspended, later on, attacked innocent and young bystanders in one instance (Sabah 2013ae).

In the aspect of violence, there were 10 news reports that reported the violent acts of the protestors as opposed to the 7 news reports that referred to police violence. The violent acts of the protestors included throwing stones (Sabah 2013n, 2013h, 2013b, 2013ad), bottles (2013h), Molotov cocktails (2013m, 2013n), and burning police cars (2013f, 2013n, 2013ab). As for the police violence, the cases included the usage of pepper spray and tear gas (Sabah 2013b, 2013c, 2013p, 2013o, 2013h), water cannon (2013o, 2013e), and one particular report which used the term 'allegedly' for the usage of rubber bullets (2013ad). In 5 news reports, protestor violence came first (Sabah 2013b, 2013d, 2013h, 2013p, 2013ad) as opposed to three news reports which stated that police violence was first (2013o, 2013aa, 2013ae).

In the news reports, no grievance or slogan of the protestors was given place except for the reports that referred to the initial environmentalist sit-in, which isn't in the scope of this study. There was one news report which referred to the demands of the forum of the Gezi

movement as 'unreasonable and endless' (Sabah 2013t). There was another news report which stated that 'sincere' protestors who were participating in the protests for the trees didn't join in the clashes with the police forces (Sabah 2013ac).

There was one interesting finding that arose when the news reports were analyzed, which referred to the protests as either provocation (Sabah 2013i, 2013m) or intended to refer to the provocations with the heading '17 Big Lies' (2013l). What was interesting about these news reports was that they were highly parallel to the discourse of the state regarding Gezi protests.

As for the columns, there were 16 different pieces written by several authors, which were found useful for analysis. Since it would be time-consuming and unnecessary to evaluate each column separately, it would be a better approach to look for opposites and tendencies in the general discourse of the columns. The primary distinction between the columns lies in the aspect of attitude towards the protests, as some columnists saw the protests as provocations while others thought they were organic. Majority of the columnists argued that the protests were fueled by provocations, even if that wasn't the case in the earlier days of the protests (Övür 2013a, Övür 2013b, Barlas 2013, Altınışık 2013, Ramoğlu 2013a, Ramoğlu 2013b, Gümüştekin 2013, Şafak 2013, Yükselir 2013c, Yükselir 2013d). Others argued that they were organic and sincere instances of public demonstrations which were fueled by grievances of the people (Kahraman 2013a, Kahraman 2013b, Uluç 2013a, Uluç 2013b, Yükselir 2013a, Yükselir 2013b). The interesting finding in this aspect was the evolution of discourse of one columnist, Sevilay Yükselir, who was, in the earlier days of the protests, among the columnists who argued that the protests were organic but later on changed her mind and discourse, claiming that the protests have turned into a stage of provocation. Another distinction between the columns was found in whether they emphasized the police violence or the violence of the protestors. Aside from those who emphasized both, Ersin Ramoğlu wrote only and extensively about the violence

of the protestors alongside Osman Altınışık (Ramoğlu 2013a, Ramoğlu 2013b, Altınışık 2013). On the other side, Hasan Bülent Kahraman and Hıncal Uluç were highly critical of the police violence, naming it the number one culprit in the escalation of the protests and violence (Uluç 2013a, Uluç 2013b, Kahraman 2013a, Kahraman 2013b). Finally, only three pieces emphasized the fact that protests were an expression of some grievances of the people, such as intervention to the lifestyle of people (Yükselir 2013b) or feeling left out of political mechanisms (Kahraman 2013a, 2013b), which were neglected by the government as opposed to the more common overall discourse found in other 13 columns which only focused on the mishandling of the initial environmentalist sit-in.

- **5.1.4 Overall Comparison**

When the discourse of Sabah regarding three cases is compared, there are some striking differences found. When the news reports are analyzed in the light of Van Dijk's ideological square, certain binary codes stand out in Sabah's discourse and framing regarding the Egyptian case. 'Us' being protestors, the labels and terms like 'determined', 'freedom', 'poverty' and 'army' is lined up against 'them' which refer to 'Mubarak', 'stubborn', 'repression', 'greed', 'personal fortune', 'censorship' and 'police'.

Sabah on the Egyptian Revolution	
Us	**Them**
Protestors	Mubarak Dictator
Determined	Stubborn
Freedom	Repression Censorship

Poverty	Greed
	Personal fortune
Army	Police

In the Syrian case, strict contrast between police violence and labeling the regime figures were found in the news reports, especially when contrasted with Egypt. The labeling of the regime figures was quite positive despite reports on brutal repression, which were much more violent than the Egyptian revolution both in practice and in the framing of the news reports of Sabah. No clear us vs them binary emerged in terms of the ideological square in the Syrian context. In the news reports regarding the Syrian uprising, the grievances of the masses weren't taken for granted in the news reports which was the case in the news reports of Sabah regarding Egypt. In the framing of news reports in Gezi protests, some elements regarding the binary codes of 'us' vs 'them' emerged. However, in the Turkish case, this binary code was multi-layered as it even differentiated the protestors. 'Violent', 'aggressive' and 'drunk' 'provocateurs or 'marginal' with 'unreasonable and 'endless' demands constituted the part of 'them' while 'sincere' and 'peaceful' protestors who cared for the 'trees' constituted 'us' alongside 'police forces' which were 'reasonable' in their use of violence, according to the general framing of the news reports.

Sabah on Gezi Protests	
Us	**Them**
Peaceful	Violent
Sincere	Aggressive
Praying	Drunk
Cleaning up after themselves	

Protestors/Activists	Provocateurs
Police forces	Marginal groups
Reasonable	Unreasonable and endless demands

In the aspect of violence, the Syrian and the Egyptian regime was reported as harsh and mainly the instigator of violent incidents, whereas in the Gezi protests there were more news reports on violent incidents started by the protestors than those who were started by the state or the police forces. This is especially apparent in the news reports on Tahrir and Taksim square, which were depicted as completely different spaces, while the former was peaceful and free and the latter was chaotic and violent. The grievances of the protestors, especially poverty, were only taken for granted in the Egyptian case, while there was some validation through the discourse of the regime in the Syrian context, which was done through news reports which stated the fact that Bashar al-Asad thought some of the grievances and demands of the protestors were reasonable. In the Gezi context, there was an opposite practice, which labeled the grievances and demands of the protestors as endless or unreasonable. Finally, in the aspect of censorship, only the censorship practices of the Egyptian state were highlighted. Overall, there were several inconsistencies in Sabah news reports which were openly supportive of the Egyptian protestors, neutral towards the situation in Syria, and highly opposing the protestors in the Gezi protests.

As for the columns, the individual comparison shows that there were some writers who were consistent and some who were not. Tulu Gümüştekin kept a consistent discourse when her writings about Egypt and Syria are compared. However, her tone was much softer when she was addressing the situation in Syria despite harsher state reaction. Furthermore, Gümüştekin was critical of the Syrian and Egyptian police for their violent practices while she was almost apologetic for the police in the Gezi protests, which demonstrates a 180-degree turn. Mehmet

Barlas was consistent in his caution for the anger of the masses and arguing that no good can come out of it, in his writings on Egypt and Gezi. However, he was against the government in the Egyptian case while being pro-government in Gezi. Murat Övür on the other hand adopted completely different discourses on Egypt and Gezi, especially towards the protestors. In Egypt, he was highly supportive of the masses which he called were out for their freedom while he was cautious and critical of the protestors of the Gezi, who he thought was playing a dangerous game. Finally, Hasan Bülent Kahraman was consistent in his discourse towards Gezi and Egypt which he saw as both organic and peaceful demonstrations. Furthermore, he was critical of both the Turkish and Egyptian governments for their lack of understanding of the protests and the events that led to them. Overall, the positions of the columnist were highly mixed and far from being uniform, in all of the cases. However, some patterns did emerge. All of the columnists were against the Egyptian state but not all of them supported the revolution, as some were skeptical of what it may bring as opposed to those who had faith in the masses, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. In the Syrian context, one columnist had a more optimistic approach towards the reform possibilities and had a tendency of siding with the regime while the other was skeptical of the reform possibilities and was against the Syrian state and al-Asad. Finally, the majority of the columnists thought that Gezi protests were fueled by provocations and not at all organic. However, again a large number of columnists were critical of the initial reaction of the government and the police. Nevertheless, there were some columnists who thought that the masses should be listened to by arguing that the protests are organic and rightful in some aspects.

5.2 Cumhuriyet

- **5.2.1 25th of January Revolution of Egypt**

There were 19 news reports that were found to be eligible for analysis between the dates of 26.01.2011 and 12.02.2011

Throughout 11 news reports which labeled the masses, the term 'protestor' was used in all of them. Alongside 'protestor', the term 'Egyptians' was used 4 times, suggesting a totality (Cumhuriyet 2011a, 2011d, 2011g, 2011k). Furthermore, 3 news reports emphasized the fact that there were participants from every group of the society, ranging from young to elderly, poor to rich, and Muslim to Christian (Cumhuriyet 2011a, 2011d, 2011o). There was also one news report which praised the determination of the protestors (Cumhuriyet 2011q). As for the negative emphasis, the instances of looting on the part of protestors (Cumhuriyet 2011g, 2011i) and one incident in which a police officer was beaten to death (2011j) were reported. Labeling of the regime and its figures had a much more negative tone. Mubarak was often accused of being deaf to the demands of the protestors and change (Cumhuriyet 2011f, 2011k, 2011l, 2011m, 2011n). Moreover, one news report stated that Mubarak was in hiding, fearing to appear against his people (Cumhuriyet 2011c). There was another negative emphasis as two news reports claimed that Mubarak and the regime placed provocateurs among the protestors, in order to delegitimize the protests (Cumhuriyet 2011d, 2011j). One news report referred to Mubarak as the 'pharaoh' (Cumhuriyet 2011f) while two others criticized his resistance to the calls of resignation in the latter days of the revolution (2011p, 2011r). Finally, one news report stated the fact that Mubarak's vice president threatened the public if they aren't willing to go into a dialogue with the regime (Cumhuriyet 2011q).

In the aspect of violence, there were 5 news reports on the violence of the protestors as opposed to the 6 that were reporting the police violence or violence of Mubarak supporters. The violence of the protestors included throwing stones (Cumhuriyet 2011a, 2011c) and setting fire to buildings (2011c, 2011d) alongside the beating of the police officer mentioned above. On the other hand, the police violence involved water cannons and pepper spray (Cumhuriyet 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d) while other more brutal police violence incidents such as shooting a teenager in the head (2011c), brutal beatings (2011d), opening fire towards the protestors

(2011g) and injuring medics were reported (2011m). There was one news report that reported the attack of the Mubarak supporters to the protestors (Cumhuriyet 2011l). Finally, there were 4 news reports which implied that police violence came first (Cumhuriyet 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011g) as opposed to the one that stated that protestor violence was first (2011d).

As for the aspect of grievances and demands, the ones that were stated in the news report were economic and political reforms (Cumhuriyet 2011a), poverty (2011a, 2011b, 2011e), and corruption (2011b, 2011e). Furthermore, the demand for ousting Mubarak was more apparent in the later news reports (Cumhuriyet 2011d, 2011g, 2011k). Finally, the grievances of poverty and corruption were embedded in the text as a social reality and taken for granted.

Miscellaneous findings include one report on self-immolation (Cumhuriyet 2011a) and many other cases of censorship. Censorship cases involved arresting foreign journalists (Cumhuriyet 2011b), internet censorship (2011b, 2011c, 2011e), and some other bans on media agencies such as Al-Jazeera (20111h, 2011m, 2011n).

As for the columns, there were 13 pieces written by different columnists, all of whom were in favor of the protestors and against Mubarak. One columnist, Nilgün Cerrahoğlu, stated that Egypt was a police state (Cerrahoğlu 2011a, 2011c) that was ruled by an iron-fisted dynasty (2011b). She also referred to Mubarak as 'delusional' (Cerrahoğlu 2011c) and a 'pharaoh' (2011e). She was highly in praise of the masses, stating that their performance was pretty impressive and their public revolt was glorious (Cerrahoğlu 2011e, 2011c) as well as arguing that the protests were a step taken towards a more transparent Egypt (2011a). One interesting emphasis found in her overall discourse was a caution for the Muslim Brotherhood and hope that the revolution won't take an Islamic turn like it did in Iran (Cerrahoğlu 2011d, 2011e). Özgen Acar was another columnist who saw Muslim Brotherhood as a possible threat (Acar 2011a). He labeled Mubarak as a 'dictator' twice (Acar 2011a, 2011b). Furthermore, he was the only columnist who wrote about the personal fortune of Mubarak (Acar 2011b). Faik Bulut

wrote three pieces on the Egyptian revolution, all of which put the economic grievances of the people in the center. He claimed that 'bread', poverty and economic inequalities were the main causes of the protests (Bulut 2011a, 2011c) as well as pointing fingers at the economic exploitation of people by the regime (2011b). He also referred to Mubarak as a 'dictator' (Bulut 2011a). Another columnist who wrote about poverty was Erol Manisalı as he stated twice that it was one of the main causes of the protests (Manisalı 2011a, 2011b). He stated that the protests were 'rightful' (Manisalı 2011a) as well as referring to Mubarak as a 'dictator' (2011a, 2011b). Sadık Meleki was the final columnist that wrote about the revolution in Cumhuriyet. He stated that the revolution was sparked by the demands of justice and freedom against the 'dictator' Mubarak (Meleki 2011). He also claimed that the public revolt wasn't Islamist but had many different voices involved (Meleki 2011).

- **5.2.2 Syrian Uprising**

The news reports involving the Syrian uprising suffered the same fate as it did in Sabah as again the foreign news section was dominated by the intervention in Libya and the nuclear disaster in Japan. There were 11 news reports that were found to be eligible for analysis.

Labeling of the protestors was highly scattered in the news reports as there were 5 different terms used to identify the masses. Two of the news reports referred to them as 'protestors' (Cumhuriyet 2011t, 2011y), and two of them used the term 'opposition' (2011w, 2011x) while the other 3 used the word 'demonstrators' (2011u, 2011v, 2011w). There were some other news reports which used negative labels such as 'heavily armed' (Cumhuriyet 2011v, 2011y, 2011ad) or 'provocateurs' (2011v, 2011ad). In the news reports that used the said negative labels, it was stated that the reports were taken from SANA, the news agency of the Syrian regime. As for the regime figures, some news reports indicated that the regime is willing to compromise and realize some of the demands of the protestors (Cumhuriyet 2011u, 2011v,2011w, 2011y, 2011z, 2011ac). Other news reports were about massive support rallies

for the regime (Cumhuriyet 2011x, 2011ab). On the other hand, news reports that had a negative emphasis stated that even children were among political prisoners (Cumhuriyet 2011t) or they wrote about an 11-year-old girl being shot by the police (2011w). Finally, one news report labeled some of the reforms made by al-Asad as 'limited' (Cumhuriyet 2011ad).

In the aspect of violence, there were 9 news reports that were about violent incidents. Three of them involved the protestors and their acts of burning certain buildings or statues (Cumhuriyet 2011u, 2011x, 2011z). Two news reports about the violent instances involving the police were either using pepper spray (Cumhuriyet 2011t, 2011v) while 7 of them were about using live bullets against the protestors (2011u, 2011v, 2011w, 2011x, 2011aa, 2011ac, 2011ad). Finally, 5 news reports indicated that the violence was instigated by the police (Cumhuriyet 2011t, 2011v, 2011w, 2011aa, 2011ac) as opposed to one which stated that it was started by the protestors (2011u).

As for the grievances and demands of the masses, they were mainly about 'freedom' (Cumhuriyet 2011t, 2011w), 'state of emergency laws' (2011u, 2011aa), and 'avenging the martyrs' (2011w, 2011y). Another two news reports indicated that sectarianism was a possible cause (Cumhuriyet 2011v) and outcome (2011aa) of the protests. None of the grievances were taken for granted or embedded in the text as a social reality, other than sectarianism.

There was one miscellaneous finding in one news report which stated that the regime was releasing Islamist prisoners (Cumhuriyet 2011y)

In the given time period, there was only one column written by Nilgün Cerrahoğlu which was against the regime in her overall discourse. Cerrahoğlu argued that al-Asad wasn't as hated as Mubarak but turned the whole country against himself by reacting harshly to the protests and labeling them as a foreign conspiracy (Cerrahoğlu 2011f). Furthermore, she stated that al-Asad

failed to carry out some reforms and ignored the demands of the people, bringing his country to the edge of the cliff (Cerrahoğlu 2011f).

- **5.2.3 Gezi Protests**

There was extensive news coverage on the Gezi protests in Cumhuriyet newspaper as there were 41 news reports that were suitable for analysis between the dates of 29.05.2013 and 16.06.2013.

There were many different terms used to label the protestors which were dominantly positive with the exception of some neutral terms. Positive labels that were used to refer to the masses were 'bravehearts' (Cumhuriyet 2013b), 'resister' (2013b), 'citizens' (2013b, 2013d, 2013e, 2013k), 'people' (2013c, 2013d, 2013h, 2013n, 2013r, 2013w, 2013af). A more neutral term, 'protestor' was used in 4 different news reports (Cumhuriyet 2013k, 2013l, 2013m, 2013o). There was a constant emphasis on the fact that the protests are peaceful as was stated in 6 different reports (Cumhuriyet 2013y, 2013ad, 2013af, 2013ag, 2013aj, 2013am). Furthermore, the fact that people from all strata of the society were participating in the protests was emphasized 8 times in different news reports (Cumhuriyet 2013d, 2013g, 2013i, 2013p, 2013ab, 2013ac, 2013ad, 2013ai). Also, the determination of the protestors was praised in 3 different news reports (Cumhuriyet 2013j, 2013g, 2013ai). Other labeling practices include protestors cleaning up the park (Cumhuriyet 2013l) and praying on Friday (2013ab). When the labeling practices on the state and regime figures are analyzed, a completely different tone appears like most of the labels, mainly targeting Erdoğan, were of negative nature. Erdoğan was referred to as 'stubborn' (Cumhuriyet 2013c, 2013z), a 'bully' (2013d, 2013f) and also 'angry' (2013w, 2013ae). He was also accused of threatening the public in four different news reports (Cumhuriyet 2013o, 2013aa, 2013ae, 2013al), ignoring the demands of the people in three (2013w, 2013ae, 2013ag) as well as being accused of having a 'mentality full of bans' in one of them (2013i). Finally, five news reports stated that the state terrorized its own people

(Cumhuriyet 2013o, 2013an, 2013k, 2013u, 2013ai) while two others emphasized that the reaction of the state to the protests was disproportionate (2013e, 2013h).

There were many news reports that were about violent incidents, mainly conducted by the police forces. There were 22 news reports on police violence as opposed to 5 news reports about violence carried out by protestors. The main act of violence on the part of protestors was throwing stones (Cumhuriyet 2013e, 2013l, 2013m, 2013ak, 2013o). On the other hand, violent practices of the police ranged from using live ammunition (Cumhuriyet 2013m, 2013r, 2013v) to rubber bullets (2013d, 2013g, 2013h) alongside water cannons and pepper spray which was reported by 12 different news reports. Other violent practices emphasized in the news reports involved shooting pepper spray cans from a very close range to the protestors (Cumhuriyet 2013an, 2013al, 2013e, 2013o, 2013p, 2013t), allegations of killing a protestor with bats (2013s) and allegations of shooting pepper spray can to the head of one protestor intentionally (2013an). In all of the news reports police was the instigator of violent incidents.

As for the grievances and demands of the people, the ones that were mentioned in the news reports involved 'defending the right to the city' (Cumhuriyet 2013d), freedom and democracy (2013i, 2013s, 2013af), authoritarianism (2013o, 2013af) and resignation of the government (2013e, 2013i, 2013l, 2013p). All of the demands and grievances were given in the text as a social reality.

One other finding was about censorship practices of the state, which mainly targeted the internet and Twitter (Cumhuriyet 2013d, 2013u).

There were a huge number of columns written about the Gezi protests, which isn't shocking. Some of the columns that were mainly about politics, parties, or legislation aren't included in the analysis. There were 17 columns that were suitable for analysis written by 6 different writers. All of the writers were in favor of the protests and against the government.

Emre Kongar was one of the first columnists who wrote about the protests. He argued that the police violence and the iconic moment of the woman in the red dress getting sprayed by the police was the reflection of the totalitarian nature of the state (Kongar 2013a). Furthermore, he claimed that the protests were against the 'angry' one-man regime (Kongar 2013b) which escalated further because of Erdoğan's stubbornness (Kongar 2013d). Finally, Kongar saw Gezi protests as an organic civil disorder, which will eventually pave the path to democracy (Kongar 2013c). Another columnist who wrote extensively on the protests was Bekir Coşkun. Coşkun complained in his first piece that not many people were in the park to stand up against the regime (Coşkun 2013a). However, he admitted to having misevaluated the situation as more people joined the protests in search of justice and reacting to Erdoğan owning the state and rising Islamism (Coşkun 2013b). Coşkun also labeled Erdoğan as a 'dictator' and argued that nothing will be the same after the Gezi protest, meaning that the people won't take any more of his authoritarian attitude (Coşkun 2013c). Finally, for Coşkun, Erdoğan was the main person to blame for the situation as his polarizing discourse led the country to such events (Coşkun 2013d). Hikmet Çetinkaya had a similar approach to the protests as he argued that the state is no longer functioning and any objection to the state might have someone labeled as a terrorist (Çetinkaya 2013a). Moreover, Çetinkaya claimed that the protests were against despotism, corruption (Çetinkaya 2013b), and civil fascism (2013c). Finally, Çetinkaya stated that peaceful Gezi protestors with all their colors were out against the oppression of the violent state (Çetinkaya 2013e) and police violence was key in the escalation of the events (2013d). Another columnist, Orhan Bursalı, argued that the protests were caused by the intervention of the state to the lifestyle of secular people and many other negativities, which indicates that the protests were ideological and not just about the trees (Bursalı 2013a). Like Coşkun, he also labeled Erdoğan as a dictator and thought that Gezi protests will be the turning point since he can't resist the force of the people (Bursalı 2013b). Other writers, such as Ali Sirmen and Erol

Manisalı, argued that corruption was one of the main causes of the protests (Sirmen 2013) and they were against the whole system (Manisalı 2013).

- **5.2.4 Overall comparison**

When the news reports of Cumhuriyet on three different cases are analyzed through the ideological square, some similarities, as well as differences, emerged. In the news reports regarding the Egyptian revolution, 'us' vs 'them' binary codes was constituted as 'us' being referred to with words such as the 'protestors', 'every group of the society, 'poverty', 'freedom' while 'them' was referred to 'Mubarak', 'dictator', 'wealth', and others.

Cumhuriyet on the Egyptian Revolution	
Us	**Them**
Protestors	Mubarak
Every group of the society	Pharaoh
	Dictator
Determined	Coward
Poverty	Wealth
Freedom	Repression

In the Syrian uprising, no clear 'us' vs 'them' binary codes emerged as the terms that referred to the protestors or the regime were too scattered. In the Gezi context, however, the binary codes were loud and clear as all of the news reports employed a similar discourse and ideological square practice.

Cumhuriyet on Gezi Protests	
Us	**Them**
Citizens People Protestors	Erdoğan Police
Brave Determined Reasonable	Bully Angry Stubborn Disproportionate
Peaceful	Violent Threatening Terrorized
Freedom	Bans

In the aspect of violence, the state was the main instigator and reported as brutal and harsh, in all of the 3 cases. However, in the Syrian case, the news report emphasized the brutal nature less than it did in the news reports about other countries, despite the fact that the most brutal reaction of all 3 cases belonged to the Syrian regime. As for the grievances and demands, they were taken for granted in the news reports on the Egyptian revolution and Gezi protests, much more so in the latter. No such practice was found in the news reports on the Syrian uprising. Finally, Cumhuriyet reported on acts of censorship by the regime in the Egyptian and Turkish case while no reports on the same topic were found in the news coverage regarding the Syrian uprising. One interesting finding in the Cumhuriyet news report was the emphasis on the Islamist identity of the released prisoners in the Syrian uprising. This correlates with a

similar caution towards Islamist groups which were found in the discourse of some columnists who wrote about the Egyptian revolution. Overall, Cumhuriyet news reports were more consistent in comparison with Sabah, as Cumhuriyet news reports had an extremely supportive tone towards the protestors in the Egyptian revolution and Gezi protests while maintaining a neutral attitude towards the Syrian uprising.

There were only 2 columnists who wrote on different cases. Nilgün Cerrahoğlu wrote about the Egyptian revolution and the Syrian uprising, maintaining a discourse and position in favor of the protestors and against the state in each case. The other columnist, Emre Manisalı, wrote about the Egyptian revolution and Gezi protests, also being anti-regime and in favor of the protestors. In Cumhuriyet newspaper, columnists generally had uniformity in position, in the cases where there were several pieces published. In the Egyptian case, all of them labeled Mubarak as a dictator and all of them had a stance and discourse that was against the government and supportive of the protestors. Faik Bulut was the only columnist who emphasized the economic aspect of the protests in the Egyptian case. Furthermore, some of the columnists emphasized caution for Islamism as some argued that Muslim Brotherhood was a threat. In the Syrian case, only one column was written and it was in favor of the protestors as mentioned above. On the other hand, there was a boom in the columns written about Gezi protests all of which were highly supportive of the protestors and highly critical of the state and Erdoğan in particular. Some columnists called Erdoğan a dictator, civil fascist, or despot. There were many different grievances mentioned by the writers, including rising Islamism, authoritarianism, and corruption. All of the columnists had an optimistic and enthusiastic approach to Gezi protests

5.3 Comparison by Case

- **5.3.1 25th of January Egyptian Revolution**

Sabah and Cumhuriyet news reports and columnists had a similar tone towards the Egyptian revolution, which was supportive of the protestors and critical of the regime. The ideological square outlook of both newspapers, which were given above, were similar both in terms of labels and the assignment of 'us' vs 'them'. The difference lied in the approach towards the protesting groups, especially in the discourse of the columnists. One Sabah columnist was highly in praise of the Muslim Brotherhood while some Cumhuriyet writers thought that they were a threat to be aware of. This was also evident in the labeling of the protestors by Cumhuriyet, which at times stated that the masses weren't Islamists but a movement with a wide range of groups, including Christians and Secular people. Sabah didn't use a similar labeling practice as it didn't include news of diverse participation.

- **5.3.2 Syrian Uprising**

The discourse of the news reports of both newspapers in the Syrian case was nearly identical as both newspapers were kind of neutral. They reported brutal police violence and state repression but despite this, they also emphasized the reforming and open-to dialogue nature of the regime and al-Asad. Furthermore, both newspapers didn't use the kind of language they used in Egypt when they were labeling the regime in Syria. However, it can be said that Cumhuriyet was more negative towards the state in terms of labeling practices as some news reports emphasized the fact that children were in prison and the police shot an 11-year-old girl while Sabah more positively emphasized the massive support rallies for the regime and their peaceful nature. As for the columnists, one Sabah columnist was pro-regime while the other Sabah columnist was critical of the regime. There was only one Cumhuriyet columnist who wrote about the Syrian uprising and her discourse was against the regime.

- **5.3.3 Gezi Protests**

Gezi protests were the main source of contrast between the discourse of both newspapers as they adopted completely different discourse which is evident when the ideological square outlook of both newspapers are compared, which were quite opposite. Both newspapers used a highly subjective tone and discourse both in their news reports and columns while Sabah was pro-government and Cumhuriyet was in favor of the protestors. Cumhuriyet focused heavily on police violence while Sabah put more emphasis on the violent nature of the protests. Cumhuriyet constantly used negative labeling when referring to the regime or Erdoğan whereas Sabah didn't. There were some overlapping labeling practices especially in the news reports focusing on some of the positive aspects of the protestors. However, this was taken for granted and ever-present in the discourse of Cumhuriyet while it was rare and outnumbered by the negative labeling practices in the discourse of Sabah. Both newspapers ignored the economic aspect of the Gezi protests. As for the columnists, all of the Cumhuriyet writers were heavily supporting the protestors and critical of the regime. On the other hand, the majority of the Sabah columnists adopted a pro-government stance while the remaining minority of the columnists used a more critical tone towards the government but weren't necessarily fully in support of the protestors.

5.4 Explanation of the Findings

The final section of this chapter will be dedicated to the explanation of the findings and the analysis through ideological and historical perspectives. According to the three-dimensional concept of Norman Fairclough, discursive practice mediates between the social reality and the text which, in other words, shapes how social practices are reflected in the text (Fairclough 1992). This whole chapter has been dedicated to the discourse of the newspapers, which mediated between what happened in reality and what the readers perceived from the text. This discursive practice is dominated by ideology as Richardson argues that historical actors and

their interests must be acknowledged in relation to the discourse produced by the newspapers and for whom these discourses are produced (Richardson 2006: 147-148). Understanding the position and ideology of these newspapers will help to understand why they adopted the discourse they did regarding different instances of protest. When the ideology and the position of both newspapers, Sabah and Cumhuriyet, are compared, a very antagonistic picture is found. Since the day it was established in 1924, Cumhuriyet newspaper has always been a newspaper that followed Kemalist principles such as secularism and republicanism, as the name itself suggests (Kaya 2010: 85). Needless to say, during the JDP rule which was against Kemalism and its principles from day one, Cumhuriyet was located in the heart of oppositional journalism. Furthermore, pushed to the opposition, Cumhuriyet newspaper became increasingly more leftist, even to an extent that would upset some of its hardened Kemalist readerships. On the other hand, Sabah newspaper, which began to be published in 1985, was on very good terms with JDP since it came to power (Yılmaz 2021: 52). Furthermore, Sabah is situated among conservative and center-right journalism, which might explain its compatibility with the JDP regime. To this end, it would be a suitable strategy to explain some of the discourse with the position towards state and ideology.

Findings indicated that both newspapers were supportive of the Egyptian revolution. However, it can be argued that this similarity is caused by different reasons. The reason why Sabah was supportive of the revolution can be found in the position and approach of the Turkish state towards the revolution. Omar Sheira argues that Erdoğan was one of the first leaders in the world that advocated for the need for Mubarak's resignation when the protests began in 2011 (Sheira 2014: 1). Indeed, Erdoğan and JDP leadership demonstrated open support for the protestors, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. JDP's approach towards the Egyptian revolution was echoed in the pages of Sabah. However, this approach doesn't explain why Cumhuriyet, a newspaper that is highly against JDP and its policies, supported the revolution

as Sabah did. Ideological perspective can come into play for explaining the supportive discourse of Cumhuriyet towards the Egyptian revolution. Cumhuriyet's leftist ideology and writer base might explain why Cumhuriyet was supportive of the masses that were out for socioeconomic equality and freedom. Furthermore, being in the opposition in its own country, the desire to shake the seat of a despot is understandably a relatable pursuit for Cumhuriyet and its ideology. This ideology and state position argument is also useful for explaining why some columnists of Sabah, who tend to be conservative and center-right oriented, were more cautious of what the revolution may bring while Cumhuriyet columnists were in full support of the revolution. Finally, the discourse and approach of both newspapers towards the Muslim Brotherhood can also be explained by both factors of ideology and position of the Turkish state. Being conservative and pro-government, Sabah's approach to Muslim Brotherhood was identical to that of the Turkish government and the JDP which was supportive. Being secular and opposition to the government, Cumhuriyet on the other hand saw Muslim Brotherhood as a threat and its columnists advocated caution towards Islamists.

Both of the newspapers had a neutral and similar discourse towards the Syrian case with minor differences. Some similarities can be explained by the fact that both newspapers relied on the same news agencies in the Syrian uprising. Furthermore, the fact that traditional media agents and journalists were subject to intensive censorship made it harder to obtain information about the uprising (Al-Saqaf 2016). This is evident in the usage of SANA, the Syrian Arab News Agency, both by Sabah and Cumhuriyet in the same news reports. The existing differences between the discourse of Sabah and Cumhuriyet, the latter being more critical towards the Syrian regime, might be explained again by the ideological and state position perspective. Hinnebusch argues that the relations between Syria and Turkey were in a state of friendship and alliance until 2010 and only began worsening after the uprising (Hinnebusch 2016: 1-2). It might be the case that Sabah and Cumhuriyet again reproduced their position

towards the state in their discourse towards the Syrian uprising. However, some might argue that this analysis and its explanation might be a bit of a stretch due to the minority of the differences between the discourse of the newspapers and the lack of sufficient news reports or columns written about the uprising, especially compared to the other two cases. Nevertheless, further research with a more extensive database and scope might be necessary to reach this conclusion. Finally, it can be argued that even though the state repression in the Syrian case was more brutal and al-Asad's discourse was more hostile, the fact that both newspapers were easier and more positive on al-Asad when compared with Mubarak might indicate that the discourse of news coverage is also about the public image of the ruling figures.

The discourse of the newspapers on Gezi protests was completely different and representing the opposing camps. It is evident that the ideology and the position towards the regime of the newspapers dominated the discourse of both newspapers regarding the protests. Indeed, both newspapers were aware of the fact that they were parts of this conflict, which made them adjust their discourse accordingly. Even in the tone and discourse of the newspapers, it was apparent that their style of journalism and selection of words shifted to a much more subjective manner. Being the most fierce newspaper among the opposition journalism and fervent defenders of secularism, Cumhuriyet was fully in support of the protestors and highly critical of the government. On the other hand, being on good terms with the JDP and representing the conservative, center-right ideology, Sabah was in support of the regime and depicted the protestors in a much negative light than Cumhuriyet, despite a small number of Sabah columnists being rather critical of the regime.

Overall, with the exception of some columnists, Sabah's discourse reflected the approach and the position of the Turkish state in nearly all of the cases, with Syria being debatable. On the other hand, the discourse of Cumhuriyet was highly dominated by its ideology in all of the cases, again Syria being debatable. After all, it can be argued that both newspapers'

discourse towards the three cases could be explained to some extent with the ideological perspective and their position towards the state. Finally, Dağtaş's analysis that Turkish news reports on foreign news coverage are similar because of internationally shared journalism codes might hold true to some degree (Dağtaş 2013: 30). However, the existence of some discursive differences, especially in the Egyptian case, imply the existence of a discursive space that is beyond the scope of internationally shared journalism. To this end, it can be argued that the discursive practices beyond the shared codes of journalism are dominated by ideology and position towards the state.

6. CONCLUSION

The protests evaluated in this thesis, the 25th of January Egyptian revolution, Syrian uprising, and Gezi protests, greatly changed the localities they took place in, altering the lives of the people and changing the political dynamics, for better or for worse. The fact that they took place in the near history means that their effects are still visible, which makes it imperative to study and analyze them. In order to do so, this thesis tried to bring together the analysis of social reality, discursive practices, and the text, a model envisioned by Fairclough (Fairclough 1992). Without the analysis of social reality, the analysis of discursive practices and how they reflected and shaped the text would have been up in the air. A comparative case study approach was used to make better sense of the social reality, analyzing the differences and similarities of the instances of protests involved in this study. Aspects like 'causes of protests', 'performance of the protestors' and 'state reaction' were analyzed and compared through the light of the theoretical framework and existing literature on the cases. The first conclusion of this thesis is that the three protests involved in this study are comparable and similar in several ways. Even though they took place in different countries and different settings, causes such as rising authoritarianism, neoliberal policies, and increasing socio-economic inequalities were shared in all of the cases. Furthermore, there were also some similarities in the performance of the

protestors as in all cases the intention to remain peaceful, the importance of social media, and repertoire of the slogans was quite visible. Finally, in the state reaction aspect, some commonalities were found in state practices such as police brutality or invoking the 'foreign agents' discourse. Overall, it should be stated that there were also many differences between the protests and the degree of the similarities mentioned above were different in each aspect.

After having established the comparison of the protests and the analysis of social reality, the aim of this thesis was to analyze and compare the discursive practices that dominated the text and the discourse of each newspaper. This was done through analyzing news reports and columns, with regards to the 'ideological square' notion of Van Dijk and the overall discourse (Van Dijk 2011).

Primarily, the internal discourse analysis of each newspaper was done separately, which brought about the second conclusion of this thesis which is the fact that when the discourses of both newspapers on all of the cases were compared, it was seen that the discourse of Cumhuriyet was much more consistent than that of Sabah. Sabah had a more ambivalent discourse towards the cases, which was especially evident in the depiction and reporting of the Egyptian revolution and Gezi protests. Cumhuriyet, on the other hand, was supportive of both the Egyptian revolution and Gezi protests, while remaining somewhat neutral in the Syrian uprising, even though still it was more supportive of the Syrian protestors when compared to Sabah.

Secondly, the comparison of the discourse of both newspapers was done separately for each case which led to the third conclusion. The third conclusion of this thesis is that when the discourses of the two newspapers involving the same instances of protests are compared, a completely contrasting picture arose in the Gezi protests, while the discourses towards the remaining two cases were similar, even though there were slight differences. Sabah and Cumhuriyet newspapers were completely on different sides regarding their discourse on Gezi protests, Sabah being more supportive of the government and Cumhuriyet being supportive of

the protestors. Both newspapers were supportive of the protestors in the Egyptian revolution and both of them maintained a neutral discourse on the Syrian uprising.

The final task for the chapter on critical discourse analysis was to make sense of the differences and similarities of the discourse of the two newspapers, through ideological and historical perspectives. The fourth and final conclusion of this thesis is that the findings of the discourse analysis of both newspapers can be explained through the light of ideology and the position of newspapers towards the state. The fact that Sabah and Cumhuriyet used a completely different discourse and tone towards the Gezi protests reflects their opposing ideologies, the former representing the conservative and center-right ideology while the latter representing the secular and leftist camp. Furthermore, the fact that Sabah is a pro-government newspaper and Cumhuriyet is a fierce opposition newspaper added to the schism which resulted in the differences in the discourse of both newspapers on Gezi protests. These ideological and political differences were also reflected in the cases in which the discourse and the position of the newspapers were similar. For instance, the approach of the newspapers towards the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egyptian case was different, which was again caused by the differences in ideology.

Overall, this paper tried to bring together the discourse and social reality analysis in an attempt to make sense of these crucial instances of protests, and how they were depicted in the two Turkish newspapers, Sabah and Cumhuriyet. All of the three cases have the potential to be the sole study of an entire thesis, so has the discourse analysis of a single newspaper. However, this comparative approach was fruitful and mind-expanding as it allowed us to see the differences and similarities between the instances of protest and discourses of the newspapers. An interesting and potentially fruitful study might be to compare the discourse of the Sabah newspaper regarding the Syrian regime over the years. This study can be particularly useful as the conflict isn't over yet and the relationship between both countries, Syria and Turkey

dramatically changed over the years, which would allow us to test the ideological and position towards the state approach employed in this thesis.

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