Negativity Bias, Political Parallelism, Media Ownership:
The Case of the 2015 and 2018 Turkish Parliamentary Elections

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Abstract

This study focuses on the question of media impact on information availability in the Turkish press during the election news coverage in 2015 and 2018. It analyses the potential link between negativity bias and press-party parallelism and correlates this connection with media ownership patterns. We conduct a quantitative media content analysis based on the front pages of six newspapers. The results show a significant relationship between negativity and partisanship: papers are more negative towards their political opponent and more positive towards the party they endorse. Newspapers support their endorsed party mostly by "attacking others", through criticism of the respective opposition. In sum, the number of messages of both left/pro-oppositional and right/governmental newspapers on front pages are predominantly negative (up to 80.8% in 2015 and up to 71.2 % in 2018). Original negative messages by journalists exceed the positive ones by a factor of six in 2015 and almost five in 2018, and the neutral ones by a factor of almost five in 2015 and even nine in 2018. Furthermore, we investigate the impact of media ownership structure on the relationship between negativity and partisanship. The results reveal the newspapers' tendency to be either pro-incumbent or pro-challenger depending on their ownership structure: For newspapers that are part of conglomerate or cross-media ownership structures, negative messages towards the main opposition party (CHP) are 22 (2015) or 67.5 (2018) times more common than positive messages. Independently owned newspapers display 31.5 (2015) or 140 (2018) times more negative than positive messages towards the ruling AKP. This significant difference is evidence of pronounced press-party parallelism in Turkish news media outlets. We offer several possible explanations from the supply-driven perspective on media bias: Most likely, the results are attributable either to the media outlets' organizational ties with the parties, profit considerations or direct political and ideological preferences. The findings shed some light on the current (political) media situation in Turkey and they illustrate implications of actual media activity in connection with the rise of populist parties.

Keywords: content analysis, negativity bias, partisanship, media, ownership, Turkey.

JEL classification: D83; P16; D72; L82

Content

1   Introduction

The question of media impact on information availability, voter behaviour, political participation, voters' preference, and hence political and economic outcomes has been discussed extensively in the past decades. In a developed democracy, newspapers are expected to be free and objective sources of information. On the one hand, media outlets appear to adopt "catch-all-ism": They replace their own ideological identities with diversity in order to reach the largest possible audience and increase their commercial value (van Kempen, 2007). Then again, media outlets have also been known to align themselves with a particular political party, as a result of which political competition runs parallel to media competition (Artero, 2015). **Partisan media** (i.e., outlets that lack of neutral, independent reporting) at times contribute to the breakdown of democracies. The Republic of Turkey possibly is a current, prominent example of this transition. We focus on the relationship between the media organs and political parties in Turkey as a highly relevant case study in the field of media bias research.

What affects biased tonality of election news coverage and what conclusions can be drawn from this to partisan behaviour by media? To investigate these questions, this comparative case study examines the relationship between news coverage, its relevant (media) producers (i.e. media owners, editors and quoted political actors), negativity bias and partisan appeals of newspapers in Turkey during two election periods, the re-election on November 1, 2015, and the snap election on June 24, 2018. Considering two election periods allows us to analyse negativity bias and press-party parallelism in view of change versus continuity of Turkey's party system. It is of interest whether a once established biase continue to intensify. **Political parallelism** is identified as the systematic support given by newspapers to a specific party by positive (praise), at least comparatively less negative messages, or the systematic criticism of the opponent party.

Both elections had unique characteristics. In the regular election on June 7, 2015, the Islamic-conservative AKP government under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan failed to achieve the absolute majority in parliament for the first time since 2002. In addition, the left-wing pro-Kurdish HDP for the first time made it past the ten percent threshold into parliament. However, a coalition government could not be formed, and a re-election took place on November 1, 2015, amidst escalating political violence, terrorism and polarization. The AKP ultimately regained the absolute majority but faced considerable challenges on the political agenda: The unsuccessful peace process concerning the Kurdish minority, three major terrorist attacks, including the deadliest terrorist attack in the history of Turkey (in Ankara), and finally a

significant change in the electoral code after a constitutional referendum in April 2017. The latter, along with macroeconomic decisions, the civil war in neighbouring Syria and the situation in Iraq, was ultimately used by the government Fto justify an early parliamentary election: The snap election on June 24, 2018, which was the first to be held under Turkey's new presidential system. In order to pass the unusually high 10%-threshold, several opposition parties formed unlikely alliances to challenge President Erdogan and the ruling AKP. The absolute majority however went to the "Cumhur İttifakı"-alliance of the ruling AKP and the right wing MHP. Other issues that surrounded the June 2018 election and received extensive news coverage included the declining currency, increasing involvement in the Syrian civil war, and the state of emergency that had been in effect since the failed coup in July 2016.

Our analysis is based on the content of the front pages of six national Turkish newspapers: *Cumhuriyet*, *Sözcü*, *Hürriyet*, *Sabah*, *Türkiye* and *Yeni Safak*. The data was gathered over the periods October 1 to November 1, 2015, and May 24 to June 24, 2018. To construct a measure of news coverage, we used the method of quantitative media content analysis. The newspapers have different ownership structures and political orientations, which enables us to analyse the media-government relations in Turkey and furthermore the components media ownership and journalistic initiative in respect to partisanship and negativity.

Our findings contribute to the literature on press-party parallelism, polarisation of news media (Carkoglu et al., 2014) and political parallelism in the Turkish press (Bayram, 2010). Assuming the media perspective and adding the ownership component, we also expand on electoral research, e.g. regarding negative campaigning in Turkish elections (Toros, 2015). To the best of our knowledge, the present study is the first to investigate the relationship between the partisan bias of newspaper content and negativity bias while considering media ownership structures in Turkey.

The next section examines negativity and partisan bias. It also provides some political background information. After describing the research design (Section 3), the results are presented in Section 4. The article concludes with a discussion of the overall trend of political parallelism considering media outlets' organizational relationships with the parties, profit considerations and direct political and ideological preferences.

2 Theoretical and institutional context

2.1 Negativity, partisanship and press-party parallelism

It is widely argued that one of the most salient characteristics of election campaign news is attacking candidates and the increase in negative coverage (Shaefer et al., 2008; Capella & Jamieson, 1997). The use of negativity has gained considerable attention and relevance, mainly due to its critical role in affecting political and social outcomes. "**Negativity bias**" is the tendency to devote more coverage to negative than to positive or neutral information. Negative news stories are framed as failure, fiasco, crisis, frustration, default, threat or disappointment. Several sciences study the relative strength of negative over the positive news. From a psychological point of view, it is well documented that people pay more attention to negative information. They attach greater weight to negative information when assessing other individuals and they devote greater cognitive energy while processing bad things (Soroka & McAdams, 2015). Economics has established that people care about a loss of utility more than about a gain of equal magnitude (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Besides the experimental work on loss aversion (Tversky & Kahneman, 1992; Dittrich et al., 2012) the political science literature has produced two main findings on negativity bias: Klein (1991) has shown that negativity plays a greater role in the public perception of candidates than positivity. Ansolabehere & Iyengar (1995) examined the impact of negative political communication on voter turnout, voting choice and political participation during electoral periods. In the field of media and communication sciences, negativity is studied with a specific focus on the administrative or financial structure of news organizations, the biases of editors, audiences or media owners, and the behaviour and preferences of journalists. Within the science of media economics, for instance, the distinction of supply- and demand-side of the news media market is used to explain the cause of media bias. The *supply-driven perspective* considers the preference for biased news of in- and external news market actors. The media industry is internally biased, if coverage favours one side over the other. This is attributed to the ideological bias and interests of journalists (Baron, 2004), owners of the news outlets (Anderson & McLaren, 2012), reporters and editors. An external bias can be caused by governments (Besley & Prat, 2006), lobbies (Baron, 2005) and advertisers (Petrova, 2008, 2012; Germano & Meier, 2013). By contrast, the *demand-driven perspective* identifies consumers asking for biased coverage (Mullainathan & Schleifer, 2005; Gentzkow et al., 2016; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006).

When newspapers have strong partisan alignments the concept of "political" or "**press-party parallelism**" is a relevant research focus. It contains the complex relations between different

factors for negativity in news coverage and the politicised media landscape. Seymour-Ure (1974) introduced the concept of parallelism between parties and newspapers. The main feature was found in the ownership of news outlets by political parties. More factors were identified that may influence media partisanship and bias: Organisational connections to political parties (Hallin & Papathanassopoulos, 2002), editorial partisanship, the legal scope for media firms to support parties (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995), commercialisation and the level of competition in the media system (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010), the level of political and social polarisation (Bernhardt et al., 2008) and profit considerations of media firms (Besley & Prat, 2006).

Hallin and Mancini (2004) applied the concept of press-party parallelism in their cross-national comparative study. Here, partisanship was significantly found in the media content, ownership structure of the news media, readership patterns and affiliations of journalists, media owners and media managers.

In this article, we argue that increasing commercialism and relations between media organs and parties (i.e. clientelism) are important drivers of further political partisanship and polarisation in the media. **Clientelism** here means utilitarian relationships between media organs and parties: Media ownership by parties is used to form and strengthen alliances between political parties and/or media organs. We investigate the possible interrelation between negativity bias, political parallelism, media ownership and polarisation in the case of the Turkish press, focusing on politicians' messages. We examine how those messages are selected and presented in the news by the journalists or editors and in what way negativity and partisanship appear.

First, we elaborate on the level and characteristics of negativity in the election news coverage in Turkey in 2015 and 2018. We then specifically ask whether the level of negativity towards the respective endorsed (or opponent) party within the various newspapers changed. Lastly, we examine to what extent negativity and political parallelism varies according to the ownership structures of newspapers. Finally, we address the following summary question: Is there a three-way connection between partisanship, negativity and ownership?

The paper focuses on two variables: political parallelism (the political context) and media ownership (the economic context). In this context, by **parallelism** we mean the newspapers' political engagement by systematically supporting their endorsed candidate or party and criticising their opponent. While the link between journalists' political beliefs and news selection is well-researched (Patterson & Donsbach, 1996; Niven, 2001; van Kempen, 2007),

we add the negativity component. The following first set of hypotheses describes our expectations regarding the connection between newspaper partisanship and negativity:

Turkish newspapers display more negative messages on their front pages than positive or neutral ones (H 1a).

Furthermore, newspapers operate in accordance with their political alignment. Their endorsed party primarily sends negative messages. In addition, newspapers give more negativity towards their political opponent (H 1b).

Once press-party parallelism somehow is apparent, it will probably increase. We therefore expect that the level of newspapers' negativity (H 1a) and accordance (H 1b) during the 2018 election period will surpass that of 2015 (H 1c).

To press-party parallelism, we then add media ownership structures. Plenty of literature has associated media ownership, the media market and/or media profit orientation with the content of the political and economic news coverage (Dunaway, 2013; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006; Hamilton, 2004; Gilens & Hertzman, 2000; Akhavan-Majid et al., 1991). Usually, the following forms of media ownership are distinguished: corporate (i.e. shareholder controlled), cross-media, chain and independent. In this study, *corporate* media companies within this study appear as conglomerates in particular. Those include media outlets being part of a larger business that also operates in other industries. Usually, their overarching objective is the maximisation of profits. This may lead to a more unbalanced broadcast, i.e. more negative or positive as opposed to neutral campaign messages (Dunaway, 2013; Gilens & Hertzman, 2000). If a media company or its parent owns various media sources such as print, TV, radio or online, we speak of *cross-media* ownership. Such companies are more likely to receive financial support from collusion with the government than independently owned publishers, which makes their content more susceptible to bias (Besley & Prat, 2006). Besides that, news content manipulation and lower viewpoint diversity are well documented for cross-owned media outlets (Pritchard, 2002). *A chain ownership* comprises numerous outlets of one certain medium such as a chain of newspapers, magazines, TV channels. They can facilitate news bias, for example due to a homogenizing effect on editorial recruitment (i.e. less editorial independence) (Akhavan-Majid et al., 1991; Wackmann et al., 1975). Furthermore, chain owned media companies tending to be more profit-oriented than independently owned publishers and therefore more likely produce negative or positive rather than neutral media content (Dunaway, 2008). *Independently* owned media outlets are led by a single individual, company or family. They are not publicly traded or owned by a holding company.

Of course, media bias may be due not only to media ownership structures but also to a wide range of factors on the demand and supply side. The relationship between ownership structure and negativity bias in conjunction with political parallelism is yet to be researched in the Turkish case. We therefore propose the following second set of hypotheses:

Newspapers under conglomerate/cross-media/chain ownership offer more negative coverage than independently owned newspapers (H 2a).

Furthermore, outlets under conglomerate/cross-media/chain ownership offer more negative coverage of the opposition and more positive coverage of the ruling party than independently owned outlets (H 2b).

Lastly, the level of negativity towards the opposition (and positivity towards the ruling party) grew from 2015 to 2018 within conglomerate/cross-media/chain ownership structures (H 2c).

2.2 Media Landscape and Policy in Turkey

Historically speaking, the Turkish newspapers have always had close ties with the political parties (Bayram, 2010). The deregulation and commercialisation of the media market, the emergence of a corporate-clientelist relationship between the media and the state, the concentration of media ownership, the low legal obstacles to cross-mergers and the investments of media owners in non-media sectors have been widely studied (Christensen, 2007; Kurban & Sözeri, 2012). But the establishment of a predominant party system since the AKP's first term in office in 2002 gave the discussions on Turkey's media landscape, particularly media independence and pro-government-bias, new momentum. The party that rather had a volatile and fractionalised image attracted a vast majority of media owners who began to support the new AKP government for its pro-EU agenda. Consensus-building policies went out of fashion as a group of pro-government and partisan media outlets emerged over the years. Critics have referred to these outlets and their wholesale support for the government as the "media pool" (Kaya & Cakmur, 2011, pp. 532; Tunç 2015, pp. 15).

Primarily due to the poor macroeconomic financial situation following the 2001 economic crisis, assets of some newspapers and TV channels were transmitted in the Saving Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF), which is under the supervision of the Central Bank of Turkey. The bank is now attached to the President's office and insofar not detached from political events. The motivation behind the integration of media companies into the TMSF fuelled extensive discussions over its transparency. Especially, because the indirect political interference

through the Central Bank of Turkey resulted in the sale of one of the second-largest media group (Turkuvaz Media Group; this contains the *Sabah* newspaper, i.a.) to a corporation that has close ties with the AKP government. A consortium of businesspersons, including the prime minister's son-in-law, led the sale. This entire procedure intensified the public debate because it was considered a government's effort to create a partisan media outlet, by using the clientelist relationships in its favour (Carkoglu et al., 2014). Accordingly, the AKP's rise to power has been identified as a "milestone" for media-state relations: Reshaped and AKP-friendly media companies have gained the upper hand over opposition and mainstream outlets (Kurban & Sözeri, 2012). In recent years, Turkey's manifold media landscape including their diverse national and foreign coverage transformed into a permanent conflict between either pro-government or pro-opposition media outlets.

Further significant changes in the news industry occurred between 2015 and 2018. This concerns the Dogan Media Company (owner of several daily newspapers, including the largest newspaper, *Hürriyet*) which was part of the Dogan Group. The Dogan Group was involved in a tax evasion case, which culminated in a tax fine of USD 2.5 billion in 2009. This judgment was widely seen as one of the government's first strategic steps to eliminate opposition media (Kurban & Sözeri, 2012; European Commission, 2009). The sale of the thereby financially weakened Dogan Media Company to the Demirören Holding, a pro-government Turkish conglomerate with interests in energy, construction, industry, port and shopping mall management, tourism and media in early 2018 can be seen as a second and ultimately effective step. That way, one of Turkey's leading media groups, which tended to side with the opposition, slowly moved closer to the government.

Lastly, in the second quarter of 2018 and while the election campaigns, *Cumhuriyet's* trials began, and the *Sözcü* newspaper was sued on terror charges.[1]

In conclusion, 90 percent of the most read or watched national newspapers and TV channels currently favour the government (Reporters without Borders, 2018). The remaining media companies were strongly challenged by the political circumstances.

3   Operationalisation, Data and Method

We use newspaper front pages to evaluate the effects of negative coverage. This source of media content allows us, firstly, to consistently record the changing atmosphere over time.

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[1] Multiple journalists, lawyers and executives from *Cumhuriyet* went on trial on charges of aiding a terrorist organization, facing sentences of between 7,5 and 43 years in prison.

Such consistency could not be achieved with online news outlets, which update their pages many times a day. This overwhelming variation associated with the increasing popularity of online media, would make comparisons difficult. Secondly, digital full-text archives (including front pages) are available for Turkish newspapers but not for online news, newscasts, or radio news. Thirdly, the printed press still has an agenda-setting role, whereas many other media do not produce their own content.

Six of the total of 45 Turkish daily national newspapers were selected based on their geographic distribution, level of circulation, ideological stance, format and ownership structure. The front pages of the selected newspapers were analysed over the one-month period prior to each of the elections of November 1, 2015, and June 24, 2018. The front pages of *Sözcü*, *Türkiye* and *Yeni Safak* were obtained from the e-newspaper archive of Ihlas News Agency (www.gazeteler.org), whereas those of *Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* were sourced from the E-Newspaper archive Iha (http://gazetebasliklari.iha.com.tr/). The sample contains outlets from four of the six largest publishing companies;[2] the combined circulation of the sampled newspapers accounts for about 46% of the market (Medyatava, 2015/2018). Finally, the sample represents the four ownership types (see 2.1) as follows: *Hürriyet*, *Sabah*, *Türkiye*, *Yeni Safak* are concurrently categorised as conglomerate, cross-media and chain ownerships. *Sözcü* also is included in the chain ownership category but independently owned. *Cumhuriyet* exclusively is independently owned. Since the categories conglomerate and cross-media include the same cluster of the sample newspapers, we summarise them as conglomerate/cross-media. Figure 1 shows the circulation, political orientation and ownership structure of the sampled newspapers.

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[2] The largest publishing companies are: Demirören (*Hürriyet*), Albayrak (*Yeni Safak*), Kalyon/Turkuaz (*Sabah*), Dogus, Ihlas (*Türkiye*) and Ciner.

Figure 1. Sample newspapers: Market share, political orientation (Carkoglu et al., 2014) and ownership structure.
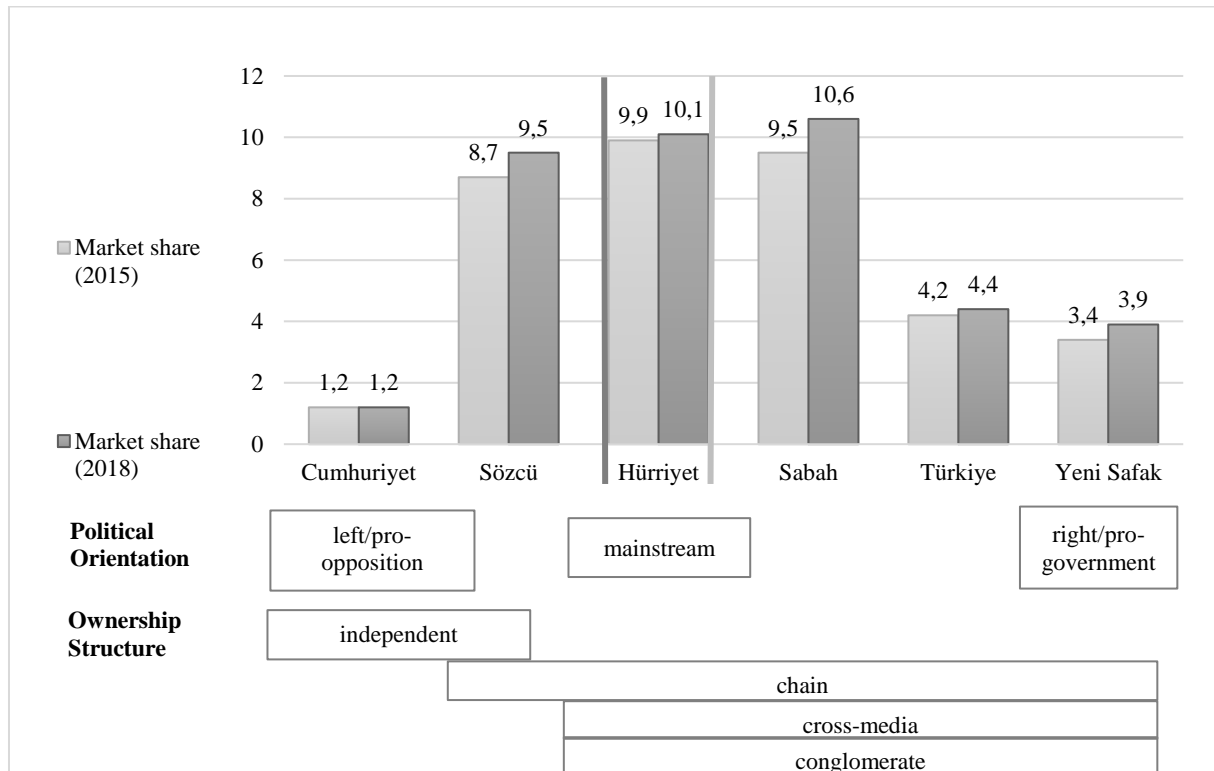
The main method used for analysis is the content analysis, defined as a systematic and objective analysis of message characteristics (Neuendorf, 2002). We followed a deductive scientific approach, in which variables were established, measurements were decided and a coding scheme were made before the observation began. The frequencies of the variables obtained by the content analysis were then evaluated and analysed using correlation models. The following table gives an overview over the variables and their possible characteristics:

Table 1. Variables and characteristics

News Tone	Journalistic Initiative	Message-sending Agent (sender)	Message-receiving Agent (recipient)	Ownership Structure
How is the message characterised?	*Who is the author of the message?*	*Who speaks?*	*Who is adressed?*	*How is the newspaper organised?*
negative (critical)	Journalists/Editors (direct)	AKP (ruling party)	AKP (ruling party)	independent
positive (praising)	Others (e.g. politicians/parties) (quote/indirect)	CHP (opponent)	CHP (opponent)	chain
neutral				cross-media
				conglomerate
Individual Messages on Front-Pages				**Newspaper**

The main unit of analyses are individual messages on front-pages. We identify the support given by newspapers to a specific party through their distribution of positive (praise) or at least non-negative messages (political **parallelism**). Throughout the study, we distinguish between negative (critical), positive (praising) and neutral messages (*news tone*) across the six sample newspapers and two election campaigns. The message is rated as negative/critical when the actor is clearly criticised or disapproved, or positive/affirmative if it contains an expression of endorsement and confirmation (Lengauer et al., 2012). This rated tonality of a statement constitutes our dependent variable. In the course of *journalistic initiative*, we distinguish between direct and indirect messages (quotes): Newspapers may express their preferences for political actors either directly through messages by their own journalists, or indirect by systematically printing quotes by these actors (Gkolemis, 2012). We then examine according to the sender (*message-sending agent*) and the recipient (*message-receiving agent*). Hereby, we distinguish between the governing party (AKP) and their most important opponent (CHP). We complete the main unit of analysis (messages on front pages) with the underlying newspaper by asking in which *ownership structure* the newspaper is managed.

In the next step, we used correlation analysis as a statistical method to evaluate the strength of relationship between two quantitative variables. We correlated the variable "news tone" (negative/positive/neutral) with variables for journalistic initiative (direct/indirect), message-sending and -receiving agents (AKP/CHP) and the ownership structure (independent/chain/cross-media/conglomerate).

Finally, we examined a final model, the three-way hierarchical log linear analysis. Here, we extended the two-way contingency tables in order to analyse the relationship between three

discrete, categorical variables. For each of the present ownership structures that retains we looked at the news tone in conjunction with the message-receiving agent ("ownership × news tone × message-receiving agent").

All variables were treated as "response variables" to investigate their association, i.e. no distinction was made between independent and dependent variables.

We examine 1,432 individual messages from 192 front pages per election period. The sample comprises 227 statements from *Cumhuriyet*, 252 from *Sözcü*, 201 from *Hürriyet*, 269 from *Sabah*, 235 from *Türkiye* and 248 from *Yeni Safak*.[3] To test the intra- and inter-coder reliability of our assessment of tonality, a random subsample of the 2015 data was re-coded. Regarding the inter-coder reliability, Cohen's Kappa for all codes ranged from .824 to 1 ("almost perfect"). The intra-coder reliability is expressed through the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC), which ranges from .875 (95% confidence interval from .801 to .922) to 1 for our codes (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979).

4   Results

4.1   News tone

By either directly producing messages or indirectly reproducing the words of politicians or parties, the newspapers gave wide coverage to negative statements on their front pages (64.8% and 61.5% for 2015 and 2018, respectively), compared to positive and neutral ones (cf. Tab. 2). The newspapers were strongly involved in the electoral campaign. The share of front pages that include (positive or negative) evaluative messages by the politicians or the journalists themselves exceeds 80 percent. Appraisals and opinions about specific candidates are much more common than a neutral or passive stance, and negative statements are more common than positive or neutral ones. It appears that the Turkish newspapers'choice of primarily negative statements was an intentional decision.

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[3] On average, the front pages do not contain significantly different amounts of messages (average = 238 messages; standard deviation = 21.4). This allows the analysis of absolute values, i.a..

Table 2. Tone frequencies for each newspaper[4]

Newspaper	November 1, 2015				June 24, 2018			
	Neg. (%)	Pos. (%)	Neut. (%)	Total	Neg. (%)	Pos. (%)	Neut. (%)	Total
Cumhuriyet	79 (65.8)	21 (17.5)	20 (16.7)	120	73 (68.2)	13 (12.1)	21 (19.6)	107
Sözcü	84 (80.8)	11 (10.6)	9 (**8.7**)	104	98 (66.2)	20 (13.5)	30 (20.3)	148
Hürriyet	74 (61.7)	14 (11.7)	32 (26.7)	120	35 (43.2)	17 (21.0)	29 (35.8)	81
Sabah	84 (65.6)	27 (21.1)	17 (**13.3**)	128	78 (55.3)	47 (33.3)	16 (11.3)	141
Türkiye	77 (58.8)	25 (19.1)	29 (22.1)	131	74 (71.2)	15 (14.4)	15 (14.4)	104
Yeni Safak	75 (59.1)	37 (29.1)	15 (**11.8**)	127	74 (61.2)	29 (24.0)	18 (14.9)	121
Total	**473 (64.8)**	**135 (18.5)**	**122 (16.7)**	**730**	**432 (61.5)**	**141 (20.1)**	**129 (18.4)**	**702**

In 2015, with a share of balanced messages close to 30 percent, *Hürriyet* was more neutral than the other newspapers. The rest of the newspapers in the sample did not differ considerably in their tendency towards featuring evaluative statements in 2015. However, *Sözcü* had the most decidedly negative tone (more than 80 % negative statements). *Sözcü*, *Sabah* and *Yeni Safak* featured around 90 percent evaluative, i.e. either positively or negatively charged, statements.

In 2018, *Sözcü*, *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* considerably reduced their negativity. The biggest change can be seen in *Hürriyet*, as the level of negativity decreased almost by 20 percent, with its neutrality level increasing by nearly 10 percent. In addition, *Sözcü*'s negativity share fell by 15 percent, while the negative tonality of *Sabah* diminished by 10 percent. Positive tonality gained new momentum in 2018, with *Sabah*'s share reaching 33 percent.

4.2 Journalistic initiative

To what extent is the negativity in the news directly attributable to journalists (journalistic initiative), as opposed to the newspapers' quoting of external sources (messages of other actors)? Table 3 provides some answers.

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[4] Percentages among all references of a particular newspapers are given in parentheses. The relationship between the newspapers and the news tone is statistically significant in each election campaign. 2015: χ^2 (10) = 36.75, $p < .001$; Cramer's V = 0.159. 2018: χ^2 (10) = 48.83, $p < .001$; Cramer's V = 0.187.

Table 3. Journalistic initiative: Tone by direct messages (journalists/editors) versus indirect messages (quotes of others)[5]

Tone	November 1, 2015		June 24, 2018	
	direct messages (by journalists) (%)	indirect messages (quotes of others) (%)	direct messages (by journalists) (%)	indirect messages (quotes of others) (%)
Negative	158 (81.9)	315 (58.7)	119 (75.8)	313 (57.4)
Positive	26 (13.5)	109 (20.3)	25 (15.9)	116 (21.3)
Neutral	9 (4.7)	113 (21.0)	13 (8.3)	116 (21.3)
Total	**193 (100.0)**	**537 (100.0)**	**157 (100.0)**	**545 (100.0)**

In the 2015 sample, journalists themselves produced 193 direct messages or 26.4 percent of all references without quoting others. 82 percent of these messages were negative – six times more than the number of positive references and 17 times more than neutral statements. In 2018, the newspapers sent 157 direct journalistic messages (close to 17 % of the total) without quoting others. Among those, 75 percent were critical. The negative share exceeded the positive references by a factor of almost five, and the neutral messages by a factor of nine.

In both election periods, criticising a candidate or a party was mostly done directly, without quoting others. In 2015, the share of negative journalistic (direct) references outweighed the share of negative references generated by politicians or other actors (indirect) by 23 percent. In 2018, this difference had declined somewhat to 18 percent.

Next, we examined the use of direct negativity by each newspaper (cf. Tab. 4). In 2015, the opposition-leaning *Sözcü*, a keen opponent of the ruling AKP and supporter of Kemalist ideology, made the greatest use of direct journalistic negativity: Nearly 68 percent of its negative references constituted direct journalistic criticism. By contrast, the negative statements contained in the mainstream-left *Hürriyet* tended to be (indirect) quotes from parties or politicians (89.2 %), rather than direct messages from the journalists or editors (10.8%). The conservative *Türkiye* and *Yeni Safak* similarly preferred indirect, "covert" negativity: While almost 60% of their statements were negative (cf. Tab. 1), only about a quarter of those references were generated directly by the journalists/editors themselves.

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[5] Percentages among the negative tone for each message type (direct/journalists vs. indirect/others) and year are given in parentheses. The relationship between the news tone and the message type is statistically significant. 2015: χ^2 (2) = 38.16, p < .001; Cramer's V = 0.229; 2018: χ^2 (2) = 19.64, p < .001; Cramer's V = 0.167.

By 2018, the share of direct negative statements generated by the conservative newspapers *Türkiye* and *Yeni Safak* themselves had grown, whereas "covert" negativity became more popular with the mainstream papers *Hürriyet* and *Sabah*. Mainstream-left *Hürriyet* made no negative statements generated by its own journalists whatsoever, and mainstream-right *Sabah* also leaned heavily towards indirect negativity, quoting electoral actors for about 80 percent of its negative appeals. Lastly, the share of direct journalistic statements in the oppositional *Sözcü* fell considerably in 2018, below the share of indirect messages.

Table 4. Journalistic initiative: Use of negativity per newspaper by direct messages (journalists/editors) versus indirect messages (quotes of others)[6]

	November 1, 2015		June 24, 2018	
Newspaper	**direct messages (by journalists) (%)**	**indirect messages (quotes of others) (%)**	**direct messages (by journalists) (%)**	**indirect messages (quotes of others) (%)**
Cumhuriyet	25 (31.6)	54 (68.4)	21 (28.8)	52 (71.2)
Sözcü	57 (67.9)	27 (32.1)	35 (35.7)	63 (64.3)
Hürriyet	8 (10.8)	66 (89.2)	0 (0.0)	35 (100.0)
Sabah	29 (34.5)	55 (65.5)	15 (19.2)	63 (80.8)
Türkiye	19 (24.7)	58 (75.3)	20 (27.0)	54 (73.0)
Yeni Safak	20 (26.7)	55 (73.3)	28 (37.8)	46 (62.2)
Total	**158 (33.4)**	**315 (66.6)**	**119 (27.5)**	**313 (72.5)**

4.3   Message-sending agent

The six newspapers can be divided into two clusters, depending on the degree to which they report statements by the AKP, as opposed to the main opposition party CHP. In the first cluster, consisting of the (mainstream-)right *Sabah*, *Türkiye* and *Yeni Safak*, we found an overwhelming majority of AKP references in 2015 (cf. Tab. 5). Due to this imbalance, these newspapers almost appeared as "unofficial party sources". The second cluster of newspapers, containing the (mainstream-) left *Cumhuriyet*, *Sözcü* and *Hürriyet*, featured considerably fewer AKP references and more balanced coverage between two main parties. As a result, the

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[6] Percentages of negative statements from direct messages (journalists/editors) versus indirect messages (quotes of others) for each newspaper and year are given in parentheses. The relationship between the message type and the newspapers is statistically significant. 2015: χ^2 (5) = 66.12, $p < .001$; Cramer's V = 0.374. 2018: χ^2 (5) = 23.27, $p < .001$; Cramer's V = 0.232.

front pages of the oppositional newspapers contained markedly fewer party statements than those of the pro-government newspapers.

In 2018, the first cluster (*Sabah*, *Türkiye* and *Yeni Safak*) maintained its strong bias in favour of statements by the AKP. By contrast, two of the three newspapers of the second cluster (*Cumhuriyet* and *Sözcü*) devoted more space to opposition statements. *Cumhuriyet* even quoted the CHP 15 times more often than the AKP. Thus, abandoning the more balanced stance it maintained in 2015, *Cumhuriyet* had become somewhat of an "unofficial party source" for the opposition by 2018.

Table 5. Messages sent by AKP/CHP (share of negativity) and reported in each newspaper[7]

Newspaper	November 1, 2015		June 24, 2018	
	AKP (%)	**CHP (%)**	**AKP (%)**	**CHP (%)**
Cumhuriyet	28 (60.7)	20 (60.0)	3 (66.6)	46 (65.2)
Sözcü	10 (50.0)	18 (66.6)	21 (28.5)	45 (58.3)
Hürriyet	46 (54.3)	28 (53.5)	45 (37.7)	33 (51.5)
Sabah	85 (58.8)	1 (0.0)	72 (65.2)	1 (0.0)
Türkiye	88 (59.0)	7 (14.2)	66 (69.6)	1 (1.0)
Yeni Safak	87 (55.1)	1 (0.0)	58 (60.3)	0 (0.0)
Total	**344 (57.2)**	**75 (53.3)**	**265 (57.7)**	**126 (60.3)**

4.4 Message-receiving agent

We also investigated the potential link between press-party parallelism and negativity bias by examining whom the messages were addressed to (message-receiving agent). The results, which are summarised in Table 6, show that the newspapers had a strong tendency to publish negative messages about one party and non-negative messages about the other.

In 2015, the oppositional newspapers addressed substantially fewer references at the AKP than at the CHP – the consideration of message-sending agents put aside. The AKP received most coverage, and the greatest share of coverage in relation to the CHP, from *Sözcü* and *Cumhuriyet*. Accordingly, the CHP received relatively few statements from the pro-government newspapers *Sabah*, *Türkiye* and *Yeni Safak*. Rather than addressing solely the

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[7] The table lists the number of all references – positive, negative and neutral – sent by the AKP or the CHP and printed in each newspaper. The percentages refer to the shares of negative messages among those references. For instance, *Hürriyet* printed 46 references from the AKP or affiliated persons in the run-up to the 2015 election, of which 54.3 percent were negative.

main opposition party CHP, references to the opposition were widely dispersed: Among the political parties, besides the CHP, the HDP (the mainly Kurdish-led "People's Democracy Party") and the MHP[8] (the ultraconservative "Nationalist Action Party") were addressed most frequently. Concerning the negativity and on the part of the mainstream and pro-governmental newspapers (*Hürriyet*, *Sabah*, *Türkiye* and *Yeni Safak*), references directed at the CHP remained highly negative.

Table 6. Messages addressed to the AKP/CHP (share of negativity) by each newspaper[9]

	November 1, 2015		June 24, 2018	
Newspaper	**AKP (%)**	**CHP (%)**	**AKP (%)**	**CHP (%)**
Cumhuriyet	74 (77.0)	3 (0.0)	75 (77.3)	11 (27.2)
Sözcü	75 (92.0)	3 (0.0)	94 (87.2)	23 (26.0)
Hürriyet	46 (82.6)	4 (100.0)	25 (60.0)	10 (80.0)
Sabah	9 (0.0)	8 (100.0)	40 (0.0)	50 (94.0)
Türkiye	11 (36.3)	8 (75.0)	10 (10.0)	48 (91.6)
Yeni Safak	9 (11.1)	4 (100.0)	22 (0.0)	41 (87.8)
Total	**224 (75.4)**	**30 (73.3)**	**266 (58.6)**	**183 (78.6)**

In 2018, the CHP increasingly became the addressee of newspaper messages. Negative appeals towards the CHP were concentrated among the (mainstream-) pro-government newspapers *Sabah*, *Türkiye* and *Yeni Safak*. The shares of negativity directed at the AKP among the pro-opposition newspapers *Cumhuriyet* and *Sözcü* still predominate the negativity towards the CHP. Therefore, the second sample period provides even stronger evidence of press-party parallelism if only the main two parties are considered.

In order to analyse the overall relationship between the newspapers, the tone and the addressee of the messages, we supplement the contingency tables with a three-way log linear analysis. This analysis offers a final model that retains all effects. The likelihood ratio is χ^2 (0) = 0, p = 1, which indicates that the highest-order interaction (newspaper × news tone × message recipient) is significant, with χ^2 (80) = 199.67, p < .001 for 2015 and χ^2 (80) = 325.74, p < .001 for 2018. To break this effect down, we conducted separate chi-square tests on the message-receiving agent and news tone for each newspaper separately for

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[8] In 2015, the MHP clearly considered itself an opposition party, which changed remarkably for the 2018 elections under the new constitution law, when the party even formed an electoral alliance with the AKP.
[9] The table lists the number of all references – positive, negative and neutral – adressing the AKP or the CHP by each newspaper for the two sample periods. The percentages refer to the shares of negative messages among those references. For instance in 2018, *Cumhuriyet* reported 75 references directed at the AKP, of which 77.3 percent were negative.

2015[10] and 2018[11]. The oppositional newspapers *Cumhuriyet* and *Sözcü* assumed a rather positive journalistic stance when mentioning the CHP and a negative stance whenever the AKP was addressed. The number of references directed at each party differed greatly. Oppositional newspapers were more likely to express their support by attacking the government, rather than by praising the opposition. *Sözcü*'s 92 percent negativity directed at the AKP in 2015 and 87 percent in 2018 made it more partisan than the traditionally more strongly pro-oppositional *Cumhuriyet*, whose negativity rate against the AKP was only 77 percent in both election periods. The pro-government newspapers *Sabah*, *Türkiye* and *Yeni Safak* followed this path: Although their messages were not directed exclusively at the CHP but addressed a range of other actors in 2015, partisanship was still evident. When these newspapers addressed opposition parties or actors, they did so mostly in a negative way, whereas the level of negativity was much lower when the ruling AKP was addressed. Due to the partisanship, *Türkiye* overtook the actually more pro-governmental *Yeni Safak* from 2015 to 2018: While *Türkiye*'s negativity share directed at the CHP increased from to 75 percent in 2015 to 91 percent in 2018, *Yeni Safaks'* fell from 100 percent to 87 percent.

4.5 Ownership structure

Lastly, we examined a final model (three-way hierarchical log linear analysis) for each of the three present ownership structures that retains the news tone in conjunction with the message-receiving agent. The association "ownership × news tone" is less significant for 2015,[12] the highest-order interaction "ownership × news tone × message-receiving agent" yielded significant results.[13] The likelihood ratio of all models was $\chi^2 (0) = 0$, p = 1.

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[10] For the 2015 election, there is a significant association between news tone and message-receiving agent for each newspaper: *Cumhuriyet*: $\chi^2 (16) = 41.05$, p = .001. Cramer's V = .413. *Sözcü*: $\chi^2 (14) = 57.87$, p < .001. Cramer's V = .528. *Hürriyet*: $\chi^2 (16) = 51.12$, p < .001. Cramer's V = .461. *Sabah*: $\chi^2 (16) = 76.81$, p < .001. Cramer's V = .548. *Türkiye*: $\chi^2 (16) = 29.98$, p = .018. Cramer's V = .338. *Yeni Safak*: $\chi^2 (16) = 52.29$, p < .001. Cramer's V = .454.

[11] For the 2018 election, there is a significant and strong association between news tone and message-receiving agent for each newspaper: *Cumhuriyet*: $\chi^2 (12) = 57.93$, p < .001. Cramer's V = .520. *Sözcü*: $\chi^2 (12) = 75.14$, p < .001. Cramer's V = .504. *Hürriyet*: $\chi^2 (12) = 41.45$, p < .001. Cramer's V = 506. *Sabah*: $\chi^2 (14) = 159.01$, p < .001. Cramer's V = .751. *Türkiye*: $\chi^2 (14) = 68.82$, p < .001. Cramer's V = .575. *Yeni Safak*: $\chi^2 (14) = 111.69$, p < .001. Cramer's V = .679.

[12] *Conglomerate/cross*: p = .560; *Chain*: p = .450; *Independent*: p = 0.560. This was negligible because the effects were consolidated with the significant higher-order interaction of "ownership × news tone × message-receiving agent".

[13] *Conglomerate/cross*: 2015: $\chi2 (16) = 91.96$, p < .001; 2018: $\chi2 (16) = 215.70$, p < .001.
Chain: 2015: $\chi^2 (16) = 38.95$, p = .001; 2018: $\chi^2 (16) = 79.39$, p < .001
Independent: 2015: $\chi2 (16) = 91.96$, p < .001; 2018: $\chi2 (16) = 215.70$, p < .001
This demonstrates, that the expected values generated by the model were not significantly different from the observed data. Therefore, the model is a good fit of the data.

To break this analysis further down, separate chi-square tests on the message-receiving agent (AKP vs. CHP) and news tone were performed specifically. This test showed a strong association between the message-receiving agent and the level of negativity bias, as seen in Table 7.

Table 7. News tone by message-receiving agent (addressee) and ownership structure[14]

Tone	November 1, 2015 AKP (%)			November 1, 2015 CHP (%)			June 24, 2018 AKP (%)			June 24, 2018 CHP (%)		
	congl. /cross	chain	indep.	congl. /cross	chain	indep.	congl. /cross	chain	indep.	congl. /cross	chain	indep.
Neg.	43 (57.3)	112 (74.6)	126 (84.5)	22 (91.6)	22 (81.4)	0 (0.0)	16 (16.4)	98 (51.3)	140 (82.8)	135 (90.0)	141 (81.9)	9 (27.2)
Pos.	22 (29.3)	22 (14.6)	4 (2.6)	1 (4.1)	4 (14.8)	5 (83.3)	72 (74.2)	72 (37.6)	1 (0.5)	2 (1.3)	10 (5.8)	15 (45.4)
Neut.	10 (13.3)	16 (10.6)	19 (12.7)	1 (4.1)	1 (3.7)	1 (16.6)	9 (9.2)	21 (10.9)	28 (16.5)	13 (8.6)	21 (12.2)	9 (27.2)
Total	75	150	149	24	27	6	97	191	169	150	172	33

Overall, we found a strong relationship between newspapers of a particular ownership structure and tone towards specific addressees. Media outlets owned by a *conglomerate/cross-media holdings* display less negativity towards the AKP (57.3% and 16.4% for 2015 and 2018, respectively) and more negativity towards the CHP (91.6% and 90.0% for 2015 and 2018, respectively). Their share of positive statements towards the AKP (29.3%) exceeded the corresponding share towards the CHP (4.1%) by a factor of more than 7 in 2015, and by a factor of 57 in 2018 (74.2% vs. 1.3%). These differences highlight the extent of political parallelism among those Turkish news outlets in our sample that are owned by companies that are either also active in other business sectors or possess multiple media outlets. Note, however, that we cannot say anything about the source of this partisanship: Do these

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[14] Percentages within the particular addressee (e.g. AKP or CHP) are given in the parentheses. A moderate (conglomerate/cross) or strong (independent) association between the message-receiving agent and the news tone was observed. The relationship between the two variables was statistically significant (for *chain* only in 2018).
Conglomerate/cross: 2015: χ^2 (6) =13.31, p= .038, Cramer's V= 0.259; 2018: χ^2 (6) =156.63, p<.001. Cramer's V= 0.563.
Chain: 2015: χ^2 (6) = 7.01, p = .317, Cramer´s V = 0.141; 2018: χ^2 (6) = 68.55, p < .001, Cramer´s V= 0.307.
Independent: 2015: χ^2 (6) = 78.11, p < .001, Cramer´s V = 0.502; 2018: χ^2 (4) = 83.60, p < .001, Cramer´s V = 0.455.

newspapers inherently lean towards the AKP (ideology) or do they simply support whichever party happens to be in office (opportunism)?

For the selected *chain ownership* newspapers, the relationship between the ownership pattern and the overall tone towards a specific addressee was weaker. In 2015, 81.4% of the statements directed at the CHP where negative, compared to only 74.6% of those directed at the AKP. Although the difference is not as large as above in the case of conglomerate/cross-media ownership, we do find that chain ownership media outlets, too, were more critical of the CHP than of the AKP. However, the difference was larger in 2018: Negativity towards the CHP was 30% higher than towards the AKP. Furthermore, the newspapers' rate of positive tonality towards the ruling AKP was nearly 6.5 times higher than towards the oppositional CHP.

Lastly, the *independent* media outlets showed strong partisan orientation in both election periods. In 2015, almost 85 percent of the messages addressed to the AKP were negative, but none that concerned the CHP. Conversely, positivity for the CHP was 32 times higher than positivity towards the AKP. In 2018, the partisan orientation was slightly less pronounced. The independent newspapers were both more critical of, and less positive towards, the CHP than in 2015. However, given more than 80% negative appeals directed at the AKP, the political preferences remained clear.

Finally, an overall tendency for a clear and negative positioning can be stated across all ownership structures. Exceptions from this only exist for independent newspapers addressing the CHP in 2015 and 2018 and conglomerate/cross owned newspapers addressing the AKP (2018). Here, positivity exceeds negativity or neutrality.

5   Conclusion

This paper has examined the link between negativity and political parallelism, and connect it with media ownership structures using the example of the news coverage of Turkey's general election in November 2015 and the snap election in June 2018.

Partisanship and Negativity

We found confirmation for our *first set of hypothesis* regarding partisanship of the newspapers. For both election campaigns, the news coverage was overwhelmingly negative (H 1a). The level of negativity mainly correlates with the journalistic initiative (negative references directly created by the journalists were 81.9% in 2015 and 75.8% in 2018). Furthermore, newspapers predominantly operate in accordance with their political alignment:

Negative messages are mainly sent by a newspapers´ endorsed party. In addition, newspapers relied on negative coverage to criticise their political opponents and thereby express support for their endorsed party (H 1b). Although some exceptions (Cumhuriyet 2015, Hürriyet, 2018), all newspapers in the sample showed some indication of favouritism, so it appears that attacking others was the way in which these Turkish newspapers support "their side" of the political struggle. The intensification of these effects from 2015 to 2018 (H 1c) is partially visible: In sum and across the newspapers, the negativity level stays consistent but the allocation changes: The negativity among indirect messages, sent by the CHP and addressed at the CHP increased. This dynamic suggests that the ruling party (AKP) has gained power not only in the political sphere, but also in the media sphere.

Ownership, negativity bias, political parallelism

The *second set of hypothesis* was confirmed to a certain degree. Contrary to the first part hypothesis, independently owned newspapers offered considerably more negative coverage than conglomerate/cross-media or chain ownership structures (H 2a). A direct influence of ownership structures on the newspapers' negativity levels could not be observed. Irrespective of the ownership patterns, negative messages were transferred much more frequently than positive or neutral ones during both election campaigns. The second part, however, can be confirmed: We found a strong and positive relationship between ownership patterns and tone towards specific recipients. Newspapers under conglomerate/cross-ownership show higher negativity rates towards the opposition (CHP) and lower negativity rates as well as higher positivity rates towards the ruling party (AKP). The same pattern applies, albeit to a lesser degree, to chain ownership. Independently owned newspapers also exhibit a strong relationship between tone and recipient, but in the reverse direction: They systemically favoured the oppositional CHP over the ruling AKP (H 2b). Concerning the conglomerate/cross- and chain-ownerships, the partisan behaviour intensified from 2015 to 2018 (H 2c). This was not the case with independently owned newspapers. Here, negativity towards the CHP increases in favour of decreasing negativity towards the AKP.

As to the reasons for these observations, supply-driven factors may shed some light on the incidence of negativity levels and partisan bias. These include firstly business-related preferences and profit considerations. Several newspapers that belong to more sectarian and religious community-based media outlets have maintained close relationships with the (ruling) AKP government and played a crucial role as "influential sources of inspiration and legitimacy" for the party (Kumbaracibasi, 2009, pp. 158). For instance, the *Yeni Safak*

newspaper is owned by the Albayrak group, which is closely associated with the Nakshibandia (*Naksibendi*) sect. The Albayrak group has close ties with the government and generates the ideological roots of the party, which may cause some ideological preferences (Kumbaracibasi, 2009; Bayazit, 2016). Besides such idiosyncratic political leanings, several media companies have won several large tenders for public projects, which may provide some indication as to their motivation. The Albayrak Group has been particularly active in non-media fields, winning tenders for example for the construction of the Istanbul underground railway and the production of tanks for the Turkish army (Media Ownership Monitor Turkey, 2017)[15]. Low levels of negative coverage directed at the AKP might be explained in a similar fashion by non-media business interests with respect to Ihlas Holding (*Türkiye*) and the Kalyon Group (*Sabah*).[16] Secondly, political motives and idiosyncratic preferences on the part of reporters for the oppositional newspapers (*Cumhuriyet* and *Sözcü*) may have caused higher negativity levels towards the ruling AKP and lower negativity levels towards the oppositional CHP. Such tendencies may have been spurred by the (threat of) imprisonment of numerous journalists on defamatory charges against President Erdogan. In this regard, Yavcan and Ongur (2014) draw attention to *Cumhuriyet*'s surge in sales in response to the imprisonment of their head journalist Mustafa Balbay on allegations regarding the Ergenekon trial[17] in 2009. *Cumhuriyet*'s sales again increased when the editor-in-chief Can Dündar and the journalist Erdem Gül were imprisoned on November 26, 2015.[18] Finally, the economic upswing of the *Sözcü* in August 2018 (achievement of the third highest sales in Turkey after *Sabah* and *Hürriyet*) may have strengthened their keen oppositional strategy.

The information we have presented confirms the theory of press-party parallelism. The results on the source of the messages show that neither oppositional nor conservative or mainstream newspapers devote equal coverage to the two main parties (AKP/CHP). This bias of voice allocation highlights the omnipresence of "favouritism" among Turkish newspapers. The nonexistence critique concerning unbalanced stance in presenting different sides of the

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[15] Launched by the German section of the Reporters without Borders; The Media Ownership Monitor also drew attention to the revenue of the Albayrak group, which reached up to USD 1 billion in 2008 compared to USD 150 million in 2000.

[16] The Kalyon group was involved for example in public projects such as the Taksim square pedestrianization, Istanbul's third airport and underground railway construction. The Ihlas Group has been responsible for urban renewal and other construction projects in Istanbul and across Turkey.

[17] Ergenekon is the name of a clandestine network accused of attempting to overthrow the government and to instigate armed riots. The trial came into prominence in 2008. However, the coup plot convictions were declared "unproven" by the Turkey's highest appeal court in 2016.

[18] Sales in the last week of November 2015 increased by 13.5 percent over the previous week (www.medyatava.com/tiraj, last accessed on 04.09.2020).

discussion during the election campaign periods even exacerbates the bias. Regarding political implications, it is to be noted that such biased news messages, some of which have even intensified over time, also may lead to more unbalanced election campaigns. The moment a newspaper clearly positions itself politically and even makes itself financially dependent on the ruling party, this attitude will consolidate rather than dissolve in the future. In addition, close connections of politics, media and business sectors also lead to increasing dependence of the media on political results and the economic situation. This, too, will eventually lead to more biased reporting.[19] Society's desire for an independent press is thus indispensable for the further development of fair and free democracies.

In this regard, the paper has contributed to a practical and empirical basis for the theoretical literature on media bias. The results also confirmed consistency between the (individual) journalistic initiative with the ideological goals of the news organisations: Journalists were not disinclined to persuade the media consumers via direct negative or positive messages to support either the ruling party or the opposition. Finally, supply-driven reasons fit well with the discussion of media bias during the Turkish parliamentary election campaigns. Non-media activities and participation in large public tenders constitute potential motives of the media outlets' political alignment. In particular, the thereby economical competition among non-independent owned media outlets (i.e. conglomerate, cross- or chain media ownerships) was unlikely to reduce the appearance of media bias.

Having examined the relationship between negativity bias, partisan appeals of the newspapers and media ownership in Turkey during two election periods, this paper has offered a critical outlook on journalistic professionalism and political parallelism in Turkey. The methods of analysis can equally be applied to alternative newspaper samples, periods and countries. Such research can further enlighten media-government relations and the (manipulative) role of negativity – particularly in what appears to be a global surge of populism.

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[19] The relationship between Fox News and the Republican Party may be the American example for close connections between politics, media and business sectors.

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