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Mediated Securitization of Migration in Turkey: Media Frames, Editorial Variation, and Migration Governance, 2011–2023

Gülseren Ergün
Department of New Media and Communication, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Karaman, Türkiye

Melike Ateş Emiroğlu
Department of New Media, Institute of Social Sciences, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Karaman, Türkiye

Ali Can
Department of New Media and Communication, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Karaman, Türkiye; alican@kmu.edu.tr

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Abstract

This article examines how Turkish news media contributed to the discursive securitization of migration and how refugee representations corresponded with contemporaneous developments in migration governance. While existing research has largely emphasized state actors, elite speech acts, and formal policy instruments, the communicative dimensions of securitization remain comparatively underexplored. Drawing on 250 news items published in seven nationally circulated newspapers between 2011 and 2023, together with selected policy and institutional documents, the study employs qualitative media discourse analysis and structured cross-period comparison. The findings reveal a non-linear reconfiguration of migration coverage: humanitarian representations persisted but increasingly coexisted with narratives of fiscal burden, demographic permanence, cultural tension, public disorder, and security risk. In some of the examined reports, criminal and terror-related incidents intensified threat-oriented associations by foregrounding refugee or foreign identity and extending the significance of individual events to wider migrant populations. Despite substantial editorial differences in political interpretation and responsibility attribution, the selected newspapers displayed thematic overlap in representing prolonged displacement as an enduring concern of migration governance, without necessarily endorsing the same or substantively comparable policy interventions. The analysis identifies temporal and discursive correspondence between these representations and increasingly control-oriented governance practices without claiming direct media effects on policy. The article develops a conceptual model of recursive mediated securitization and distinguishes cross-editorial thematic overlap from the more restrictive proposition of issue-matched cross-ideological convergence, thereby clarifying how competing humanitarian, administrative, political, and security rationales may coexist within migration governance.

Keywords: Mediated securitization; migration governance; media discourse; editorial variation; Turkey.

1. INTRODUCTION

International migration is increasingly governed not only as a humanitarian, demographic, or socio-economic matter but also as a problem of public order and national security. This is especially evident in contexts marked by forced displacement, political instability, border insecurity, and terrorist violence. Since the September 11 attacks and the subsequent global "war on terror," migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees have often been represented as security risks, although empirical research does not support the simple assumption that immigration generally produces terrorism [1–3]. Migration becomes securitized, therefore, not simply because it constitutes a clearly established or objectively measurable danger, but because it is publicly constructed and institutionally governed as a threat.

Classical securitization theory explains how political actors frame issues as existential threats to legitimize measures that might otherwise fall outside ordinary politics [4]. Migration research has accordingly examined elite speech acts, restrictive legislation, border control, detention, surveillance, and institutional change [1, 2, 5]. Later scholarship has broadened this perspective by emphasizing audiences, context, bureaucratic practices, and non-state actors [6, 7]. Yet the communicative processes through which migration-related threats acquire visibility, circulate across political divisions, and become normalized remain underexamined, particularly in non-Western refugee-hosting contexts.

News media occupy an important position within these communicative and political processes. Through framing, repetition, categorization, source selection, and narrative emphasis, reports shape the frameworks through which migration becomes publicly meaningful [8]. They may connect migrants to terrorism, crime, economic burden, cultural incompatibility, or disorder, making nationality, refugee status, or foreignness salient even when unnecessary to explain an event. Moral panic and risk-society theory help illuminate how collective labels, uncertainty, and anticipated danger can magnify individual incidents and extend their significance to wider populations [9, 10].

Media discourse should not, however, be treated either as a passive channel for elite claims or as an independent cause of attitudes and policy change. News organizations may reproduce official positions, amplify incidents, articulate social concerns, challenge government policy, or demand regulation. Political statements and institutional measures, in turn, provide categories and authoritative signals for subsequent reporting. This article conceptualizes these interactions as recursive mediated securitization: a process in which media frames, political claims, public controversies, and governance practices may reinforce, redirect, or contest one another without necessarily following any single or predetermined causal sequence. Newspaper discourse is therefore examined as one component of the wider communicative conditions of securitization, not as evidence of audience acceptance or policy causation.

Turkey provides an instructive setting for examining these dynamics. Following the Syrian conflict in 2011, the country became one of the world's largest refugee-hosting states, with most displaced Syrians under temporary protection. Early discourse often emphasized hospitality, religious solidarity, and moral responsibility. As displacement became prolonged, public debate increasingly incorporated fiscal costs, employment and services, urban capacity, demographic permanence, citizenship, return, and social cohesion. These concerns developed amid insecurity, economic pressure, electoral competition, and political polarization, allowing humanitarian and security-oriented interpretations to coexist.

Existing research has examined migration governance in Turkey, party-political approaches to Syrian displacement, social acceptance, and media representations of refugees [11–13]. This scholarship shows that humanitarian, economic, political, and exclusionary narratives overlap. Less attention has been devoted to how these frames evolved across ideologically differentiated newspapers, how criminal or terror-related incidents were connected to broader migrant categories, and how changing representations corresponded with contemporaneous governance developments. A longitudinal and multi-outlet perspective is important because securitization may develop cumulatively through repeated categorizations, critical events, and the normalization of migration as a problem of burden, permanence, risk, and control.

The article therefore asks: *How did Turkish newspapers with different editorial orientations construct and circulate migration-related frames between 2011 and 2023, and how did these frames resonate with contemporaneous developments in migration governance?* The analysis focuses on humanitarian protection, economic and administrative burden, cultural tension, crime, public order, terrorism, and security-oriented regulation. It also examines how collective labels, references to nationality or legal status, metaphors, and other forms of narrative amplification extended individual events to wider migrant populations.

The study draws on 250 news items published in seven nationally circulated newspapers representing pro-government, opposition-oriented, mainstream or centrist, and period-specific editorial positions. Qualitative discourse analysis and structured cross-period comparison examine frames, categorizations, source structures, responsibility attributions, metaphors, and shifts in emphasis across four periods. These patterns are considered alongside selected legal, policy, and institutional developments. The design supports relational analysis while limiting its claims to temporal and discursive correspondence rather than direct causal influence.

The findings indicate that migration coverage did not undergo a simple transition from humanitarianism to securitization. Humanitarian representations persisted throughout the study period but increasingly coexisted with narratives of fiscal

burden, demographic permanence, cultural tension, public disorder, and security risk. In some reports, criminal, violent, and terror-related incidents intensified threat-oriented associations by foregrounding migrant nationality or legal status and generalizing individual events. Editorial differences nevertheless remained in source selection, responsibility attribution, moral evaluation, and the justification of intervention.

The article distinguishes between cross-editorial thematic overlap and the stronger proposition of issue-matched cross-ideological convergence. The former refers to the recurrence of related migration governance concerns across politically differentiated newspapers, even when the reports address different events or policy problems. The latter would require evidence that newspapers with different editorial orientations supported substantively comparable interventions in response to the same identifiable issue. This distinction prevents the shared recognition of migration as a public concern from being treated automatically as ideological convergence or securitization.

The article contributes a conceptual framework of recursive mediated securitization and a longitudinal account of how humanitarian, administrative, political, public-order, and security-related frames coexisted and changed across selected Turkish newspapers between 2011 and 2023. Its findings position Turkey as a hybrid protection–control configuration while identifying issue-matched convergence and potential reciprocal causal mechanisms as questions requiring further empirical investigation.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Securitization theory explains how an issue comes to be understood and governed as a security threat through political articulation, audience recognition, and institutional practice rather than through its objective characteristics alone. In the Copenhagen School's classical formulation, political actors frame an issue as an existential threat in order to legitimize measures that might otherwise fall outside ordinary political procedures [4]. Applied to migration, this perspective directs attention to the processes through which migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees are represented as threats to public order, cultural cohesion, territorial integrity, or national security.

Research across Europe and North America has shown that such representations became especially prominent after the September 11 attacks and subsequent terrorist incidents [1, 2]. Migration has increasingly been addressed through surveillance, detention, restrictive border control, and preventive practices that translate uncertain or anticipated dangers into objects of security governance. Securitization does not necessarily require migrants to be portrayed as direct or immediate threats. It may also develop through diffuse associations among migration, crime, disorder, demographic pressure, cultural difference, and future insecurity. Repeated associations of this kind can normalize increasingly restrictive measures by presenting them as necessary forms of precaution or risk management.

Much of the early literature focused on political leaders, official speech acts, legislation, and security institutions. These approaches clarify how states authorize and implement exceptional or control-oriented measures, but they offer a less complete account of how threat interpretations acquire wider visibility and social plausibility. Political claims are rarely effective in isolation. They are circulated, modified, contested, and normalized within broader communicative environments. Understanding migration securitization therefore requires attention not only to state actors but also to the media and other societal actors that participate in constructing the conditions under which migration becomes intelligible as a security problem.

News media are central to the production and circulation of migration-related meanings. Media discourse does not simply reflect existing understandings of security; it also participates in their reproduction, modification, and normalization [8]. Through framing, repetition, source selection, categorization, and narrative emphasis, news reports make some aspects of migration more visible than others. When nationality, legal status, or foreignness is foregrounded in reports concerning crime, terrorism, economic pressure, or public disorder, the significance of individual incidents may be extended to wider migrant populations.

The concept of moral panic helps explain how particular groups can become generalized symbols of danger. Moral panics emerge when persons or social categories are represented as threats to shared values and when the scale or meaning of that threat is amplified through repeated and emotionally charged representation [10]. Migrants and refugees may consequently be positioned as "folk devils" associated with crime, economic decline, cultural disruption, or insecurity even where the available evidence does not support such generalization. The concept is useful not because every negative report necessarily produces public hostility, but because it identifies mechanisms through which isolated events, collective labels, and intensified threat narratives can magnify social concern.

Beck's concept of the risk society [9] complements this account by locating media-driven threat construction within a wider context of uncertainty and anticipatory governance. In late-modern societies, public and institutional attention increasingly focuses on dangers that are uncertain, difficult to calculate, or located in the future. Migration may therefore become a symbolic risk category onto which anxieties concerning economic precarity, demographic change, globalization, cultural transformation, and political instability are projected. Media narratives linking migrants to terrorism are particularly consequential because they connect visible identities to uncertain and potentially catastrophic harms, despite the absence

of a systematic empirical relationship between immigration and terrorism [3].

Media do not construct such meanings independently of political discourse or institutional practice. News organizations may reproduce official claims, amplify episodic incidents, contest government policy, or provide visibility to demands for greater regulation. Political statements and governance measures, in turn, supply categories, events, and authoritative sources that shape subsequent reporting. Media discourse should therefore be understood neither as a passive channel of elite securitization nor as an autonomous source of public fear. It forms part of a wider communicative environment in which migration-related risks are repeatedly interpreted, contested, and normalized.

Post-Copenhagen School scholarship has moved beyond the view of securitization as a discrete elite speech act followed by passive audience acceptance. Whether a threat claim becomes politically consequential depends on social and historical context, the authority of the actors involved, institutional practices, audience positions, and the settings in which the claim is circulated and contested [7, 14–16]. Securitization is therefore better understood as a situated and relational process through which particular interpretations of danger acquire visibility, legitimacy, and institutional relevance.

Within this process, news media operate as more than channels for official discourse. They may reproduce political claims, reinterpret critical events, amplify public controversies, challenge government policies, or give visibility to demands for intervention. Their role varies according to editorial orientation and political context. A pro-government newspaper may reinforce an official humanitarian or security narrative, whereas an opposition-oriented outlet may criticize government policy while still representing migration as a problem of burden, permanence, disorder, or institutional control. Media participation in securitization cannot therefore be reduced either to top-down transmission or to an autonomous bottom-up challenge.

Building on this relational approach, the article conceptualizes recursive mediated securitization as a process in which media frames, political claims, public controversies, and institutional responses repeatedly interact. The analysis does not assume a single decisive actor, nor does it presuppose a fixed or uniform causal sequence. Media reporting may increase the visibility of particular threat interpretations; political actors may reproduce, contest, or appropriate them; and subsequent governance measures may provide new categories and authoritative signals for further reporting. The process is recursive because discursive and institutional developments can re-enter later cycles of political communication, media representation, and public debate.

Top-down and bottom-up dynamics are therefore treated as possible directions within the same configuration rather than as competing explanations. Official institutions may introduce categories through which migration is subsequently reported, while media narratives and public controversies may increase pressure for political response. More often, these directions overlap. The analytical emphasis consequently falls on circulation, recontextualization, and reciprocal reinforcement rather than on identifying a single point of origin or attributing the process exclusively to the state, the media, or society.

The position of audiences within this model requires caution. Newspaper discourse reveals the interpretive frameworks made publicly available, but it does not demonstrate how readers receive, accept, reject, or negotiate them. Survey and experimental research may provide contextual evidence about perceived threat, social distance, or policy preferences, but it cannot establish that the specific reports examined here directly produced particular attitudes. The present study therefore examines mediated securitizing moves and the discursive conditions of their possible acceptance rather than claiming to measure completed audience endorsement.

Two analytical distinctions follow from this framework. First, the study differentiates between migration's governability and its explicit securitization. Newspapers may represent prolonged displacement as requiring protection, registration, capacity management, status determination, policing, mobility regulation, or return without necessarily constructing migrants as threats. Such representations become more explicitly securitizing when intervention is justified through generalized danger, prevention, surveillance, restriction, containment, or control.

Second, the framework distinguishes discursive correspondence from causal influence. Media narratives and governance developments may display temporal and conceptual resonance, but such correspondence does not establish that news coverage independently caused particular policy outcomes. The analysis therefore examines how media frames, political claims, and institutional practices intersect while preserving distinctions among discursive construction, audience reception, and decision-making.

Figure 1 presents recursive mediated securitization as a conceptual relationship among media frames, political discourse, public controversies, and migration governance practices. It highlights possible interactions and feedback without assuming a fixed causal sequence.

The figure illustrates theoretically plausible interactions among media frames, political discourse, public controversies, and migration governance practices. Dashed bidirectional arrows indicate possible circulation, reinterpretation, contestation, and discursive or temporal resonance rather than empirically established causal relationships. Institutional measures and official communications may subsequently become subjects of media reporting and political debate. The model does not assume a fixed sequence, uniform audience acceptance, or that all migration governance practices constitute

securitization.

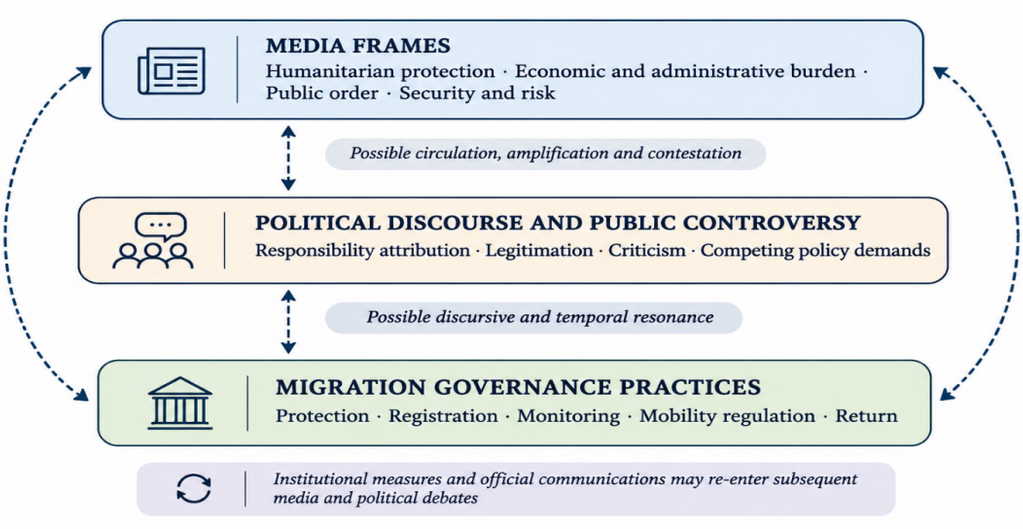


Figure 1. *Conceptual Model of Recursive Mediated Securitization in Migration Governance*

This framework is particularly appropriate for Turkey, where prolonged displacement, humanitarian discourse, political polarization, public controversy, and security-oriented governance coexist. It enables the analysis to examine how migration becomes intelligible as a matter of protection, governability, risk, and, in some instances, control, without assuming a linear progression from media representation to institutional response.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The present study adopts an interpretive, qualitative research design to examine how migration-related meanings and threat perceptions were constructed, circulated, and reconfigured in Turkish newspaper coverage. Rather than treating migration as an objectively measurable security risk, it investigates the discursive processes through which migrants and refugees became intelligible as objects of protection, burden, public-order concern, or security intervention. This approach is consistent with critical migration scholarship emphasizing that migration governance is shaped by discourse, categorization, and public interpretation as well as by material security conditions [17, 18].

The research combines qualitative media discourse analysis with the contextual examination of selected policy and institutional materials. Media analysis identifies how migration-related meanings were framed, contested, and normalized, while legal texts, policy documents, official statements, and institutional reports are used to assess temporal and discursive correspondence between media representations and governance developments [19].

The design follows an interpretive and constructivist logic rather than seeking statistical causal inference. It does not assume that media narratives preceded institutional responses, independently produced public attitudes, or directly caused particular policy measures. Instead, it examines how media frames, political claims, public controversies, and governance practices may have intersected within a recursive communicative environment. The analysis therefore distinguishes among discursive production, unmeasured audience reception, and institutional decision-making.

The primary media corpus consists of 250 news items and news-section materials published between 2011 and 2023 in seven nationally circulated Turkish newspapers. This period encompasses the initial arrival of displaced Syrians, the institutionalization of temporary protection, the prolongation of displacement, prominent public-order and security controversies, and increasingly contested questions of migration governance, political membership, and return. The corpus was constructed to examine variation and change in migration-related representations across different editorial environments and historical contexts rather than to estimate the statistical prevalence of particular frames in the Turkish press.

Newspaper selection was informed by editorial diversity and national circulation. The study includes Sabah and Yeni Şafak as pro-government newspapers; Cumhuriyet and Sözcü as opposition-oriented newspapers; and Hürriyet and Milliyet as mainstream or centrist newspapers. Posta is treated as period-specific because its editorial positioning changed during the research period, particularly following changes in ownership. These classifications serve as contextual analytical categories rather than fixed or internally homogeneous ideological identities. Their purpose is to facilitate comparison among different political and journalistic approaches to migration. Comparative studies of refugee coverage also illustrate the value of examining varied editorial environments [20].

The corpus was assembled through criterion-based purposive sampling informed by editorial diversity and the study's

theoretical concerns. Newspaper archives were examined using migration-related Turkish terms, including mülteci [refugee], Suriyeli [Syrian], sığınmacı [asylum seeker], göçmen [migrant], and düzensiz göç [irregular migration], in conjunction with topics relating to humanitarian protection, economic and administrative burden, cultural and identity-based tensions, crime, terrorism, public order, border governance, and security. These themes correspond to the principal analytical concerns developed in the theoretical framework and subsequently refined through engagement with the selected material.

The central criterion for inclusion was the substantive relevance of migration, refugee identity, nationality, or legal status to the report's narrative and analytical significance. Items were selected when they provided material for examining at least one of the study's principal concerns: humanitarian representations; economic or administrative pressures; cultural or identity-based interpretations; public-order and security associations; or the amplification of migration-related risks and fears. Particular attention was given to reports in which these themes intersected, where individual incidents were connected to broader migrant categories, or where political and institutional actors advanced competing interpretations of migration governance.

The selection also sought to capture contrasting discursive configurations rather than only reports supporting a predetermined securitization narrative. Humanitarian and rights-oriented representations, administrative and capacity-related concerns, and critical accounts of restrictive governance practices were considered alongside explicitly threat-oriented reporting. This approach was intended to make visible the coexistence of protection and control, as well as the different justificatory routes through which newspapers represented migration as an enduring matter of public governance.

The final corpus includes 250 items across the seven selected newspapers, with the outlet-level distribution presented in Table 1. The sample was not constructed through proportional allocation according to newspaper circulation, publication volume, or the number of search results returned by each archive. Nor were equal numerical quotas imposed across newspapers or analytical periods. Differences in the final number of items per newspaper therefore reflect the composition of the purposively selected corpus and should not be interpreted as measures of the relative prominence of migration-related reporting within the respective outlets.

Table 1. *Composition of the Media Corpus by Newspaper and Editorial Orientation*

Newspaper	Period-specific editorial orientation	Study-period coverage	Edition(s) searched	Final number of news items (n)	Share of the corpus (%)
Sabah	Pro-government	2011-2023	Online	43	17.2
Yeni Şafak	Pro-government	2011-2023	Online	32	12.8
Cumhuriyet	Opposition-oriented	2011-2023	Online	46	18.4
Sözcü	Opposition-oriented	2011-2023	Online	27	10.8
Posta	Period-specific: opposition-leaning during the earlier period examined; closer to the mainstream following the subsequent ownership change	2011-2023	Online	35	14.0
Hürriyet	Mainstream/centrist	2011-2023	Online	38	15.2
Milliyet	Mainstream/centrist	2011-2023	Online	29	11.6
Total	-	2011-2023	-	250	100.0

Note. Editorial classifications are period-specific analytical categories and should not be understood as fixed or unchanging institutional attributes. Posta is classified with reference to changes in its ownership and editorial orientation during the study period. The reported figures describe the composition of the purposively selected corpus and do not indicate the relative volume of migration coverage in each newspaper. The study period does not imply that every newspaper is represented by at least one item in every individual year.

The initial archive searches and eligibility assessments were not accompanied by a complete quantitative retrieval and exclusion log. Consequently, the total number of initially retrieved items, the number screened and excluded for each newspaper, and the corresponding inclusion rates cannot be reconstructed reliably. These figures are therefore not reported or retrospectively estimated. Although the selection criteria and the final corpus can be described, the absence of complete screening counts limits the procedural reproducibility of the sampling process.

For longitudinal analysis, the material was organized around four interpretive periods: 2011–2014, 2015–2017, 2018–2020, and 2021–2023. These periods reflect changes in the political, social, and institutional context of migration governance rather than an assumption that media discourse developed through sharply separated or internally uniform stages. The comparative analysis draws on illustrative reports from the principal editorial orientations within each period, as demonstrated in the period-aligned comparisons presented in Section 4. The availability of such cases supports qualitative comparison of contrasting narratives but does not establish numerical balance across all newspaper–period combinations.

Accordingly, the study distinguishes analytical coverage from statistical representativeness. Its longitudinal claims concern the emergence, persistence, recombination, and changing contextual significance of identifiable frames within the selected material. They do not imply that the frequency of a frame increased or decreased across the Turkish newspaper population, or that every editorial category contributed an equivalent number of items in every period. The resulting corpus is therefore best understood as an analytically selected body of media texts suitable for interpretive discourse analysis and bounded cross-period comparison rather than as a probability sample or an exhaustive archive of migration coverage [21].

The analysis proceeded in two stages. The first stage examined how migration-related meanings were constructed within the selected media corpus; the second stage compared the ways in which similar or contrasting patterns operated across editorial orientations and analytical periods.

In the first stage, qualitative discourse analysis focused on framing, categorization, metaphor, source selection, responsibility attribution, and narrative structure [22]. Particular attention was given to whether migrant nationality or legal status was foregrounded, how individual incidents were connected to wider populations, and how humanitarian, administrative, political, and threat-oriented vocabularies made particular forms of intervention appear intelligible or legitimate.

Coding followed an iterative, theory-informed procedure. Initial categories were derived from securitization theory and scholarship on media framing, moral panic, risk society, and affective politics. They were subsequently refined through open coding and repeated engagement with the corpus so that recurring themes and narrative structures not fully captured by the initial framework could be incorporated. Five principal categories guided the analysis:

- *Humanitarian framing:* refugees and migrants represented as vulnerable persons deserving protection, care, or solidarity;
- *Economic and administrative burden:* references to employment, public expenditure, welfare provision, service capacity, or urban pressure;
- *Cultural and identity-based framing:* representations of migrants as culturally incompatible, demographically consequential, or socially disruptive;
- *Public-order and security framing:* associations among migration, crime, terrorism, violence, border insecurity, or social disorder;
- *Risk amplification and fear rhetoric:* emergency metaphors, invasion imagery, numerical escalation, anticipated danger, and other devices magnifying the significance of migration-related events.

Because coding and interpretation were conducted by a single researcher, the study does not claim intercoder reliability. Consistency was instead supported through repeated close reading, systematic memo-writing, iterative refinement of categories, and continuous comparison across newspapers and periods. Emerging interpretations were tested against the wider corpus, including cases that complicated or contradicted the principal patterns.

The second stage used a structured, period-aligned comparison across four analytical periods: 2011–2014, 2015–2017, 2018–2020, and 2021–2023. Where suitable material was available, reports from pro-government, mainstream or centrist, and opposition-oriented newspapers were compared through six common dimensions:

1. the principal source or authorized voice;
2. the position assigned to refugees or migrants;
3. the actor held responsible;
4. the moral, political, administrative, or security vocabulary employed;
5. the mechanism connecting an individual event to a wider migrant population; and
6. the governance response rendered intelligible or legitimate.

The period-aligned comparison was designed to examine interpretive variation rather than to achieve numerical equivalence among editorial categories. The presence of illustrative cases from different editorial orientations within each period allowed the analysis to compare how migration was represented through humanitarian, administrative, political, and security-related rationales. However, these illustrative comparisons should not be interpreted as evidence of equal coverage across outlets or periods. Where comparable material was limited, the analysis was restricted to the available cases, and the resulting interpretations were treated as context-specific rather than representative of all reporting within an editorial category.

Cross-editorial comparison distinguished two levels of correspondence. The first examined thematic overlap: the recurrence of related migration governance concerns across editorial orientations within the same analytical period, even when reports addressed different events. The second specified a stricter issue-matched criterion for assessing potential cross-ideological convergence. Under this criterion, reports from at least two editorial orientations must concern the same identifiable event, policy controversy, institutional measure, or specific governance problem and endorse substantively comparable responses despite differences in justification or responsibility attribution.

Comparisons considered publication dates, actors and sources, problem definitions, proposed interventions, and their underlying rationales. References to public authorities or general administrative responsibility were not sufficient to establish convergence. Because the illustrative period-aligned reports did not consistently address the same issue, the present analysis primarily establishes thematic overlap and editorial variation; it does not claim systematic verification of issue-matched convergence.

The analysis also distinguishes governance orientation from securitization. Humanitarian protection, educational inclusion, routine registration, legal accountability, and coercive restriction are not treated as equivalent forms of intervention. A governance-oriented representation is classified as explicitly securitizing only when the justification for intervention relies on generalized threat, anticipated danger, preventive surveillance, restriction, containment, or coercive control. Rights-based criticism of restrictive measures and humanitarian counter-frames must therefore remain analytically distinct from explicit endorsements of security-oriented intervention.

The study does not use frame frequencies to rank newspapers or editorial groups as more humanitarian, hostile, or security-oriented. It identifies recurring qualitative configurations, internal variation, changes in narrative emphasis, and moments of intensification around terrorist attacks, violent incidents, public controversies, and political crises. These patterns are interpreted as evidence of discursive development and resonance rather than as statistically representative estimates or proof of direct media influence on governance outcomes [7].

To contextualize the media findings, the analysis also draws on a purposively selected set of legal instruments, bilateral statements, administrative communications, and research reports concerning migration governance between 2013 and 2023. These materials were selected for their relevance to the principal governance themes identified in the newspaper corpus, including protection, registration, border management, mobility regulation, administrative enforcement, and return. The documents were examined in terms of their dates, institutional origins, stated objectives, legal or administrative provisions, and correspondence with the media frames identified across the four analytical periods. This documentary comparison is intended to identify temporal and discursive resonance rather than establish causal relationships between media coverage and policy decisions. Official statements are treated as evidence of institutional positions and reported administrative activities, not as independent verification of policy effectiveness or implementation outcomes. Accordingly, the documentary analysis follows an interpretive approach that distinguishes institutional correspondence from causal influence [23].

Several limitations define the scope of the findings. First, the purposively constructed corpus captures variation across selected national newspapers, analytical periods, and editorial orientations but is not statistically representative of the Turkish media landscape. Television, local news, social media, and much of the digital information environment fall outside the analysis. In addition, the absence of a complete retrieval and exclusion log limits the procedural reproducibility of the sampling process, although the final corpus and qualitative selection criteria are documented. Accordingly, the findings identify recurring discursive patterns within the selected material rather than estimating the prevalence of particular frames across the wider media system.

Second, newspaper discourse reveals publicly available representations but not their reception. The study can identify how migrants were categorized and how individual incidents were connected to wider populations, but it cannot determine how readers accepted, rejected, or negotiated these meanings. Survey and experimental research is therefore used only as contextual evidence concerning broader attitudes, not as proof of effects produced by the reports examined.

Third, the policy materials do not provide access to internal decision-making. Migration governance may reflect legal obligations, bureaucratic priorities, international relations, security assessments, economic conditions, party competition, and public controversy. The study consequently identifies correspondence and possible resonance rather than causal influence. It cannot determine the weight policymakers assigned to media discourse.

Finally, coding by a single researcher necessarily involved interpretive judgment. Repeated reading, memo-writing, refinement of categories, comparison across outlets and periods, and attention to counterexamples were used to strengthen analytical consistency. Differences in archive accessibility and preservation may also have affected which reports could be retrieved.

These limitations restrict claims about representativeness, audience effects, and policy causation but remain compatible with the study's more bounded objective: explaining how migration-related meanings were constructed, compared, and recontextualized across a longitudinal newspaper corpus.

4. MEDIA FRAMES, THREAT CONSTRUCTION, AND CROSS-EDITORIAL THEMATIC OVERLAP

This section examines how migration-related meanings were constructed and reconfigured across the selected newspaper corpus. It first traces the coexistence and changing emphasis of humanitarian, administrative, economic, political, public-order, and security frames across four analytical periods. It then identifies the mechanisms through which violent or terror-related incidents acquired broader migration-related significance and compares the distinct editorial routes through which prolonged displacement became intelligible as a field of state intervention. The analysis does not equate all regulation with securitization and does not infer audience effects or policy causation from newspaper content.

Migration coverage between 2011 and 2023 did not move linearly from humanitarianism to securitization. Earlier frames remained available as new concerns emerged, producing changing combinations of protection, capacity, burden, political membership, public order, and control. The four periods used below are therefore interpretive devices rather than homogeneous stages or claims about statistically dominant frames. Table 2 summarizes these principal configurations and their coexistence across the four analytical periods.

Table 2. *Temporal Development and Coexistence of Migration-Related Media Frames, 2011–2023*

Period	Analytical Context	Recurring Frame Configurations	Representative Examples from the Corpus	Interpretive Significance
2011–2014	Initial displacement, humanitarian reception, the institutionalization of temporary protection, and early debates over reception capacity and political membership	Humanitarian protection; historical and moral solidarity; numerical visibility; reception-capacity management; conditional admission; citizenship and electoral-integrity concerns	Yeni Şafak, "Türkiye'ye sığınan Suriyeliler 20 bini aştı" ["The Number of Syrians Seeking Refuge in Turkey Exceeds 20,000"], 1 April 2012; Milliyet, "Türkiye bizi al" ["Turkey, Let Us In"], 30 August 2012; Sözcü, "Binlerce Suriyeli Türk Vatandaşı Yapıldı" ["Thousands of Syrians Were Granted Turkish Citizenship"], 25 November 2013	Humanitarian protection coexisted with emerging concerns about reception capacity and political membership.
2015–2017	Rapid expansion and prolongation of displacement, unequal international responsibility-sharing, rising fiscal concerns, and highly visible incidents involving violence, crime, and public disorder	Religious-humanitarian responsibility; international burden-sharing; fiscal and administrative burden; collective categorization; crime and public-order framing; narrative proximity between migrant identity and violence	Yeni Şafak, "Ensar nedir bilmezler ki" ["They Do Not Even Know What Ansar Means"], 19 February 2015; Milliyet, "Suriyeli mülteci yükü Türkiye'nin omuzunda" ["The Burden of Syrian Refugees Rests on Turkey's Shoulders"], 9 March 2015; Posta, "Suriyelilere 16.7 milyar" ["16.7 Billion for Syrians"], 13 August 2015; Cumhuriyet, "Reyhanlı'da Suriyelilerin kaldığı evde patlama: 2 ölü" ["Explosion in a House Occupied by Syrians in Reyhanlı: Two Dead"], 6 July 2016; Sözcü, "Beyşehir'de Suriyelilerle köpek kavgası: 2 ölü, 3 yaralı" ["Dispute with Syrians over a Dog in Beyşehir: Two Dead and Three Injured"], 10 July 2016; Hürriyet, "Karı-kocadan 16 yaşındaki kıza cinsel istismar" ["Sexual Abuse of a 16-Year-Old Girl by a Married Couple"], 16 August 2017	Fiscal, administrative, crime-related, and public-order frames became more visible alongside humanitarian responsibility.
2018–2020	Protracted displacement, the routinization of migration administration, and the growing intersection of humanitarian assistance with border and mobility governance	Humanitarian care; infant and family vulnerability; irregular-migration categorization; rescue and state-centred protection; public-order framing; collective nationality references; humanitarian criticism of border coercion; fortress and exclusion imagery; the coexistence of care and control	Sabah, "15 günlük Fatma bebeğe şefkat eli" ["A Helping Hand of Compassion for 15-Day-Old Baby Fatma"], 25 September 2019; Cumhuriyet, "Döner bıçaklı kavga kamerada" ["Fight with Doner Knives Captured on Camera"], 20 May 2019; Hürriyet, "Avrupa'nın çirkin yüzü" ["The Ugly Face of Europe"], 15 March 2020	Humanitarian care and mobility control coexisted, while the legitimacy of coercive border practices remained contested.
2021–2023	Protracted presence and intensified political debate over education, integration, permanence, return, citizenship, electoral participation, and social cohesion	Continued humanitarian and affective framing; educational exclusion and institutional capacity; social belonging; permanence and return; citizenship and electoral-integrity concerns; executive authority and legal-status regulation	Milliyet, "Çocuklar yalnız öğretmenler dertli" ["Children Are Lonely, Teachers Are Troubled"], 11 May 2022; Yeni Şafak, "Mülteci meselesine insanca bakış" ["A Humane Perspective on the Refugee Question"], 20 September 2022; Cumhuriyet, "Suriyeliler hakkında son kararı Erdoğan verecek: Seçimlerde oy kullanacaklar mı?" ["Erdoğan Will Make the Final Decision about Syrians: Will They Vote in the Elections?"], 18 April 2023	Prolonged displacement intensified debates over inclusion, permanence, citizenship, electoral participation, and return.

Note. The periods are analytical devices rather than sharply bounded or internally homogeneous stages. The table identifies recurring qualitative configurations, not frame frequencies or statistically dominant representations.

4.1. 2011–2014: HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION, CAPACITY MANAGEMENT, AND THE EARLY POLITICIZATION OF REFUGEE PRESENCE

Early coverage frequently represented Syrians as civilians escaping violence and Turkey as a neighbouring state with a moral responsibility to provide protection. Humanitarian reception was nevertheless accompanied from the outset by attention to population scale, camp capacity, territorial authority, citizenship, and the possible domestic consequences of prolonged presence.

Yeni Şafak's report "Türkiye'ye sığınan Suriyeliler 20 bini aştı" ["The Number of Syrians Seeking Refuge in Turkey Exceeds 20,000"] reproduced Prime Minister Erdoğan's address to the Friends of Syria Conference [24]. References to

Syrians as "brothers," to shared history, and to those resisting the Syrian government constructed displacement through political solidarity and moral proximity. The newspaper largely circulated an official interpretation in which Turkey appeared as a protective regional actor without territorial ambition. Yet the number foregrounded in the headline also made the growing scale of displacement visible. Humanization and numerical representation therefore coexisted: Syrians were morally proximate victims, but also an expanding population requiring organized state action.

Milliyet's "Türkiye bizi al" ["Turkey, Let Us In"] similarly represented Syrians as civilians seeking protection but linked admission to institutional and territorial capacity [25]. The report described Syrians carrying Turkish flags and appealing for entry while referring to Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's statement that a United Nations-supported safe zone might become necessary if arrivals exceeded 100,000. Turkey was positioned simultaneously as a place of safety and as the authority controlling admission. The numerical threshold, camp capacity, and international responsibility-sharing introduced a managerial logic into an otherwise humanitarian account. Protection was legitimate but conditional on administrative resources, territorial management, and broader international arrangements.

A different concern appeared in Sözcü's "Binlerce Suriyeli Türk Vatandaşı Yapıldı" ["Thousands of Syrians Were Granted Turkish Citizenship"] [26]. The report reproduced an opposition politician's allegation that Syrians had been unlawfully naturalized for political and sectarian purposes before the 2014 local elections. Because this was a contested allegation rather than independently verified evidence, its analytical importance lies in the framing it made available. Refugees appeared not only as temporary recipients of protection but as a collective population whose possible incorporation into the electorate could affect political competition. The unspecified phrase "thousands of Syrians" connected citizenship, legality, and electoral integrity to the sovereign authority to define membership in the national community.

The three reports reveal a formative period rather than a purely humanitarian stage. Yeni Şafak emphasized solidarity and protective state authority; Milliyet combined vulnerability with reception capacity and conditional admission; and Sözcü connected refugee presence to citizenship and electoral integrity. These were politically distinct frames, but all positioned the state as the decisive authority over protection, admission, status, and membership. Early discourse thus established repertoires that would remain important throughout the period: Turkey as humanitarian host, displacement as a problem of institutional capacity, and refugee presence as a question of domestic governance.

4.2. 2015–2017: FROM HUMANITARIAN RESPONSIBILITY TO BURDEN AND PUBLIC-ORDER CONCERNS

Between 2015 and 2017, the media repertoire widened as displacement increased and became more prolonged. Humanitarian responsibility remained visible, but it increasingly intersected with demographic scale, public expenditure, unequal international burden-sharing, crime, communal tension, and security-related uncertainty.

Yeni Şafak's "Ensar nedir bilmezler ki" ["They Do Not Even Know What Ansar Means"] reproduced President Erdoğan's criticism of political actors advocating the return of Syrians [27]. By invoking the Islamic-historical categories of Ansar and Muhajir, the report framed protection as a religious and moral obligation. The governing authorities appeared as legitimate hosts, whereas calls for removal were presented as evidence of moral and religious failure. As in the earlier Yeni Şafak report, humanitarian framing was closely tied to elite political communication and state-centred authority.

Mainstream and opposition-leaning coverage made fiscal and administrative concerns more visible. Milliyet's "Suriyeli mülteci yükü Türkiye'nin omuzunda" ["The Burden of Syrian Refugees Rests on Turkey's Shoulders"] reported approximately two million Syrians, public expenditure of 5.2 billion US dollars, limited international assistance, and a funding shortfall affecting food provision [28]. The report retained a humanitarian orientation and attributed the central problem to unequal international responsibility-sharing. Nevertheless, the metaphor of "burden," together with repeated numerical references, translated displacement into a question of financial capacity and administrative sustainability.

Posta's "Suriyelilere 16.7 milyar" ["16.7 Billion for Syrians"] placed still greater emphasis on cumulative expenditure and population size [13, 29]. Published during the newspaper's opposition-leaning period, it juxtaposed the scale of public spending with limited external support. The Milliyet and Posta reports show that numerical framing was not inherently securitizing: figures could support claims for international solidarity or criticism of domestic costs. Repeated quantification nevertheless contributed to the normalization of refugee presence as a long-term fiscal and administrative problem.

Reports of explosions, interpersonal violence, and alleged crime made migrant identity more directly relevant to insecurity. Cumhuriyet's "Reyhanlı'da Suriyelilerin kaldığı evde patlama: 2 ölü" ["Explosion in a House Occupied by Syrians in Reyhanlı: Two Dead"] foregrounded Syrian identity and reproduced a CHP parliamentarian's allegation that the explosion occurred during bomb-making [30]. The claim was politically attributed rather than independently established, but the narrative placed Syrian identity, an AFAD registration card, explosives, and fatalities in close proximity. Refugee registration thereby became discursively connected to an alleged security threat.

Sözcü's "Beyşehir'de Suriyelilerle köpek kavgası: 2 ölü, 3 yaralı" ["Dispute with Syrians over a Dog in Beyşehir: Two Dead and Three Injured"] transformed a localized confrontation into an encounter involving the collective category

"Syrians" [31]. The headline combined national identification with casualty figures, allowing interpersonal violence to acquire wider communal and public-order significance. Hürriyet's report of the alleged sexual abuse of a 16-year-old girl similarly identified the suspects as an Iraqi married couple in the body of the report, although nationality was not required to explain the alleged offence [12, 32]. In each case, foreign or refugee identity became relevant to the interpretation of individual wrongdoing.

The period therefore involved two related developments. First, humanitarian reception became increasingly entangled with fiscal and administrative sustainability. Second, violent and criminal events created opportunities to place nationality, refugee registration, and collective identity alongside allegations, casualties, and disorder. These processes varied by editorial position: pro-government coverage defended hospitality through moral obligation; mainstream reporting combined assistance with burden-sharing and capacity; and opposition-oriented outlets emphasized expenditure, government responsibility, public order, or security uncertainty. Their vocabularies differed, yet prolonged displacement increasingly appeared as requiring management, accountability, policing, or security intervention. This was not the disappearance of humanitarianism but the cumulative expansion of the frames through which migration could be governed.

4.3. 2018–2020: PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT AND THE COMBINATION OF CARE AND CONTROL

By 2018–2020, migration management had become more routinized, and humanitarian concern was frequently articulated through institutions responsible for rescue, border control, mobility regulation, and public order. Care and control were not always opposing logics; they could coexist within the same report or be mobilized to evaluate the legitimacy of different authorities.

Sabah's "15 günlük Fatma bebeğe şefkat eli" ["A Helping Hand of Compassion for 15-Day-Old Baby Fatma"] reported the Coast Guard's rescue of 155 irregular migrants attempting to cross from İzmir to Greece. The report individualized the group through a two-week-old infant whose wet clothes were changed and who was given food. The language of compassion positioned the Coast Guard as a benevolent protector, while the wider group remained administratively categorized as "irregular migrants." Border interception, rescue, and humanitarian care were thus integrated within a state-centred narrative of legitimate authority. Protection did not displace control; it helped authorize the institution exercising it.

Hürriyet's "Avrupa'nın çirkin yüzü" ["The Ugly Face of Europe"] constructed humanitarian meaning through criticism of European border practices [33]. Descriptions of children wrapped in blankets, people gathered around fires, beatings, tear gas, barbed wire, pushbacks, and "fortress walls" foregrounded migrant suffering and portrayed European exclusion as morally illegitimate. Unlike Sabah's integration of compassion and Turkish border authority, Hürriyet juxtaposed vulnerable migrants with coercive external control. The report made the material infrastructure of border security visible while using humanitarian language to contest its legitimacy. It therefore illustrates that border-related reporting is not inherently securitizing; it can also challenge control-oriented governance.

Cumhuriyet's "Döner bıçaklı kavga kamerada" ["Fight with Doner Knives Captured on Camera"] represented a confrontation between two Syrian families in Gaziantep as an urban public-order incident [34]. Although nationality was absent from the headline, the body repeatedly identified the participants as Syrian and described knives, sticks, injuries, detentions, and a scene resembling a "war zone." The repeated national designation and conflict metaphor placed Syrian identity in narrative proximity to violence and police intervention. A localized family dispute was thereby made relevant to migration-related disorder without providing evidence that Syrians or refugees were generally associated with violence.

These reports show how different editorial positions evaluated institutions of control. Sabah represented the Coast Guard as both regulator and compassionate rescuer. Hürriyet used migrant suffering to condemn European border coercion. Cumhuriyet rendered Syrian identity relevant within an account of urban violence and police response. The reports did not share a moral judgment about control, but all represented migration through institutions governing movement, rescue, exclusion, or public order. The period therefore makes the hybrid protection–control character of migration governance especially visible: migrants appeared as persons to be rescued, populations whose movement was regulated, victims of exclusion, or subjects of police intervention.

4.4. 2021–2023: PERMANENCE, POLARIZATION, AND THE CONTINUED AVAILABILITY OF HUMANITARIAN FRAMES

Between 2021 and 2023, more than a decade of displacement shifted attention toward education, integration, citizenship, return, electoral participation, legal status, and social cohesion. Refugees were no longer represented only as recent victims of war or temporary recipients of protection. Their prolonged presence had become a contested question of institutional inclusion and political membership. Humanitarian framing nevertheless remained available and, in some cases, operated as an explicit counter-frame to burden- and threat-oriented narratives.

Milliyet's "Çocuklar yalnız öğretmenler dertli" ["Children Are Lonely, Teachers Are Troubled"] reported research on

the education of Syrian children in Esenyurt [35]. Drawing on surveys and interviews, the report referred to poverty, bullying, language barriers, social isolation, gender discrimination, interrupted schooling, and approximately 428,000 school-age Syrian children outside education. Quotations from children who described being called "Suri," excluded, or treated as unintelligent allowed refugees to appear as speaking subjects rather than only as an administratively defined population.

The headline, however, distributed concern between children and teachers. Alongside vulnerability, the report discussed language provision, absenteeism, weak school belonging, institutional capacity, and the difficulties of educating large numbers of foreign students. It also addressed girls' education through poverty, security concerns, parental attitudes, mixed-gender schooling, and early or forced marriage. The result was a dual humanitarian-managerial frame: Syrian children required protection and inclusion, while their long-term education demanded resources, language support, family cooperation, and sustained administrative intervention. The report did not construct them as security threats, but it did present integration as an enduring governance responsibility.

Yeni Şafak's "Mülteci meselesine insanca bakış" ["A Humane Perspective on the Refugee Question"] offered a more explicitly affective defence of protection. Refugees were described as an orphaned and bereaved people arriving at "our door," while love, respect, home, and healing served as familial and therapeutic metaphors. Published after more than a decade of displacement, the article shows that humanitarian discourse was not confined to initial admission. Its later function was also oppositional: by insisting on compassion and belonging, it implicitly resisted representations based primarily on burden, demographic danger, or removal. At the same time, its moral vocabulary did not resolve the legal and institutional questions of long-term residence, employment, education, citizenship, or return.

Cumhuriyet's "Suriyeliler hakkında son kararı Erdoğan verecek: Seçimlerde oy kullanacaklar mı?" ["Erdoğan Will Make the Final Decision about Syrians: Will They Vote in the Elections?"] connected Syrian presence to the 2023 elections, presidential authority, temporary protection, possible return, and political membership [36]. The report drew on a politically contested discussion concerning the president's authority to terminate temporary protection and the electoral eligibility of Syrians; these claims should therefore be read as attributed arguments rather than established facts about all Syrians in Turkey. Their framing is nonetheless significant. The headline condensed Syrian identity, executive authority, and electoral participation into an immediate question of national political competition.

This report continued concerns visible in the 2013 Sözcü case, but in a different context. Earlier allegations of political instrumentalization had become embedded in a broader debate about permanence, naturalization, return, and the future of temporary protection. Migration governance was personalized through presidential authority, while refugees appeared as a collective population located at the boundary of legal and political membership.

Together, the three reports demonstrate coexistence rather than linear replacement. Milliyet combined refugee vulnerability with institutional capacity; Yeni Şafak defended compassion, belonging, and emotional repair; and Cumhuriyet foregrounded elections, executive authority, status, and return. Their political meanings differed, but each addressed the governance of a population whose presence could no longer be treated as temporary or institutionally marginal. Humanitarian protection became connected to inclusion and belonging, administrative concern to the capacity of schools and services, and political contestation to citizenship, elections, legal status, and return. Permanence thus recontextualized earlier frames and made both continued protection and intensified regulation publicly intelligible.

Terror-related claims and violent incidents did not form a separate chronological stage. They recurred across periods as event types through which migrant identity could acquire heightened public-order or security significance. Their analytical importance lies not in demonstrating a generalized relationship between refugees and violence but in showing how reporting practices could extend an incident beyond the individuals involved.

Four mechanisms recur across the cases. First, categorical foregrounding makes nationality, refugee status, or foreignness salient in a headline or report even when it is not necessary to explain the event. Second, narrative proximity places migrant identity alongside explosives, criminal allegations, casualties, registration documents, weapons, or police intervention. Third, collectivization represents identifiable individuals or families through broad categories such as "Syrians," allowing localized events to be read as encounters involving a wider group. Fourth, affective intensification uses casualty figures, war metaphors, dramatic imagery, and descriptions of fear or chaos to increase the emotional significance of the account.

The 2016 Cumhuriyet report combined Syrian identity and an AFAD registration card with a politically attributed allegation of bomb-making. The 2016 Sözcü report joined the collective category "Syrians" to deaths and injuries, while the 2019 Cumhuriyet report repeatedly identified the participants in a family dispute as Syrian and described the scene as a "war zone." Hürriyet's 2017 crime report made Iraqi nationality relevant within an individual allegation. The events differed, but each positioned migrant or foreign identity near violence, criminality, or public-order intervention.

These representations do not establish a systematic connection between migration, terrorism, crime, or disorder, nor does the corpus reveal how readers interpreted them. Their significance lies in making broader threat-oriented readings available. Repetition may allow an explosion to become relevant to refugee registration, an interpersonal dispute to

become a confrontation involving "Syrians," or an individual offence to acquire additional meaning through foreign nationality. Violent incidents can thus act as discursive catalysts that intensify already available associations among migration, uncertainty, and risk [37].

The affective force of fatalities, weapons, explosions, crowded borders, and war imagery may further situate migration within vocabularies of anticipated danger and preventive intervention, although content analysis cannot establish audience effects [38]. Threat amplification should therefore be understood as cumulative and recursive rather than as the effect of a single headline. Political actors may supply allegations and categories, newspapers may increase their visibility, and police, border, or administrative responses may generate further material for security-oriented reporting.

Table 3 presents a period-aligned comparison of editorial framing and the resulting thematic overlap. The comparison distinguishes source selection, responsibility attribution, and the justifications attached to migration governance, rather than assuming shared policy preferences across newspapers.

Editorial orientation shaped migration coverage through source selection, responsibility attribution, moral vocabulary, and the political meaning assigned to state intervention. Pro-government, mainstream or centrist, and opposition-oriented newspapers did not use a common ideological language, and no editorial category displayed a single, internally consistent framing pattern. The comparison instead reveals distinct but partially overlapping routes through which migration became intelligible as a matter of protection, administration, political decision, or control.

Table 3. *Period-Aligned Comparison of Editorial Framing and Thematic Overlap, 2011–2023*

Period	Pro-government route	Mainstream or centrist route	Opposition-oriented route	Comparative finding
2011–2014	The 2012 *Yeni Şafak* report constructed Syrians through historical proximity, political solidarity, and moral responsibility while presenting the Turkish government as a protective regional actor.	The 2012 *Milliyet* report represented Syrians as civilians seeking protection but connected admission to numerical thresholds, camp capacity, territorial management, and international responsibility-sharing.	The 2013 *Sözcü* report connected Syrian presence to contested allegations concerning citizenship, legality, sectarian motivation, and electoral integrity.	The reports demonstrate editorial variation across humanitarian protection, reception capacity, and political membership. Their shared reference to state authority indicates thematic overlap in migration governance but does not establish agreement on a common intervention.
2015–2017	The 2015 *Yeni Şafak* report framed protection through the religious categories of *Ansar* and *Muhajir* and represented state-supported hospitality as a moral obligation.	The 2015 *Milliyet* report combined humanitarian assistance with fiscal capacity and international burden-sharing, while the 2017 *Hürriyet* report made foreign nationality relevant within an event-centred crime narrative.	The 2015 *Posta* report, during its opposition-leaning period, foregrounded public expenditure; the 2016 *Cumhuriyet* and *Sözcü* reports connected Syrian identity to alleged bomb-making, casualties, communal tension, and public disorder.	Humanitarian responsibility, fiscal burden, international assistance, crime, and public order appeared across different editorial contexts. These concerns indicate an expanding governance-related repertoire rather than demonstrated convergence on a specific policy response.
2018–2020	The 2019 *Sabah* report combined the humanitarian protection of an infant with the authority of the Coast Guard to intercept and regulate irregular mobility.	The 2020 *Hürriyet* report foregrounded migrant suffering and condemned European border enforcement through images of pushbacks, tear gas, barbed wire, and "fortress" exclusion.	The 2019 *Cumhuriyet* report represented violence between two Syrian families as an urban public-order incident and placed collective nationality in narrative proximity to weapons, injuries, and police intervention.	The reports addressed rescue, border enforcement, humanitarian criticism of coercion, and urban public order. They reveal the coexistence of protection-oriented and control-related representations, but the different events and normative evaluations preclude a claim of issue-matched convergence.
2021–2023	The 2022 *Yeni Şafak* article defended a humanitarian interpretation based on compassion, belonging, respect, and emotional healing.	The 2022 *Milliyet* report combined the vulnerability and exclusion of Syrian children with concerns about language provision, school capacity, absenteeism, and institutional sustainability.	The 2023 *Cumhuriyet* report connected Syrian presence to elections, presidential authority, temporary-protection status, possible return, and political membership.	Humanitarian belonging, educational inclusion, citizenship, elections, and return were represented through distinct editorial rationales. The reports demonstrate the continuing political and institutional salience of prolonged displacement, not agreement on a shared governance instrument.

Note. The table presents illustrative reports aligned by analytical period rather than systematically matched by event or policy controversy. It identifies editorial variation and thematic overlap in migration governance but does not independently establish issue-matched cross-ideological convergence. Shared references to state responsibility should not be interpreted as agreement on particular interventions or as evidence of common securitizing positions. The table does not report frame frequencies.

The strongest differences concerned who could speak authoritatively and why intervention was justified. Pro-government reports privileged political leaders and state institutions as protectors. Historical proximity, religious obligation, humanitarian hospitality, and compassionate state capacity linked refugee protection to legitimate national authority. Even where the emphasis was affective rather than institutional, responsibility was situated within a wider narrative of Turkey as host and protector.

Mainstream and centrist reports more often organized authority around feasibility, institutional capacity, international responsibility, research evidence, or the moral evaluation of governance practices. Milliyet's reports on admission thresholds, burden-sharing, and education combined vulnerability with questions of resources and administrative sustainability. Hürriyet's border report used suffering to challenge coercive European control, while its crime report made foreign nationality relevant within event-centred reporting. Mainstream coverage therefore did not represent a neutral midpoint: it could legitimize management, reveal institutional pressure, condemn restrictive practices, or reproduce categorical associations.

Opposition-oriented reports foregrounded government accountability, legality, electoral integrity, executive authority, expenditure, and public order. Sözcü and Cumhuriyet connected refugee presence to citizenship, elections, temporary protection, return, or police intervention. These reports often challenged government policy, yet criticism of mismanagement could simultaneously render migration intelligible as requiring stronger legal, administrative, or public-order intervention. Opposition to the government did not necessarily amount to opposition to control.

These editorial routes reveal a shared concern with the governance of prolonged displacement, but not a common position on how migration should be governed. Protection, administrative capacity, legality, public order, and mobility control entered the selected reports through different political and normative vocabularies. The resulting cross-editorial thematic overlap is therefore analytically meaningful without constituting verified convergence on specific forms of intervention.

The distinction between governance and securitization remains central. Yeni Şafak's 2022 humanitarian intervention challenged burden- and threat-oriented representations; Hürriyet's 2020 border report criticized coercive European practices; and Milliyet's education report foregrounded exclusion and institutional inclusion. These examples complicate any interpretation of governance-related reporting as uniformly securitizing. Explicit securitization is more clearly identifiable where collective migrant categories are connected to generalized danger and where restrictive or preventive intervention is justified through threat-oriented reasoning.

The media analysis reveals three interconnected patterns. First, humanitarian representations persisted throughout the study period, even as administrative, fiscal, political, public-order, and security-related concerns became increasingly prominent in the selected reports. Second, violent and terror-related incidents provided opportunities for threat amplification through categorical foregrounding, narrative proximity, collectivization, and affective intensification. Third, newspapers with different editorial orientations repeatedly addressed migration as a matter of public governance while differing in their assessments of political responsibility, institutional legitimacy, and appropriate intervention. These patterns indicate a cumulative diversification of migration-related frames rather than a linear transition from humanitarian protection to securitization.

Considered together, these findings reveal that migration's construction as a governance concern did not depend on a uniform understanding of migrants as threats. Humanitarian protection, administrative capacity, political membership, and public order could all make state intervention relevant, but they did so through different normative and institutional rationales. The distinction is particularly evident in reports that combined protection with administrative regulation or criticized coercive border practices on humanitarian grounds. Such representations demonstrate why cross-editorial thematic overlap cannot be treated as evidence of agreement on specific policies or of a shared securitizing position. Securitization is more narrowly implicated when migration-related categories are connected to generalized danger and restrictive intervention is justified through threat-oriented reasoning.

The significance of these findings extends beyond differences in newspaper framing. By repeatedly foregrounding questions of protection, capacity, permanence, mobility, and public order, the selected reports made visible a range of problems through which prolonged displacement could be publicly interpreted and contested. These discursive configurations provide a basis for examining their temporal and thematic correspondence with developments in migration governance. The relevant analytical question is not whether particular news reports caused institutional decisions, but how media representations and governance practices addressed related problems through potentially overlapping or competing rationales.

5. GOVERNANCE RESONANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

This section examines how the media patterns identified above corresponded with selected developments in Turkish migration governance. It considers public-opinion research, legal instruments, bilateral arrangements, administrative measures, and electoral debates, with particular attention to protection, registration, border management, territorial regulation, and return. These materials are used to identify temporal and discursive resonance across the analytical periods, not to attribute policy decisions to newspaper coverage.

Public-opinion research provides contextual evidence concerning the social environment in which migration governance developed. Survey and experimental studies document perceived threat, social distance, and concerns about security, cultural difference, and long-term coexistence. Because these studies employ different samples, measures, and research designs, however, they cannot be treated as a single longitudinal series or as evidence that the newspaper reports examined here produced particular attitudes.

In the Turkish case, existing research documents concerns about public order, economic competition, cultural difference, and the long-term presence of Syrian refugees [39–48]. These findings indicate a contested social environment in which migration-related claims circulated, although they do not establish that particular media reports caused changes in public attitudes.

The growing electoral significance of migration is further illustrated by Balta et al. [49], whose analysis of the 2023 elections examines changes in party discourse and electoral manifestos. Their findings indicate that migration became an increasingly salient field of political competition, particularly following the emergence of the Victory Party and amid wider economic and political pressures. The study identifies different degrees of movement towards more restrictive positions among major political parties, while also documenting important differences in their approaches to refugees and migration governance. Return became a prominent subject of political debate, although parties differed in the conditions, justifications, and policy instruments associated with it.

These developments provide a political context for the media patterns identified in Section 4. Newspapers differed in their evaluations of humanitarian responsibility, government performance, economic burden, and public order, while repeatedly treating prolonged displacement as a matter of political and administrative concern. This correspondence indicates thematic overlap across editorial orientations rather than verified convergence on specific governance interventions. It also underscores the need to distinguish demands for humanitarian protection, administrative accountability, and restrictive control, which may arise from different normative and political rationales.

The legal foundations of contemporary migration governance in Turkey illustrate the institutional coexistence of protection and regulation. Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection, adopted on 4 April 2013, established a comprehensive framework governing foreigners' entry, residence, departure, and access to international protection. Its scope includes both individual applications for international protection and temporary protection in circumstances of mass displacement. Importantly, Article 4 establishes the principle of non-refoulement, demonstrating that the expansion of administrative authority was accompanied by explicit legal protection obligations [50].

The Temporary Protection Regulation, adopted in October 2014 pursuant to Article 91 of Law No. 6458, further specified the procedures governing the admission, stay, rights, obligations, and departure of persons receiving temporary protection. The regulation also addressed institutional cooperation and administrative measures associated with mass arrivals. Articles 5 and 6 respectively provide safeguards concerning penalties for irregular entry under specified circumstances and protection against refoulement [51]. The regulation therefore cannot be interpreted simply as a restrictive security instrument. It institutionalized humanitarian protection while simultaneously defining the administrative categories and procedures through which displaced populations would be registered and governed.

This dual institutional character corresponds with the early media patterns identified in Section 4, where humanitarian representations coexisted with emerging concerns about accommodation, administrative capacity, and the longer-term implications of displacement. The relevant resonance lies in the shared recognition that mass displacement required organized institutional responses. However, the legal establishment of protection and registration procedures does not itself demonstrate securitization. Registration may serve protective and administrative purposes, and its security implications depend on the particular practices and justifications through which it is implemented.

A further development was the expansion of international cooperation on migration management. The Türkiye–EU Readmission Agreement, published in the Turkish Official Gazette on 2 August 2014, established reciprocal procedures concerning the readmission of persons who did not, or no longer, fulfil applicable conditions of entry, presence, or residence. Its provisions formed part of a wider legal and diplomatic framework for regulating cross-border mobility [52].

The joint statement issued following the Türkiye–EU Summit of 29 November 2015 linked migration cooperation to humanitarian assistance, financial support, responsibility-sharing, readmission, and the prevention of irregular migration. The parties referred to the implementation of the Joint Action Plan and the provision of an initial EUR 3 billion in support for refugees and host communities in Turkey [53].

The statement of 18 March 2016 further articulated a framework combining irregular migration control, readmission, resettlement, border cooperation, and protection commitments. It provided for the return to Turkey, subject to specified legal safeguards, of new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands from 20 March 2016. It also established a mechanism under which, for each Syrian returned from the Greek islands to Turkey, another Syrian would be resettled from Turkey to the European Union, subject to the arrangement's stated conditions. The statement explicitly referred to compliance with international law, individual assessment procedures, and non-refoulement obligations [54].

These arrangements illustrate how humanitarian and security-oriented rationales could be incorporated into the same

governance framework. Protection, financial responsibility-sharing, border regulation, and return were not presented as mutually exclusive objectives. Their institutional coexistence is relevant to the media analysis because news representations of humanitarian obligation, international burden-sharing, border insecurity, and administrative control developed within the same period. Yet these arrangements also reflected diplomatic negotiations, international obligations, and cross-border political pressures that cannot be explained through domestic media discourse alone.

The coexistence of protection and control became particularly visible in the administrative regulation of migrant registration, residence, employment, and mobility. A statement issued by the Istanbul Governor's Office on 15 November 2019 documented a series of measures concerning irregular migration, unregistered Syrians, and informal employment. According to the statement, 42,888 irregular migrants were transferred to provinces containing removal centres between 12 July and 15 November 2019, while 6,416 unregistered Syrians were transferred to temporary accommodation centres in designated provinces. The statement also reported workplace inspections, employment-related enforcement, and measures concerning business signage [55].

These figures refer to administrative transfers and enforcement activities reported by the provincial authority; they should not be interpreted as equivalent to completed deportations. Nevertheless, the statement demonstrates the operational importance of registration status, territorial allocation, labour-market regulation, and administrative supervision within migration governance.

The institutional language is analytically significant. Irregular migration, unregistered residence, informal employment, and compliance with administrative requirements were addressed within a coordinated enforcement framework. This did not necessarily render all affected migrants security threats. Rather, it illustrates how migration became an object of routine monitoring and intervention through categories that connected legal status, place of residence, employment, and public administration.

Subsequent measures further demonstrate the territorial dimension of migration management. In an official clarification concerning claims that all 39 districts of Istanbul had been closed to foreign residence permit applications, the Presidency of Migration Management stated that Istanbul had been closed to new registrations of Syrians under temporary protection in 2019. It also reported that Fatih and Esenyurt were closed to new residence permit applications in January 2021, followed by eight additional districts in October 2022. According to the same statement, 1,169 neighbourhoods across 63 provinces had been closed to new foreign registrations as of 1 July 2022, based on assessments of foreign population concentration [56].

The distinction between temporary protection registration, residence permit applications, and neighbourhood-level registration restrictions is important. These measures concern different legal and administrative categories and should not be treated as interchangeable forms of exclusion. The official statement also rejected the claim that all 39 Istanbul districts had been closed, illustrating the role of institutional communication in correcting or contesting publicly circulating representations.

Taken together, these developments demonstrate that territorial concentration, registration, and administrative compliance became prominent objects of governance. They correspond at the level of policy themes with the media frames of permanence, institutional capacity, public order, and control identified in Section 4. The correspondence, however, does not establish that newspaper reporting initiated the restrictions. Population distribution, administrative capacity, legal status, and government priorities provide alternative and potentially independent explanations.

The 2023 electoral period added a further dimension to this relationship. Balta et al. [49] document the growing importance of return in political competition and the differentiated ways in which political parties incorporated migration into their electoral programmes. This development is consistent with the broader media finding that migration increasingly appeared not only as a humanitarian concern but also as a contested question of political responsibility, demographic permanence, and future governance.

Importantly, demands for return or stricter administration cannot be interpreted uniformly without considering their stated conditions and justifications. Voluntary return, forced removal, administrative relocation, and restrictions on new registration are legally and analytically distinct. Their conflation would obscure the difference between ordinary migration management and explicitly securitizing practices.

The documentary comparison identifies three areas of resonance with the media analysis: the growing administrative significance of prolonged displacement, the coexistence of humanitarian and control-oriented rationales, and the recurring public visibility of registration, mobility regulation, border management, and return. As summarized in Table 4, these relationships varied across periods and institutional settings rather than forming a uniform transition from protection to securitization.

The evidence is consistent with the conceptual possibility that media representations, political controversies, and institutional communications may provide interpretive resources for one another. The Presidency of Migration Management's clarification concerning Istanbul's registration restrictions illustrates how administrative distinctions can enter public debate. Nevertheless, the available material establishes neither the direction of reciprocal influence nor a causal connection

between the sampled news reports and specific policy decisions. Similarly, the recurrence of governance concerns across newspapers does not independently establish issue-matched cross-ideological convergence.

Table 4. *Selected Migration Governance Developments and Their Discursive Correspondence with Media Frames in Turkey, 2013–2023*

Period	Institutional development	Governance rationale	Corresponding media theme
2013–2014	Law No. 6458 and Temporary Protection Regulation	Protection, legal status, registration	Humanitarian protection and administrative capacity
2014–2016	Readmission Agreement and Türkiye–EU statements	Border management, return, responsibility-sharing	International burden-sharing and border control
2019	Istanbul Governor's Office enforcement measures	Registration, territorial allocation, employment compliance	Public order, permanence and administrative control
2021–2022	District and neighbourhood registration restrictions	Population concentration and spatial regulation	Demographic permanence and governability
2023	Electoral debates on migration and return	Political responsibility and competing return policies	Electoral contestation, burden and control

Note. Correspondence refers to thematic and temporal relationships between selected institutional developments and the media analysis. It does not indicate that media coverage caused particular policy decisions.

The Turkish case thus reveals a hybrid configuration in which protection, routine administration, political contestation, and control-oriented practices coexist. Their relationship becomes relevant to securitization when intervention is justified through generalized threat, preventive restriction, surveillance, or containment, rather than through administrative necessity alone. The recursive framework provides a way to conceptualize these potential interactions, while their causal mechanisms remain open to further empirical investigation.

6. DISCUSSION: TURKEY AS A HYBRID CONFIGURATION OF MEDIATED SECURITIZATION

This section situates the Turkish case within the wider migration-security literature without claiming a systematic cross-national comparison. The study does not apply equivalent sampling, coding, or policy-analysis procedures to other refugee-hosting contexts; references to Europe and Lebanon therefore serve as heuristic points of orientation rather than matched empirical comparisons. Differences among host states may reflect not only distinct securitization processes but also variations in legal status, institutional capacity, geopolitical location, displacement patterns, and relations with international organizations.

Turkey can be characterized as a hybrid configuration because institutionalized protection coexists with control-oriented migration governance. During the period examined, a centralized administrative structure and a formal temporary protection regime developed alongside registration requirements, mobility restrictions, monitoring, border enforcement, and deterrence. The case therefore cannot be classified exclusively as either humanitarian or security-oriented. Its hybridity lies in the simultaneous operation of humanitarian protection, administrative management, and precautionary practices associated with public-order and security-related concerns.

Hybridity does not designate a midpoint on a linear continuum between protection and securitization. Humanitarian and control-oriented rationales may operate within the same institution or policy. Registration can facilitate access to services while increasing administrative visibility; border intervention can combine rescue with mobility control; and return can be justified through humanitarian, administrative, political, or security considerations. The analytical task is therefore to distinguish protection and routine administration from measures legitimated through generalized threat, prevention, surveillance, restriction, containment, or deterrence.

Comparison with other refugee-hosting settings clarifies this configuration without ranking cases by their degree of securitization. Research on Lebanon, for example, documents more fragmented, discretionary, and legally ambiguous forms of containment [57, 58]. Turkey's more formalized and centralized arrangements do not necessarily imply either weaker or stronger securitization: institutional protection and restrictive control may develop together, while legal ambiguity may itself operate as a mechanism of containment.

European migration-security scholarship similarly highlights bureaucratic coordination, biometric identification, border technologies, risk profiling, externalization, and transnational security cooperation [1, 59, 60]. These mechanisms are relevant to Turkey because of its incorporation into wider European migration-management and border-control arrangements. The findings do not, however, support a categorical distinction between a technological European model and a media-driven Turkish one. A more defensible conclusion is that the Turkish newspaper corpus makes communicative and affective mechanisms especially visible. Narratives of fiscal pressure, permanence, cultural tension, public disorder, terrorism, and future risk developed alongside bureaucratic and institutional practices rather than replacing them.

The findings also show that media discourse can participate in securitization without functioning solely as a channel of

official communication or as an independent source of policy change. Newspapers reproduced political claims, amplified particular incidents, challenged government decisions, and articulated competing demands for protection, accountability, regulation, or control. These roles varied by editorial orientation. Pro-government coverage often associated intervention with humanitarian responsibility and state capacity; mainstream or centrist reporting emphasized institutional sustainability, international burden-sharing, or event-centred concerns; and opposition-oriented reporting connected migration to legality, expenditure, electoral integrity, permanence, or public order.

The article's theoretical contribution lies in distinguishing the circulation of governance-related concerns across editorial boundaries from the more demanding proposition of issue-matched cross-ideological convergence. The Turkish material demonstrates the former: politically differentiated newspapers repeatedly addressed migration governance while disagreeing over responsibility, legitimacy, and appropriate intervention. The latter would require comparable responses to a shared issue and cannot be inferred from thematic overlap alone. This distinction also qualifies recursive mediated securitization: humanitarian criticism and opposition to restrictive measures may participate in the same communicative environment without constituting a shared securitizing position.

The findings are consistent with a recursive understanding of mediated securitization. Official statements and institutional measures supplied categories and events that could be incorporated into reporting, while newspaper narratives reproduced, challenged, or reinterpreted political claims and migration-related controversies. Subsequent governance practices may, in turn, become objects of renewed media attention and public debate. These relationships are conceptualized as potentially recursive rather than as a verified sequence of reciprocal influence. The evidence demonstrates thematic and temporal correspondence, not that particular reports caused institutional decisions, altered audience attitudes, or generated subsequent political responses.

The argument is most applicable to contexts characterized by prolonged displacement, political contestation over migrants' status and permanence, polarized media, recurrent public-order or security controversies, and formal institutions capable of translating demands for intervention into administrative practice. Turkey should therefore not be treated as a universal national model. The transferability of the argument depends on whether comparable research identifies similar interactions among ideological divergence, functional convergence, media framing, and institutional development elsewhere.

7. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This article examined how migration-related meanings were constructed in Turkish newspaper coverage between 2011 and 2023 and how these representations corresponded with contemporaneous developments in migration governance. Drawing on 250 news items from seven nationally circulated newspapers, it compared humanitarian, economic, cultural, public-order, and security-related frames across periods and editorial orientations. Selected legal, policy, and institutional materials were used to contextualize these patterns rather than to establish direct causal links between particular reports and specific governance decisions.

The findings reveal a gradual, though distinctly non-linear, reconfiguration of migration coverage. Humanitarian representations remained visible throughout the period but increasingly coexisted with narratives of fiscal and administrative burden, demographic permanence, cultural tension, public disorder, and security risk. In some reports, violent, criminal, and terror-related incidents intensified threat-oriented associations by foregrounding nationality or legal status and extending the perceived significance of individual events to wider migrant populations. Collective labels, casualty-centred reporting, numerical escalation, and narrative proximity between migrant identity and violence were among the mechanisms through which localized events acquired broader political meaning.

Despite persistent editorial differences, the selected newspapers displayed recurring thematic overlap in treating prolonged displacement as a matter of migration governance. This finding does not establish issue-matched cross-ideological convergence or agreement on restrictive interventions. Instead, it demonstrates how humanitarian, administrative, political, and security-related interpretations can circulate within a shared communicative environment while retaining different normative commitments. Read alongside institutional developments, these patterns support a bounded interpretation of Turkey as a hybrid protection–control configuration and illustrate the analytical value of recursive mediated securitization without thereby establishing any reciprocal causal influence.

Three policy priorities follow. First, migration-related risk assessments should rely on transparent, disaggregated, and independently verifiable evidence rather than on the visibility of exceptional incidents. Nationality, legal status, and security risk should not be treated as interchangeable categories.

Second, public institutions and news organizations should distinguish individual conduct from collective identity. Nationality or migration status should be foregrounded only when demonstrably relevant, and political allegations should be separated clearly from verified facts. Timely correction of false or unsubstantiated claims is particularly important following terrorist attacks, violent incidents, and periods of heightened social tension.

Third, migration governance should treat security, legal protection, and social cohesion as interdependent objectives.

Restriction and deterrence may provide visible demonstrations of control, but when detached from transparent evidence and rights-based safeguards they can reinforce the perception that refugees constitute a permanent threat. More sustainable governance requires accessible public data, accountable communication, mechanisms for correcting misinformation, and regular evaluation of the social consequences of restrictive measures.

As discussed in Section 3.5, the purposive corpus does not support statistical generalization across the Turkish media system; audience reception was not measured; and the policy analysis establishes correspondence rather than causation. Future research could test the argument through comparable cross-national media corpora, longitudinal audience data, interviews with journalists and policy actors, and process tracing of specific governance episodes.

Overall, the article shows that migration securitization is sustained not only through formal state action or exceptional political declarations, but also through the cumulative circulation of categories, narratives, and affective associations. Its central contribution is to demonstrate how ideologically differentiated media actors may normalize migration's governability through distinct humanitarian, administrative, political, and security rationales.

Author Contributions

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Data Availability

The news articles and institutional documents analyzed in this study are identified in the manuscript and its references. The research materials supporting the qualitative analysis may be requested from the corresponding author, subject to availability and applicable copyright and access restrictions.

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