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ENEMIES-TO-BE: PARTY AFFILIATION, NEWS USE, AND PARTISAN CONSPIRACY BELIEFS IN TURKEY

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Didem Gölbaşı

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Date (06/01/23)

To the fine line between belief and reality...

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ENEMIES-TO-BE: PARTY AFFILIATION, NEWS USE, AND PARTISAN
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ABSTRACT

Different ideological tendencies underlie the conspiracy theories that create different enemies by pointing the finger at various powerful groups behind important events. One of these tendencies is party affiliation, and conspiracy beliefs associated with affiliation to a particular political party are defined as partisan conspiracy theories, opening a separate categorization in conspiracy narratives. This study examines the partisan conspiracy beliefs in the two poles: anti-government and pro-government, based on the increasingly polarized sociopolitical atmosphere of Turkey. I investigated how individuals who feel close to different political party groups differ in their partisan conspiracy beliefs, and which variables of news use beyond conspiratorial predisposition and party proximity predict partisan conspiracy beliefs. An online survey (N = 249) based on convenience sampling, provides quantitative evidence for the existence of partisan conspiracy beliefs in Turkey. The findings suggest that participants in the pro-government group believe more pro-government conspiracy beliefs than the opposition group, at statistically significant levels, while the opposition group have higher tendency to have anti-government conspiracy beliefs than the supporters of the government. Those who feel an affiliation to the new opposition parties, which were established after recently leaving the ruling party, do not believe in partisan conspiracy beliefs as much as the opposition group and have almost the same level of belief as the participants without party affiliation. While watching the news on A Haber TV, a pro-government channel, explained the belief in pro-government conspiracy theories, watching the news on Fox TV, an anti-government outlet, and following the news on Twitter were significantly related to belief in anti-government conspiracy theories. Consequently, this research broadens the scope of conspiracy theories in Turkey in academic research and reveals significant findings on how conspiracy beliefs are related to party affiliation and news source use.

Keywords: Conspiracy theories, Conspiracy beliefs, Party affiliation, Media use, News source, Partisanship, Polarization,

MÜSTAKBEL DÜŞMANLAR: TÜRKİYE'DE PARTİ YAKINLIĞI, HABER KULLANIMI VE PARTİZAN KOMPLO İNANÇLARI

ÖZET

Önemli olayların arkasında çeşitli güçlü grupları hedef göstererek birbirinden farklı düşmanlar yaratan komplo inançlarının temelinde farklı ideolojik eğilimler yatmaktadır. Bu eğilimlerden biri de siyasi parti yakınlığıdır ve belirli bir siyasi partiye yakınlık ile ilişkili olan komplo inançları, komplo anlatılarında ayrı bir kategorizasyon açarak partizan komplo teorileri olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin gittikçe kutuplaşan sosyopolitik atmosferinden yola çıkarak hükümet karşıtı ve hükümet yanlısı olarak belirlenen iki kutuptaki partizan komplo inançlarını incelemektedir. Farklı siyasi parti gruplarına yakın hisseden bireylerin partizan komplo inançlarında nasıl farklılık gösterdiğini, komplocu düşünme eğilimi ve parti yakınlığının ötesinde hangi haber kullanımı değişkenlerinin partizan komplo inançlarını tahmin ettiğini araştırmaktadır. Kolayda örneklem üzerinden niceliksel bir çevrimiçi anket çalışması olarak tasarlanan araştırma, toplanan verilerin istatiksel analizi sonucunda partizan komplo inançlarının Türkiye'de bir fenomen olarak varlığına dair niceliksel kanıtlar sunmuştur. Buna göre, hükümet yanlısı grup istatiksel olarak anlamlı seviyede daha fazla hükümet yanlısı komplo inancı gösterirken, muhalif grup daha fazla hükümet karşıtı komplo inancı göstermektedir. Yakın tarihte iktidar partisinden ayrılarak kurulan yeni muhalefet partilerine yakın hissedenler ise, muhalif grup kadar partizan komplo inançlarına inanmamakta ve bağımsız konumlanan katılımcılarla hemen hemen aynı inanç seviyesinde bulunmaktadır. A Haber TV kanalında haber izlemek, parti yakınlığı ve komplocu eğilimin ötesinde hükümet yanlısı komplo teorilerine inanmayı açıklarken, Fox TV kanalından haber izlemek ve Twitter'dan haberleri takip etmek ise hükümet karşıtı komplo inançları ile anlamlı derecede ilişkili bulunmuştur. Sonuç olarak, bu araştırma, Türkiye'deki komplo teorilerinin akademik araştırmalardaki kapsamını genişleterek komplo inançlarının siyasi parti yakınlığı ve haber kaynağı kullanımıyla nasıl ilişkili olduğuna dair kayda değer çıktılar ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Komplo teorileri, Komplo inançları, Medya kullanımı, Haber kaynağı, Partizanlık, Kutuplaşma

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M	The mean
SD	The standard deviation
Mo	The mode
t	The t test statistic
β	The standardized beta
B	The unstandardized beta
SE B	The standard error for the unstandardized beta
p	The probability value
R^2	The coefficient of determination
ΔR^2	The change in R^2
F	The F-test statistic

LIST OF ACRONMYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)

CHP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)

CTs: Conspiracy Theories

CSES: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems

EU: European Union

DEVA: Demokrasi ve Atılım Partisi (Democracy and Progress Party)

GH: Gülen Hareketi (Gülen Movement)

GP: Gelecek Partisi (Future Party)

HDP: Halkların Demokratik Partisi (People's Democratic Party)

İP: İyi Parti (Good Party)

MHP: Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Movement Party)

SP: Saadet Partisi (Felicity Party)

TİP: Türkiye İşçi Partisi (Workers' Party of Turkey)

TKP: Türkiye Komünist Partisi (Communist Party of Turkey)

YSP: Yeşil Sol Parti (Green Left Party)

ZP: Zafer Partisi (Victory Party)

1. INTRODUCTION

Five families rule the world, some countries have already contacted aliens, and people get microchipped by vaccination. These are just a few popular ones out of hundreds of conspiracy theories. Even though conspiracy theories seem illogical and absurd, a significant portion of the population, including educated people, still believes in them, making them an important topic for rigorous academic study (Gürpınar 2020).

Conspiracy theories are claims that aim "to explain some event or practice by reference to the machinations of powerful people, who attempt to conceal their role" (Sunstein and Vermeule 2009, 205). In the face of swift social change, conspiracy theories cannot be merely labeled as fringe or alternative ideas since they are actively rejected, accepted, and manipulated by political actors in accordance with their values and goals (Nefes 2017, 619). Therefore, conspiratorial accounts are also political narratives holding historical and sociopolitical significance (Nefes 2013, 261).

Conspiracy belief is a human tendency that can be more apparent in particular political structures, cultural contexts, ideological frameworks, and discursive spheres (Herzog 2014). In Turkey's politics, conspiratorial narratives are widely used in response to critical socio-political changes and events (Nefes 2013, 260). In contrast to pathologizing perspectives, conspiracy accounts are prevalent in Turkey where distinguishing between "marginal" and "mainstream" is problematic (Karaosmanoğlu 2021). In fact, the Turkish context is full of instances where official authorities and the mainstream media have produced, replicated, or supported conspiracy theories (de Medeiros 2018; Herzog 2014).

Furthermore, conspiracy theories are not homogeneous as they can constitute distinct types targeting different groups and are underpinned by diverse ideological foundations (Nera et al. 2021). Party identification is one of the primary explanatory factors for specific conspiracy beliefs (Enders and Smallpage 2019), hence such narratives are regarded as partisan conspiracy theories (Smallpage, Enders, and Uscinski 2017).

Although there is a lot of research on partisan conspiracy beliefs over the Republicans/Democrats polarization in the United States, to my knowledge, there is no study examining partisan conspiracy beliefs in Turkey. However, given high levels of part-based polarization (Somer 2020; Laebens and Ozturk 2021), Turkey could offer a unique context in terms of partisan conspiracy beliefs.

Sağlam (2020) pointed out the specific forms of conspiracy theories in various sociopolitical settings. Drawing on the rising authoritarianism and polarization in Turkey, this study examines partisan conspiracy beliefs through a dual perspective of pro-government and anti-government to reveal how various enemies are created by conspiracy theories and are seen as a "threat" to distinct political camps. In this study, the four groups based on party affiliation are operationalized as: (1) the pro-government group, (2) the opposition group, (3) the new opposition group, and (4) the independents. The present study first asks:

RQ1: How do party affiliation groups vary in holding partisan conspiracy beliefs?

With this first research question, the present study answers which political party group that the conspiracy theories targeting different enemies are significantly related to and investigates whether we can talk about the existence of partisan conspiracy beliefs in Turkey. Based on the research pointing out that voters of ruling party were found to show more conspiracy beliefs blaming global malign powers compared to voters of other parties in Turkey (Balta, Kaltwasser, and Yağcı 2022), I hypothesized:

H1: The pro-government group will be more likely to believe in conspiracy theories that blame unspecific global and internal powers than the other party affiliation groups.

Based on the current political atmosphere of Turkey, the first research question also elaborates on partisan conspiracy beliefs among those who do not feel close to any political party and those who feel close to the newly formed opposition parties that split from the ruling party, namely the Democracy and Progress Party (Demokrasi ve Atılım Partisi) and the Future Party (Gelecek Partisi).

Beyond the traditional explanatory factors studied in the literature, such as party affiliation and conspiratorial predisposition, the study also seeks to determine which news sources in Turkey's polarized media environment best predict partisan conspiracy beliefs. Therefore, the second research question is:

RQ2: What news use variables of Turkish citizens predict partisan conspiracy beliefs after accounting for essential predictors, i.e., party affiliation, and conspiratorial predisposition?

Overall, the present research aims to provide empirical data for the conceptualization of partisan conspiracy beliefs and their relationship with the use of particular news sources in the unique sociopolitical framework of Turkey. First, the study frames the current political atmosphere in Turkey through polarization and partisanship and discusses how this framework cultivates a unique conspiratorial context. Second, it outlines partisan motivated reasoning theory as a psychological theoretical perspective to comprehend partisan conspiracy beliefs and describes partisan conspiracy theories with examples from previous studies. Then, it presents a historical overview of featured conspiracy narratives in Turkey to build in the current conspiratorial context. Third, it discusses the academic literature on the association between news use and conspiracy beliefs, and elaborates on conspiracy beliefs in the polarized media landscape in Turkey. Finally, it presents the findings and concludes with a further discussion of the results, the study's main limitations and the conclusionary remarks on partisan conspiracy beliefs in Turkey.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Current Political Framework of Turkey: Polarization and Partisanship

When one starts a topic on politics in Turkey, polarization is the number one link that pops up to mind. It is not a coincidence since research points out high levels of polarization in Turkey in the recent years (KONDA 2019; Erdoğan 2020). KONDA (2019) analyzed the present social polarization in Turkey, arguing that distinct poles were shaped by different life values: the values of the more educated, middle and upper class, younger, secular, metropolitan and modern lifestyles, and on the other hand, the lower and middle class, religious, rural/town/small city values. The report pointed out that social polarization formed by values is also reproduced by the current identity policies of the political parties (KONDA 2019, 87). On the other hand, Ertugay (2022) stated that polarization in Turkey is not a new phenomenon; there are both historical and cultural dynamics of polarization, and a clear polarization manifests itself throughout the historical flow. However, Somer (2020, 296), who has made substantial contributions to polarization studies, argued that despite the presence of historically shaped cleavages in Turkey's history, such as religious-secular, Turkish-Kurdish, and Alevi-Sunni, polarization during recent years became more partisan and deepened. Similarly, Laebens and Ozturk (2021) claimed that even though state-led modernization under both the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic formed various political divides between religious authority and secular bureaucracy, between Muslim and non-Muslim people, and between the Turkish population and the ethnic minorities throughout the Turkey history, the current ruling party takeover more strongly solidified partisan identities and polarization in today's Turkey.

The incumbent party, AKP, came to power in 2002. Its vision, discourse, and policies changed and evolved throughout the twenty years it was in power. When the AKP first took office, the Turkish electorate had been frustrated by political and economic instability and the existing political elite of the last ten years, so they supported the AKP as an agent to overcome military tutelage, to join the European Union, and to consolidate a fundamental political change in Turkish democracy (Somer 2019, 48).

Even though so many people approved and disapproved of the AKP due to its Islamist identity, they were willing to ignore the party's Islamist narratives at the micro level and converged to ensure political democracy (Somer 2007). For the first term of the AKP government (2002 - 2006), Somer (2007; 2019) argued that the AKP gradually staffed state agencies with members of the Gülen Islamist movement (GH) and its partisans, expressed Islamic discourses at the local level, while they retained their national image composed of democratization, reformism and the EU membership on the macro level. After that, the AKP succeeded in five more general elections (2007 - 2018) and ruled the country as a one-party government until the transition to the presidential system in 2018 (Çakır 2020, 2). Esen and Gümüşçü (2016) advocated that during these years, the AKP government has moved Turkey from a tutelary democracy into a competitive authoritarian regime by filling state institutions with partisans, seizing control of the media and muting the opposition, excluding those who criticize the government. Thus, they put forward, "As a result of the government's skewed access to resources and institutions, the opposition faces an uneven playing field against the incumbent party" (Esen and Gümüşçü 2016, 1582). This uneven balance of political power set the stage for anti-government Gezi protests that reached millions of supporters across the country in 2013. Protesters from different ideologies and political parties united against the rising AKP authoritarianism (Yörük and Yüksel 2014). However, Somer (2019, 53) interpreted the outcome of the Gezi protests as that since the AKP government increased its control over society and the media and manipulated perceptions, Gezi could not turn into a social movement with a concrete agenda and faded away. Overall, he concluded that all that happened strengthened the polarization even more and consolidated the pro-AKP block but could not hold the anti-AKP block together. Moreover, the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, followed by the government's declaration of a state of emergency, "an anti-GH and anti-opposition witch hunt" and the transition from a parliamentary system to a presidential system with the 2017 constitutional referendum made the already high polarization more personalized, fueled by fear and negative partisanship (Somer 2019, 54).

The 2018 general elections, the first election held within the presidential system that gave the president an expanded executive power, marked a turning point in Turkish

politics (Çakır 2020, 2). The founder and chairman of the AKP, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, became the first president elected directly by the public in this political system. Beforehand, many terrorist attacks that occurred throughout Turkey in the aftermath of the June 2015 general elections have already created an ontological distrust that resulted in rising support for the presidential system, especially among the nationalist voters (Aytaç, Çarkoğlu, and Yıldırım 2017). According to Somer (2019, 54), all conditions that led Turkey to the presidential system turned into a new polarizing discourse of the government: "either a presidential system or instability and terror". As the AKP intertwined with state institutions along with the presidential system, it has turned any situation opposed to itself into a defense strategy in that anything against the AKP is against the state, and it started to show internal and external elements as targets to protect its own base by continuing the polarization (Somer 2019, 56). On the other hand, regarding the role of the opposition in the polarization process, Somer (2019, 57) argued that the opposition also pursued its own polarizing policy, primarily based on anti-Erdoğan rhetoric, to bring down the government, which in turn braced up the pro-government camp even further. He exemplified that during the opposition's campaign against the presidential system, although they convinced their voters by citing the structural problems and authoritarianism of the system, they were criticized for targeting Erdoğan's personality and failing to produce alternative policies, consequently reinforcing the pro-AKP camp to protect their leader.

All these years of intense conflict and the rising authoritarianism in Turkey enhanced both polarization and partisan attachments (Laebens and Ozturk 2021). Drawing upon nationally representative data collected right after the 2018 general elections, Laebens and Ozturk (2021) found that Turkish voters show partisan identities and hold attitudes toward political matters consistent with their partisan attachments, even though most political parties are quite young. Correspondingly, Aytaç, Çarkoğlu, and Yıldırım (2017) conducted a study before the 2017 presidential referendum and indicated that although people have little knowledge of the presidential system and its difference from the parliamentary system, they relied on partisan cues to form their opinion about the presidentialism in Turkey. Furthermore, in "The Dimensions of Polarization in Turkey 2020" research, it was shown that opinions on several issues discussed in Turkey are

formed in line with political party affiliations; therefore, the discussions are not based on the positive or negative aspects of the issue; instead formed by looking at which party supports or opposes it (Erdoğan 2020).

Based on the electoral data between 2011 and 2015, Çakır (2020) supported that party identification has gradually increased in Turkey. While various studies show that partisan identity exists in Turkey and has intensified over the years, some studies also point out that partisans also create partisan identities with which they are negatively associated (e.g., KONDA 2018; KONDA 2019; Erdoğan 2020). Erdoğan (2020) stated that the supporters of each party have their own "anti" party supporters: AKP and MHP supporters feel the most distant to CHP and HDP supporters, whereas for the pro-CHP and the İP supporters, AKP and HDP supporters are the most distant. Similarly, According to KONDA's (2018, 39) report, the pro-AKP group is positioned very negatively towards other parties, but it has a middle position against the MHP compared to other parties. On the other hand, all of the İP voters, and a very large percentage of HDP and CHP voters, indicated that they "would not" or "absolutely not" vote for the AKP in the general elections; this anti-AKP group is negatively positioned the most to the AKP and the MHP (KONDA 2018, 26 - 39). These findings are also relevant to what Laebens and Öztürk (2021) observed in their study that partisan social identities are closely linked to the threat perception that one's political freedom and economic condition are undermined if other political parties come to power. The ruling party AKP, the main opposition party CHP, and the HDP, which are placed at the poles of Turkey's political conflict, have a high perception of threat (Laebens and Öztürk 2021, 3). Hence, they contended that Turkey's partisan group identities were developed and fortified by years of heated political warfare and the steady erosion of democracy, reinforcing the idea that one's liberties and economic well-being are dependent on their party holding office.

Supporting Çakır's findings (2020) between 2011 and 2015, Laebens and Ozturk (2021, 24) demonstrated a significant increase in both the number of partisans and the level of partisanship for the AKP and the CHP; however, they also highlighted when Erdoğan consolidated power through the executive presidential system in 2018, this trend decreased considerably for both AKP and CHP partisans. Further evidence provided by

KONDA (2019) designated that support for the existing political parties in Turkey has eroded in recent years, yet the report underlined that even though partisan identification weakens, life values based on social identities determine political preferences. For instance, a high proportion of conservatives stated they would never vote for the CHP, while secularists declared that they would never vote for the AKP (KONDA 2019, 89). Therefore, even if party identification decreased compared to the past years, political polarization is highly at stake and causes negative partisan identification resulting in a political environment full of pro/anti dualities. In addition, the decrease in party identification coincided with the transition to the presidential system and the period when Erdoğan and the AKP were identified with the state. Thus, today's polarized populace turned into almost evenly split between pro-Erdoğan and anti-Erdoğan factions (Çağaptay 2020, 7).

Along with the above-presented research findings, I regard the current political polarization in Turkey as the dichotomy between the longstanding AKP takeover in the government and the opposition against the authoritarian and absolute political power of the AKP government, enhanced in the aftermath of the transition to the presidential system. Therefore, my contention is that Turkey's unique nature of polarization may cultivate a conspiratorial context loaded with partisan linings based on two separate blocks, pro-government and anti-government.

2.2 Partisan Motivated Reasoning

Motivated reasoning refers to one's internal purpose in creating an attitude within information processing (Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook 2014, 236). Kunda (1990) elaborates on information processing in terms of two different goals, namely directional goals (processing information to get to the desired point) and accuracy goals (processing information objectively to reach accurate conclusions). Whereas modern citizens of today are expected to be accurate, they are mostly undertaken by their prior beliefs and knowledge in information processing (Taber and Lodge 2006, 756). They tend to hold on to information corresponding to their social identity more than conflicting information in the presence of directional cues (Kunda 1990). Like the concepts in

social psychology, such as confirmation and disconfirmation bias, directionally motivated reasoning leads people to follow the information that confirms their existing beliefs and dismiss information contradictory to their prior beliefs (Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook 2014, 237).

In politics, which inherently contains distinct ideological directions, motivated reasoning can be understood as motivated 'directional' reasoning (Flynn, Nyhan, and Reifler 2017, 132). As a conception of motivated reasoning in the context of political psychology, partisan motivated reasoning occurs when individuals have a directional subconscious goal of being consistent with their partisan identity while processing information (Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook 2014, 237). Especially in an environment dominated by conflicting interests and high polarization, individuals tend to stick to their pre-existing political beliefs and values against any information that would challenge them, becoming motivated reasoners as a result (Erişen 2016, 50). Therefore, when new information includes cues from political opponents in a case where the evidence is ambiguous, one can easily link to the idea that the opposition is wrong (Taber and Lodge 2006, 767).

Similarly, motivated reasoning can be seen as a psychological mechanism that moderates news selection and information seeking patterns to reach specific conclusions that give people a sense of validation (Camaj 2019, 9). Motivated reasoning may also contribute to the formation of attitudinally congruent social networks where the network members are more likely to present affirmative evidence regarding political issues that requires less information processing effort and minimal cognitive flexibility. These social bubbles in turn can limit the diversity in political arguments (Erişen and Erişen 2012). Consequently, people's attitudes toward one another on all political and social topics become even more polarized and strongly biased due to motivated reasoning that pushes people to communicate with others who share their political preferences and to self-select media sources that present the news they want to hear (Erişen 2016, 51).

To sum up partisan motivated reasoning theory, partisans are more likely to endorse their party's stance on events and policies. They strengthen their stance on an issue put forth by their in-party and reject opposing information that does not align with their

preexisting beliefs or those of their in-party (Erişen 2016, 50). Thus, partisan identity shapes public opinion formation in contexts with a tremendous amount of competitive information (Druckman et al. 2013, 59).

Party identification can be considered a social identity that triggers individuals to evaluate information in terms of political ingroup and outgroup dynamics (Nicholson 2011, 1). The psychological need to maintain a positive view of oneself and the in-group such as preferred political party encourages people to focus on the possibility that outside actors are responsible for certain events and to form conspiracy beliefs in which external factors are against the in-group (Erişen 2022). In Turkey, Çakır (2020) found that party identification is significantly associated with affective attitudes towards political parties and their leaders, as well as evaluation of the economy building upon the nationwide data from 2011 to 2015.

People as motivated reasoners in a polarized environment become estranged from one another and start to harbor unfavorable feelings about others (Erişen 2016, 51). Given substantial party-based political polarization (Somer 2020) and longstanding "we" and "others" discourses by political party leaders (Kiriş 2011), partisan motivated reasoning stands as a remarkable psychological standpoint in the formation of conspiracy beliefs in Turkey.

2.3 What Are Partisan Conspiracy Theories?

Given the notion of motivated reasoning discussed above, conspiracy theories can also be regarded as outputs of interpreting information about the world with directional motives. Conspiracy theories mostly point to an enemy that individuals externalize their anger and insecurities onto, as well as an enemy into which they embody complicated issues (Hollander 2018, 4). This enemy might be any group, such as a race, a nation, a country, a leader, and a political party that someone frames as a threat, an evil, or something full of prejudice (Silverstein 1992, 145). In this sense, conspiracy theory endorsement can be regarded as "a motivated process that serves both ideological and psychological needs" (Miller, Saunders, and Farhart 2016, 825). Uscinski and Parent (2014) claim that conspiracy theories act like vaccination of the mind because

communicating conspiracy theories provide "a unifying narrative of a terrifying enemy" that "heightens alertness to avert tragedy" and consequently "sensitizes minds to vulnerabilities" (132).

Nevertheless, Smallpage, Enders, and Uscinski (2017, 2) argue that conspiracy beliefs might not merely be products of psychopathological motives, defense mechanisms, or cognitive shortcuts but rather of "shared core associations" with a group identity such as party affiliation. In fact, conspiracy beliefs are generally underpinned by ideological predispositions and partisan leanings. In the context of American society, Democrats tend to endorse conspiracy theories implicating Republicans, and Republicans are more likely to believe in theories that blame Democrats (Hollander 2018, 4). Enders and Smallpage (2019, 5) exemplify the 'birther' conspiracy theory believed more likely by Republicans that the former president of the US, Obama, was not born in the US, so he was not eligible to become the president. They argue that belief in such a theory does not simply stem from the fact that believers are predisposed to think of the world as full of conspiracies; in contrast, it is a manifestation of partisan loyalty, an instrument to reassure their worldview. Indeed, 'birther' beliefs are predicted most significantly by ideological and partisan self-identifications; on the other hand, conspiracy beliefs regarding the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the assassination of Kennedy are explained prominently by conspiratorial thinking predisposition (Enders, Smallpage and Lupton 2020).

Moreover, Smallpage, Enders, and Uscinski (2017) put forward that although individuals subconsciously process information according to their previously existing beliefs, conspiracy theory endorsement is not always the result of automatic and unconscious psychological processes. In their research, they found that people consciously associate political parties and conspiracy theories; more specifically, partisans figure out which conspiracy theory represents which political party even when the conspiracy theory belongs to their side. For instance, both Republicans and Democrats agreed that Republicans are delegates of conspiracy theories accusing Barack Obama of not being a natural-born-citizen of the United States of America. Hence, by relying upon correlates of specific conspiracy beliefs, Smallpage, Enders, and

Uscinski (2017, 6) concluded that the partisanship element distinguishes conspiracy theories at least into two categories, non-partisan and partisan conspiracy theories.

On the other hand, there is a nuanced question about partisan identity and belief in partisan conspiracy theories and whether all partisans endorse conspiracy theories (CTs) or not. Correspondingly, Miller, Saunders, and Farhart (2016) claim: "Although research has provided support for the notion that liberals and conservatives endorse different conspiracies, this, too, cannot be the whole story. Not all conservatives endorse CTs that implicate liberals, and not all liberals endorse CTs that implicate conservatives" (826). For evidence to the argument, Pasek et al. (2015) found that those who disapprove of the presidency of Barack Obama, and hold negative attitudes toward Blacks, in addition to their partisan/political identity as Republican/conservatives, were the most likely to endorse the 'birther' conspiracy theory. Furthermore, political knowledge and trust (in the authorities, media, and people in general) predict ideologically motivated conspiracy theories; for example, the combination of low trust and high political knowledge is related to higher levels of belief in conservative conspiracy theories among conservatives (Miller, Saunders, and Farhart 2016). Uscinski, Klofstad, and Atkinson (2016, 12) also agreed that partisanship significantly influences subscribing to conspiracy theories containing partisan elements; however, they underlined the role of trusted elites and conspiratorial predispositions in forming conspiracy beliefs.

In contrast to partisan conspiracy theories in the context of the US that are shaped by the dual political struggle between Republicans and Democrats, Turkey's uneven political field, where the AKP government has a highly skewed political power against the opposition (Esen and Gümüşçü 2016) may form partisan conspiracy theories arising from the Turkey-specific duality of the pro-government and the anti-government. Based upon the political framework picturing the rising authoritarianism of the government and negative partisan identification in Turkey, I assume that partisan conspiracy beliefs exist and vary in dichotomous pro-government and anti-government perceptions.

2.4 The Unique Conspiratorial Context of Turkey

The rise of identity politics, globalization, and the erosion of national identity have created a global conspiratorial turn in the recent past; nevertheless, the rise of conspiracy theories in Turkey is partly an extension of this global trend, but also stems from conspiratorial nationalist roots entrenched in the Turkish history (Gürpınar 2020, 3). The enemies that are the subject of conspiracy theories in Turkey have changed, transformed or been reshaped in the historical process. Studies state that Sevres Syndrome, which they define as the cornerstone of conspiracy theories in Turkey, is an explanatory approach to the formation of conspiracy theories and the enemies they contain (Nefes 2013; Nefes 2015a; Nefes 2015b; Nefes 2017; Karaosmanoğlu 2021; Gürpınar 2020). Sevres Syndrome stands for an existential fear and a perceived threat that the West and its internal collaborators have an eternal aspiration to annihilate the Turkish Republic in refence to the the Treaty of Sèvres signed in 1920 between the winning allies of World War I and the defeated Ottoman Empire to divide Ottoman lands among the western countries (Nefes 2015b; Gürpınar 2020). Nefes (2015b, 2013) argued that the popularity of anti-Semitic themes in conspiracy theories circulated in Turkey such as the Dönme community (a crypto-Jewish conspiracy that the converts to Islam keeping their Jewish faith secretly, dominate and manipulate Turkey) are derived from ontological insecurities over the threat of internal and external enemies rooted in Sevres Syndrome.

Building upon the internal and external enemies of Turkey, Herzog (2014, 199) mentioned two major distinct subjects of Turkey's conspiratorial context, outward factors (dış mihraklar) as foreign imperialistic threats to the unity of Turkey and deep state (derin devlet) as a secret organization within the Turkish state pursuing illegal actions to eliminate anything against the interests and regime of the state they have determined. Especially the deep state has been a notable term in Turkey after the Susurluk scandal. This controversial traffic accident in 1996 revealed the intertwined connections between the government, the military, and right-wing paramilitary groups (Herzog 2014, 199). Both leftists and rightists used the term to explain mysterious murders in Turkish politics (Gürpınar 2020, 70-71).

Conspiracy theories have been used to explain ever-changing sociopolitical circumstances in Turkey (Nefes 2013, 260). Therefore, when political conditions and balances differ, so do theories and enemies. When the AKP came to power in 2002, neo-nationalists (ulusalcılar) created conspiracy theories that the AKP was a pawn of American imperialism against the secular Kemalist republic of Turkey due to its liberal and western-oriented policies and Islamic background (Gürpınar 2020, 48-49). On the other hand, the AKP earlier seemed lacking in ontological insecurity over foreign threats to the sovereignty of the Turkish Republic. A study conducted with political party members in Turkey before the Gezi Protests revealed that the AKP members did not agree with the conspiracy theories about the Dönme community because they claimed their vision of Turkey is based on meritocracy and multiculturalism (Nefes 2013, 260).

Gürpınar (2020, 78) argued that along with the Gezi protests in 2013, the AKP's rising discourse, "the New Turkey vs. the Old Turkey" ("the New Turkey" was formed by the AKP, and "the Old Turkey" which is perceived as the Kemalist secular military country left behind), created new enemies of the New Turkey and a conspiracy universe that would be used frequently by Erdoğan and the AKP. In the increasingly authoritarian context that needs enemies to maintain legitimacy, new enemies became "elusive and metaphysical enemies" rather than specific ideologies and political movements (Gürpınar 2020, 95). Mastermind (üst akıl) was a perfect example of this kind of enemy who was omnipotent, yet an unknown entity that might be either a group of individuals or an institution; the term became very popular and instrumentalized to invent enemies from 2016 onwards (Karaosmanoğlu 2021). Furthermore, interest lobby (faiz lobisi), which was used by then-Prime Minister Erdogan in response to the Gezi protests, is a similar example since the interest lobby is a secret international power that tries to control Turkey through high interest rates in the global financial system (Nefes 2017, 611). Both Gürpınar (2020, 80) and Nefes (2017, 612) claimed that during the Gezi protests, Erdoğan tried to delegitimize the protest and the protesters attributing them to the products of global external powers through the conspiratorial narratives. Accordingly, de Medeiros (2018) brought forward that systemically employing paranoid narratives of critical social and political situations, Erdoğan silences the opponents and

consolidates the state power for his political gain. He also contended that in the years between the Gezi protests and the July 15 coup attempt, conspiracy theories speculated by the Turkish political elite started to emphasize internal enemies more than externals as a polarizing strategy. For instance, in May 2016, a group known as the Pelican organization with anonymous group members accused then-Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu (later founded the GP, one of the new opposition parties today) of conspiring against Erdoğan, which resulted in his dismissal as prime minister (Gürpınar 2020, 82).

In addition to the conspiratorial rhetoric of the ruling party, the opposition also created its own conspiratorial universe in the increasingly polarized context. For example, the fact that Muharrem İnce, the presidential candidate of the main opposition party, CHP, lost in the 2018 general elections, then remained silent for a long time led to numerous conspiracy theories circulating, especially on Ekşi Sözlük and Twitter, İnce actually won the election but was threatened by the AKP government (Parlak and Tangün 2018, 38). Parlak and Tangün (2018, 47) put forward that since politics in Turkey is not conceived as a negotiation area but as a power struggle, the conspiratorial context is based on the victim/sovereign dichotomy; thus, İnce and the electorate, who are aggrieved, explain the invincibility of the ruling AKP government with conspiracy theories based on various electoral frauds and threats.

Furthermore, KONDA's survey research (2018) reported that a considerable number of people in Turkey endorsed conspiracy theories about "external powers" and they did not significantly differ from those who did not subscribe to such theories in terms of levels of education and income. This finding is consistent with the afore-mentioned Sevr Syndrome embedded in the conspiratorial history in Turkey. The report also underlined that political identity was not directly associated with conspiracy beliefs in general; however, it was related to which conspiracy theories people believed in. For example, distinct partisan identities gave different answers to the theory that the Lausanne Treaty would end in 2023. Hence, the nationwide survey has provided empirical evidence for belief in partisan conspiracy theories linked to party affiliation in Turkey.

Drawing on the unique conspiratorial context of Turkey, the present study mainly asks how beliefs in partisan conspiracy theories in Turkey differ in terms of party affiliation.

Since research has focused on conspiracy theories generally associated with the government's discourses, this study dealt with partisan conspiracy theories in two separate dimensions, pro-government and anti-government, to shed light on conspiracy beliefs creating different enemies who pose a "threat" to distinct sociopolitical camps. Upon that, the present study analyzes group differences in pro-government and anti-government conspiracy beliefs by defining four groups based on party affiliation: (1) the pro-government group, (2) the opposition group, (3) the new opposition group, and (4) the independents. Based on these defined groups, the first research question is:

RQ1: How do party affiliation groups vary in holding partisan conspiracy beliefs?

Apart from the sociopolitical analyses of conspiracy theories in Turkey, there is limited research focusing on political conspiracy believers. However, a latest study building upon the KONDA data collected in 2018, provided a significant finding and an enlightening insight for future research on partisan conspiracy beliefs in Turkey: voters for the ruling party, AKP, were more likely to believe in conspiracy theories based on malign global powers than those who vote for other parties (Balta, Kaltwasser, and Yağcı 2022). Similarly, an ethnographic study conducted with ultranationalist men from northern Turkey (Sağlam 2020) found that the sample often used conspiratorial narratives accusing western powers or Israel as malign forces to interpret recent circumstances in politics, economics and daily life in general. Sağlam (2020, 19) emphasized that although the identity of the conspirators sometimes takes different country names, all narratives were based on a secret plan to undermine Turkey or the political power of Erdoğan. An earlier study on online users' conspiracy beliefs about the Gezi Protests supported that the AKP sympathizers tended to endorse the government's conspiracy theories about the interest rate lobby, whereas the AKP opponents abstained from such theories (Nefes 2017). Therefore, based on the research linking conspiracy beliefs pointing ambigious global powers and the ruling party supporters, I categorized such theories as pro-government conspiracy theories and hypothesized:

H1: The pro-government group will be more likely to believe in conspiracy theories that blame unspecific global and internal powers than the other party affiliation groups.

As a contribution to the existing research focused on particular political parties, I included how those who do not feel close to any political party and those who feel close to the new opposition parties that broke away from the ruling party, specifically the DEVA and the GP, show partisan conspiracy beliefs. Regarding the new opposition, I expected to find results worth discussing since the leaders of both parties held high-level positions in the government during the events of three conspiracy theories in the survey.

2.5 Media Use and Conspiracy Beliefs

Conspiracy theories are also nourished by the wide variety of information pools the media provides. News media studies on conspiracy beliefs generally highlight the predictive capacity of what types of news media individuals use. For instance, whereas frequent exposure to mainstream newspapers was associated with lower conspiracy beliefs, exposure to less formal, nontraditional accounts of media was found to be more predictive of belief in conspiracy theories (Stempel et al. 2007). Stempel et al. (2007) showed that American consumers of legitimate news media, such as network TV or newspapers, were less likely to endorse conspiracy theories about 9/11 attacks, while those using less legitimate media such as blogs and tabloids were more likely to have conspiracy beliefs regarding the attacks. Similarly, a more recent study in Germany showed that frequent exposure to video-sharing platforms and alternative news sites linked to a higher endorsement of conspiracy theories, on the contrary, the use of public TV news, quality press, and news aggregator websites was associated with lower conspiratorial beliefs (Schemer et al. 2021). Moreover, Romer and Jamieson (2021) found that users predisposed to conspiratorial thinking and those who hold conservative political beliefs and are less exposed to mainstream news have been drawn to conservative media in the US, and the selective usage of conservative media strengthened conspiracy ideas about the COVID-19.

The use of politically biased news sources also affects people's views of reality by changing how they interpret experts' findings and, more crucially, by influencing their opinions in ways that go beyond what the available evidence suggests (Garrett, Weeks,

and Neo 2016, 343). Garrett, Weeks, and Neo (2016) found that Americans who use conservative news sources were more prone to believe in political misperceptions in favor of conservatives, and those who use liberal news sources were more likely to believe in falsehoods in favor of liberals even if they were aware that journalists, fact-checkers, or scientists disagree with them. An experimental study by Warner and Neville-Shepard (2014) proved that regardless of prior beliefs, direct media exposure to political conspiracy theories caused higher belief in conspiracies shown in the media stimuli and concluded that ideologically homogeneous media echo-chambers can increase belief in conspiracies.

Another experimental study by Kim and Cao (2016) found that exposure to media messages promoting government conspiracy theories increased belief in the conspiracy both immediately after exposure and two weeks later; therefore, the study suggested that media promoting government conspiracy theories can result in long-term cynicism toward the government. Hollander (2018) indicated that even when sociodemographic, political, and individual differences were statistically controlled for, watching programs on the conservative-leaning Fox News led to greater belief in theories involving Obama and decreased belief in theories involving Bush. On the other hand, having greater knowledge of the news media system negatively predicted conspiracy beliefs even if the theories were aligned with people's political ideologiy (Craft, Ashley, and Maksl 2017).

Furthermore, the rise of social networks, internet search engines that display various sources of media institutions, and the growing amount of user-generated content have opened a broader window to conspiracy theories (Radu and Schultz 2017). According to research from the US, most social media users hold conspiracy beliefs, and the extent of belief in conspiracy theories with partisan tones depends on their political ideologies and sociodemographic factors (Min 2021). More specifically, Min (2021) supported that the conservatives who frequently discuss politics in a more homogeneous network have higher beliefs in conservative conspiracies than conservatives who frequently discuss politics in a more diverse social media network (Min 2021).

Xuan and MacDonald (2019) underlined the potential of social media to serve as an echo chamber or a contagion, especially for individuals who already have conspiratorial

thoughts. Enders et al. (2021) also pointed out conspiratorial predisposition, a belief system defined as a tendency to advocate conspiracies behind all manner of social and political events, as a significant contributor in explaining conspiracy endorsement. They stated that despite numerous studies linking social media use to higher conspiracy beliefs, social media use alone does not predict belief in conspiracy theories, yet the relationship between social media use and conspiracy beliefs gets stronger when conspiratorial predisposition intensifies (Enders et al. 2021).

Regarding social media platforms, Stecula and Pickup (2021) found that using Facebook and YouTube for news predicted greater conspiracy beliefs in both generic and COVID-19 specific, even after accounting for partisanship, demographic, and psychological factors. This follows a broadscale cross-cultural study on the relationship between social media platforms and conspiracy beliefs that argued particular social media platforms might be more prone than others to accommodate conspiracy theories and to influence users due to their unique technological affordances and social features (Theocharis et al. 2021). Hereby, they showed that Twitter use has a negative effect on conspiracy beliefs, putting forward Twitter's affordance, which enables users to access diverse political views and information. On the other hand, they found that Facebook, YouTube, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp use had positive impacts on conspiracy beliefs, mainly suggesting that the focus of Facebook, Messenger and WhatsApp was a social connection that allows peers to influence each other, and YouTube as a special case affording audiovisual materials and algorithm recommendations based on interest (Theocharis et al. 2021). Additional support for this finding comes from a study based on big data from Italy, which indicated that followers of conspiracy theories tend to form online communities on Facebook where they promote conspiratorial content and disseminate the posts of conspiracy news by liking, commenting, and sharing (Bessi et al. 2015). Moreover, concerning a very popular conspiracy theory named Flat Earth with its growing cohort of YouTubers, Weill (2022, 101) asserted that Flat Earth is one of the best-performing attention products of tech companies to make high amounts of profit just like other conspiracy theories; therefore, their social media platforms pump an addictive combination of conspiratorial content into the online feed of each user through algorithms.

2.5.1 Elaborating on conspiracy beliefs in a polarized media landscape

There is a very limited amount of research concerning the relationship between news media use and conspiracy beliefs in Turkey. In line with the research findings mentioned above, a study examining belief in coronavirus conspiracy theories in Turkey found that as Facebook usage increased, conspiracy belief increased, but as Twitter usage increased, the belief in conspiracy theories decreased (Akyüz 2021, 81). Another study focusing on Turkish TV channels by Balta, Kaltwasser, and Yağcı (2022, 633) showed that the largest predicted effects on belief in conspiracy theories were linked to the pro-government Turkuvaz group (ATV, A Haber) channels and the government-run public channel TRT. Specifically, conspiracy theories asked in the study were highlighting global malign powers: "The Lausanne Treaty will expire in 2023", "$17 trillion-worth contorium element lies underneath the Istanbul strait but foreign powers won't allow us to mine it", "The world is run by five big families", "They try to make us infertile through the use of genetically modified seeds" (Balta, Kaltwasser and Yağcı 2022, 632). Drawing upon the same theories, KONDA (2018, 60) reported that social media users were slightly more likely to subscribe to these four conspiracy theories than those who did not. The highest number of subscribers were Facebook users, and those who agreed with the theories the least were Twitter users. Similarly, in the section examining the endorsement of political claims about Turkey such as "Germany is jealous of our third airport" and "Turkey will be among the ten largest economies in the world by 2023", the report stated that 60 percent of A Haber viewers, 49 percent of ATV viewers, and 44 percent of TRT viewers agreed with these claims (KONDA 2018, 59). Finally, the report remarked on the sharpening of the "party in power" and "others" distinction, observing that those who watch the TV channels preferred by AKP voters, such as A Haber, ATV, and TRT indicated a very high rating on the functioning of democracy in Turkey, while those who watch channels such as Halk TV and Fox TV, especially preferred by CHP voters, had a very low rating on the state of democracy (KONDA 2018, 34).

All the research findings resonate with the current polarized media environment in Turkey. World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders, 2022) ranked Turkey as the 149th among 180 countries, putting forward that the ninety percent of the national

media is under government control and the public turned to follow news from critical and independent outlets to learn about the current economic and political crisis in the country. Yıldırım, Baruh, and Çarkoğlu (2021) claimed that after the AKP came to power in 2002, as the number of pro-government newspapers has grown, so has the AKP's visibility and favorability; at the same time, opposition parties have come under increasing criticism by pro-government media groups. Moreover, pro-government misinformation through partisan internet trolls and the immigration of opponents to social media to produce their content since the Gezi Park protests turned social media into a medium of polarization as well (Bulut and Yörük 2017). Even Twitter, seen as a symbol of diverse political views and information worldwide, is polarized in Turkey. A study investigating Twitter connections of media organizations revealed online echo chambers clustering as pro-AKP, liberal, leftist, and pro-Kurdish, as well as the nonmainstream accounts having close ties with each other as a consequence of oppositional stance toward the AKP government (Doğu 2017, 703).

Furthermore, a content analysis study on the framing strategies of pro-government and anti-government news media outlets in Turkey found that even during the July 15 coup attempt, which was catastrophic for the country, news outlets failed to reach a consensus and provide a media landscape where issues are objectively debated to inform the public with multiple sides of the story (İşeri, Şekercioğlu and Panayırcı 2019, 1479). Based on the findings, İşeri, Şekercioğlu, and Panayırcı (2019) argued that "sustained exposure to polarized coverage reinforces the contrast between in-group and out-group, making an us-versus-them interpretation more accessible" (1480). Yıldırım, Baruh, and Çarkoğlu (2021, 343) also pointed out that the media's discussion of hot-button issues is largely slanted and divisive; so, rather than creating a more inclusive consensus, it is more likely to reinforce already present partisan leanings and increase ideological polarization in Turkey.

The government's dominance in the mainstream media (including public press agencies and channels such as the TRT and the Anadolu Agency), and a highly polarized structure of the overall media landscape creates a unique information setting in Turkey. Unlike less polarized polities such as Germany and other Nordic countries where legacy media sources serving corrective and objective information are widely available and

followed by a large audience (Schemer et al. 2021); Turkey's media environment may enhance conspiratorial narratives, especially having partisan elements, in the nonpresence of such media structures. Hence, departing from the significance of news media, and other essential factors predicting conspiracy beliefs stated in previous studies, the present study also investigates which variables of news use predict partisan conspiracy beliefs in Turkey after accounting for conspiratorial predisposition, party affiliation and demographic factors:

RQ2: What news use variables of Turkish citizens predict partisan conspiracy beliefs after accounting for essential predictors, i.e., party affiliation, and conspiratorial predisposition?

Building upon the highly polarized media environment giving rise to uneven distribution of the visibility and biased interpretations of political actors and issues both in traditional and new media channels in Turkey, I assume that explaining partisan conspiracy beliefs in terms of news sources use requires a more nuanced approach beyond focusing on generic news use. Starting from the fact that television maintains its foremost position as a medium of communication in Turkey (RTÜK 2018; KONDA 2019) and constitutes echo chambers due to the existence of a serious amount of audience solely watching channels that are compatible with their own political views (KONDA 2019, 19); I specifically examine two television channels representing pro-government (A Haber) and anti-government (Fox TV) standpoints. Furthermore, I analyze the frequency of social media use for news as it has increased over the years, especially among voters of opposition parties (KONDA 2016; KONDA 2019), and the use of different social media platforms for news (YouTube, Twitter, etc.). I also included a category of Turkey-specific forum websites, so-called collaborative hypertext dictionaries such as Ekşi Sözlük that is a very popular and widely used news source in Turkey (Teyit.org 2019) with its opponent structure (Uçkan 2012) and user-generated political discussions (Nefes 2017).

3. METHOD

The study was designed as quantitative research based on an online survey. Due to time constraints and budget issues of a master's thesis, convenience sampling method was used to obtain data quickly.

3.1 Participants

Participants volunteered to participate in the online survey via the research link shared on social media platforms. I distributed the online survey link to a diverse range of social circles that might represent different party affiliations as much as possible. The only criterion for participation in the study was to be 18 years and older. No personal information was requested from the participants within the scope of the survey. They were informed that they would answer the questions anonymously.

Three hundred forty persons participated in the online survey between January and March of 2022. However, 90 participants were excluded from the analysis because they did not finish the survey and did not complete all the measures required for analyses. In addition, one participant who gave the same answers to all survey questions was also excluded from analyses to reach accurate results. Five participants did not complete the demographic form, yet they were included in the data analysis since they answered the questions in the measures needed for the primary analyses. Therefore, the final sample was a total of 249 participants (137 females, 99 males, four responded as "other", four preferred not to state; $M_{age} = 31.19$, $SD = 10.91$). The age of the participants ranged between 18 and 70. The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants can be seen in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Demographic Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Female	137	55
Male	99	39.8
Other	4	1.6
Preferred not to state	4	1.6
Missing	5	2
Education		
Primary School	2	.8
Middle School	9	3.6
High School	28	11.2
University	153	61.4
Masters or PhD	52	20.9
Missing	5	2

Note: N = 249. Participants were on average 31.2 years old (*SD* = 10.9).

3.2 Procedure and Measures

Before starting the data collection, the ethics committee approval was received from Kadir Has University Human Research Ethics Committee. The data was collected via an online survey software, Qualtrics, by sharing the survey link on social media platforms. Participants were first asked whether they approved the informed consent form about the purpose of the study and the anonymity of their data (Appendix A.1). After that, they first responded to the questionnaire designed to measure partisan conspiracy beliefs in the context of Turkey and completed the conspiratorial predisposition scale. Then, they answered the questions about party affiliation and news use, respectively. In the last section of the survey, the demographic questions took place to gather sociodemographic information about the sample.

3.2.1 Partisan conspiracy beliefs in Turkey

Belief in partisan conspiracy theories in Turkey was the main construct of the study. It was operationalized as two dependent variables of the research representing the political poles apart: pro-government conspiracy beliefs and anti-government conspiracy beliefs. The items (Appendix A.2) were created based on conspiracy theories in social circulation about important sociopolitical events and issues that have taken place in Turkey within the last ten years, such as the Gezi Protests and the July 15 coup attempt, which were among the events found to cause the most disagreement in Turkey (Erdoğan 2020). They were made of paragraphs involving a brief introduction to the selected events and a statement specifying a conspiracy theory about the event. Of the four paragraphs, two outlined conspiracy theories deemed pro-government, and other two outlined conspiracy theories deemed anti-government.

Drawing on the academic literature, the study defined partisan conspiracy theories as separate from generic conspiracy theories, as theories with partisan elements reflecting a particular group's political views and motivations. Thus, pro-government conspiracy theories in the context of Turkey were determined by the manifestation of the partisan loyalty to the political discourse and worldview of the ruling party, the AKP, and its leader, President Erdoğan. As it was discussed in the literature review chapter above, the incumbent party, AKP voters have been found to be more likely to endorse conspiracy theories condemning malign foreign and global powers (Balta, Kaltwasser, and Yağcı 2022). Moreover, Şengül (2021) argued that Erdoğan and other AKP elites often used "terrorists" label to denounce those acting against the AKP's interests and show disloyalty to the party or Erdoğan such as opposition party members, particular groups in conflict, and protesters.

Based on this framework, pro-government conspiracy theories were identified as inferences accusing global powers and unspecified dangerous groups such as "terrorists" working against the AKP government regarding critical circumstances in Turkey. Specifically, two theories were chosen. One was about the rapid depreciation of the Turkish lira against the exchange rates in recent years: "The recent changes in the

value of the Turkish lira were due to the operations of global financial centers". The theory was blaming global financial powers for conspiring against the Turkish lira, bringing forth rapid changes in the currency, which also has media coverage in pro-AKP news outlets (e.g., A Haber 2020).

The other was regarding the Gezi Park Protests that took place in May 2013 and started when a group of environmentalist protesters held a sit-in to voice their opposition to the Turkish government's plans to demolish the park and replace it with a replica of the Taksim Military Barracks from the time of the Ottoman Empire that would also house a mall. The protests left their mark on Turkey's recent history as unprecedented numbers of people took to the streets when the police overused their power and forcibly removed demonstrators from the park. Over the course of three weeks, millions of people from different ideologies demonstrated in Turkey in support of various concerns mainly based on the rising authoritarianism of the government. The theory was pointing terrorist groups as the organizers of the Gezi Park Protests, aspiring to topple the AKP government: "Some terrorist groups organized the protests that took place in Taksim Gezi Park in 2013 to overthrow the government". Media coverage focusing on the relationship between terrorist groups and the protests can be seen in pro-government news media (e.g., Yeni Şafak 2022, Anadolu Ajansı 2021).

On the other side, anti-government conspiracy theories in Turkey were specified as the claims declaring the AKP government as the conspirator behind critical events that happened in Turkey. One theory was about speculations on the reality of July 15 coup attempt: "What happened in Turkey on July 15, 2016, was not a real coup attempt; it was a theater organized by the government". On July 15, 2016, a group of the Turkish military linked to the Gülen Movement began a coordinated effort to overthrow President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's administration, resulting in the bloodiest coup attempt in Turkey's history. The public often expressed suspensions as "July 15 theatre", a term for allegations that the government orchestrated the coup itself. It can be widely seen on social media and be found as a phenomenon in academic research (e.g., Mencet 2017).

The other theory was about several terrorist attacks happened between the June 7 and November 1, 2015, general elections in Turkey: "The terrorist attacks that took place in Turkey between the June 7 and November 1, 2015 general elections were known by the government beforehand, but they were not prevented by taking advantage of the chaos environment to re-establish the power by re-election". When the AKP lost its parliamentary majority in the general elections on the June 7, the parties failed to form a coalition government that resulted in another election round on the November 1, 2015. The period between the two elections was the scene of serious political unrest and acts of terrorism, therefore, in the second election, the AKP came to power once again. This period was also associated with doubt and distrust among the public over the facts behind the attacks. Discussions can be captured on social media, such as the "dark period from June 7 to November 1, 2015" on Ekşi Sözlük. The theories that emerged during this period came to the fore again, as the 2023 elections approached.

As a measure of how much people endorse partisan conspiracy beliefs, a 4-item scale was developed to assess how much participants agree with the given four paragraphs on a 5-point scale (1 = *completely disagree*, 2 = *slightly disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *slightly agree*, 5 = *completely agree*). Two separate dependent variables were created for the analysis by taking the average scores of both items representing pro-government and anti-government conspiracy beliefs. To determine the reliability of the partisan conspiracy belief scale, two Cronbach alpha reliability analyses were conducted for each item measuring the pro-government conspiracy beliefs and anti-government conspiracy beliefs. Cronbach's alpha level of the pro-government conspiracy belief variable was found to be .76, and Cronbach's alpha level of the anti-government conspiracy belief variable was found to be .77.

3.2.2 Conspiratorial predisposition

Conspiratorial predisposition was defined as an "underlying predisposition toward viewing events and circumstances as the product of conspiracy" (Uscinski, Klofstad, and Atkinson 2016, 3), and it is accepted as one of the essential factors in explaining conspiracy beliefs (Enders et al. 2021; Enders, Smallpage and Lupton 2020). The

conspiratorial predisposition scale (4-item) designed by Uscinski, Klofstad, and Atkinson (2016) was adapted to the Turkish language to measure how much one is predisposed to interpret the word full of conspiracies.

The items (Appendix A.3) were "Much of our lives are being controlled by plots hatched in secret places", "Even though we live in a democracy, a few people will always run things anyway", "The people who really 'run' the country, are not known to the voters", and "Big events like wars, the current recession, and the outcomes of elections are controlled by small groups of people who are working in secret against the rest of us". A 5-point response scale was used (1 = *completely disagree*, 2 = *slightly disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *slightly agree*, 5 = *completely agree*). The average score of four items formed the conspiratorial predisposition variable. In the reliability analysis of the scale, Cronbach's alpha level was reported as .78.

3.2.3 Party affiliation

To assess party affiliation in Turkey, the study relied on the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project that involves standardized post-selection surveys measuring partisanship and other related constructs comparatively across nations, including Turkey (CSES 2012). Since the CSES surveys measure party affiliation through particular survey items that estimate feelings of closeness to a political party, "the enduring nature of the concept" as stated by Çakır (2020, 7). Consequently, four questions capturing the party affiliation from the fourth module of CSES project (CSES 2012) were used (Appendix A.4). Firstly, participants responded to the question, "Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?". If they said yes to the first question, they moved to the question, "Which party do you feel closest to?"; if they said no, they skipped to a follow-up question, "Do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than the others?". If they said yes, they answered the question, "If you feel a little closer to one of the political parties than the other parties, which party is it?".

Those who say no to the first question but indicate that they feel a little closer to a political party than the others are generally coded as leaners (CSES 2012). Nevertheless,

they were not counted as a distinct category in the present study because leaners show partisan attitudes, unlike pure independents (Greene 1999; Petrocik 2009; Çakır 2020). Thus, the participants who specified the political party they feel close to or a little closer to, were coded in the party affiliation categories determined within the scope of the study. Those who feel close to the ruling party, AKP, or its alliance member MHP were coded as the pro-government group because the MHP, which had previously taken part in the opposition, has started to support the government's rhetoric and actions after forming an alliance called the Public's Alliance (Cumhur İttifakı) with the ruling party AKP since the 2018 general elections. Those who feel close to the CHP, the İP, the HDP, the SP, and other opposition parties were coded as the opposition group. Those who feel close to the DEVA and the GP were coded as the new opposition group, considering that both founders of the parties had been in high-level critical positions in the AKP government in the past, yet they left the AKP, and became the opposition with separate political parties from the end of 2019. Those who responded as no to both questions, meaning not feeling close to any political parties, were recorded as independents. All political parties stated by the participants are presented below (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Political Parties in Party Affiliation Groups

	$n = 249$	
	n	%
Pro-Government Group		
AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)	23	9.2
MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)	4	1.6
Opposition Group		
CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)	79	31.7
İP (İyi Parti)	10	4.0
HDP (Halkların Demokratik Partisi)	22	8.8
SP (Saadet Partisi)	1	0.4
TİP (Türkiye İşçi Partisi)	9	3.6
TKP (Türkiye Komünist Partisi)	3	1.2
YSP (Yeşil Sol Parti)	2	1.2
ZP (Zafer Partisi)	3	1.2
New Opposition Group		
DEVA (Demokrasi ve Atılım Partisi)	10	4.0
GP (Gelecek Partisi)	1	0.4
Independents	82	32.9

3.2.4 News use

To gather information about what news sources participants use, a couple of questions were asked, such as "Which television channel(s) do you follow the news from?" (Appendix A.5). Participants were provided with multiple choices for news sources as well as they wrote their answers manually. Specifically, two separate variables were formed based on those who preferred A Haber TV and Fox TV channels for watching the news to analyze partisan conspiracy beliefs regarding the use of different media channels. These two TV channels were specially selected as they are associated with

opposing political leanings and lifestyles; and are among the most watched channels for news (KONDA 2019, 12-13). Whereas A Haber TV belongs to the pro-government media group, Turkuvaz, Fox TV belongs to a global American company, The Walt Disney, and broadcasts in a way considered more free and oppositional than the mainstream media (Oğuz 2019).

Furthermore, they were asked about the frequency of social media use for news on a 5-point ordinal scale (1 = *never*, 2 = *rarely*, 3 = *sometimes*, 4= *often,* 5 = *every day*). To analyze the frequency of social media use for news in the sample ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.06$), two separate groups were created based on the mean value of the variable, 4.19. Therefore, those who responded between 1 and 3 became one group for those who slightly use social media for news; those who answered 4 and 5 turned into another group for those who frequently use social media for news. They also responded to which social media platforms they use for following news, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and collaborative hypertext dictionary sites (e.g. Ekşi Sözlük).

4.FINDINGS

All analyses were carried out using the statistical analysis software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Initially, the normality assumption for the analyses was checked for all continuous variables in the study. There were no significant outliers captured in the boxplots, and the values of skewness and kurtosis for the variables were within the range of ±2, which is accepted for a normally distributed sample (Kim 2013). For the regression analyses, linear relationships between independent and dependent variables were provided and checked through scatterplots. There were no high correlations among independent variables, and VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values were between 1-2, indicating no multicollinearity problem (Johnston, Jones, and Manley 2018). Descriptive statistics of the study variables can be seen in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2.

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics of the Continuous Variables

	$n = 249$	
	M	*SD*
Pro-Government Conspiracy Beliefs	2.13	1.31
Anti-Government Conspiracy Beliefs	3.33	1.30
Conspiratorial Predisposition	3.15	1.05

Note: All measures had 5-point response scales (1 = *completely disagree*, 2 = *slightly disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *slightly agree*, 5 = *completely agree*).

**Table 4.2.** Descriptive Statistics of the Categorical Variables

	$n = 249$	
	n	%
Party Affiliation		
Pro-Government Group	27	10.8
Opposition Group	129	51.8
New Opposition Group	11	4.4
Independents	82	32.9
News Use		
A Haber TV	19	7.6
Fox TV	117	47.0
Social Media	188	75.5
Social Media Platforms		
Facebook	32	12.9
Instagram	110	44.2
YouTube	99	39.8
Twitter	180	72.3
Collaborative Hypertext Dictionaries (e.g. Ekşi Sözlük)	52	20.9

Note: A Haber TV and Fox TV rows show the number of participants watching news from those channels. Social Media row stands for the number of those who frequently use social media as a source of news. Social Media Platforms (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) block demonstrates the number participants following news from the given social media platform.

4.1 Party Affiliation Group Comparisons on Partisan Conspiracy Beliefs

In order to answer the first research question, how belief in partisan conspiracy theories differs in terms of party affiliation, two separate one-way ANOVA statistical tests were conducted to compare the mean differences in anti-government conspiracy beliefs and pro-government conspiracy beliefs according to distinct party affiliations. A one-way between-subjects ANOVA revealed that there were statistically significant differences

among the groups based on party affiliation in anti-government conspiracy belief scores $F(3,245) = 32.12$, $p=.000$. To analyze how a specific party affiliation group differs from one another on anti-government conspiracy beliefs, post hoc analyses were performed using Bonferroni adjustment. The opposition group ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .98$) showed significantly more anti-government conspiracy beliefs than the pro-government group ($M = 1.74$, $SD = 1.15$), independents ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.24$) , and those who feel close to the new opposition parties that have recently split from the ruling party ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.29$), $p = .000$, $p = .000$, and $p = .001$, respectively. Independents also indicated significantly higher scores in anti-government conspiracy beliefs than the pro-government group, $p = .000$. On the other hand, there were no statistically significant mean differences between the new opposition group and independents, and between the pro-government group and the new opposition group, $ps > .05$. The distribution of party affiliation groups across pro-government and anti-government conspiracy beliefs are illustrated in Figure 4.1.
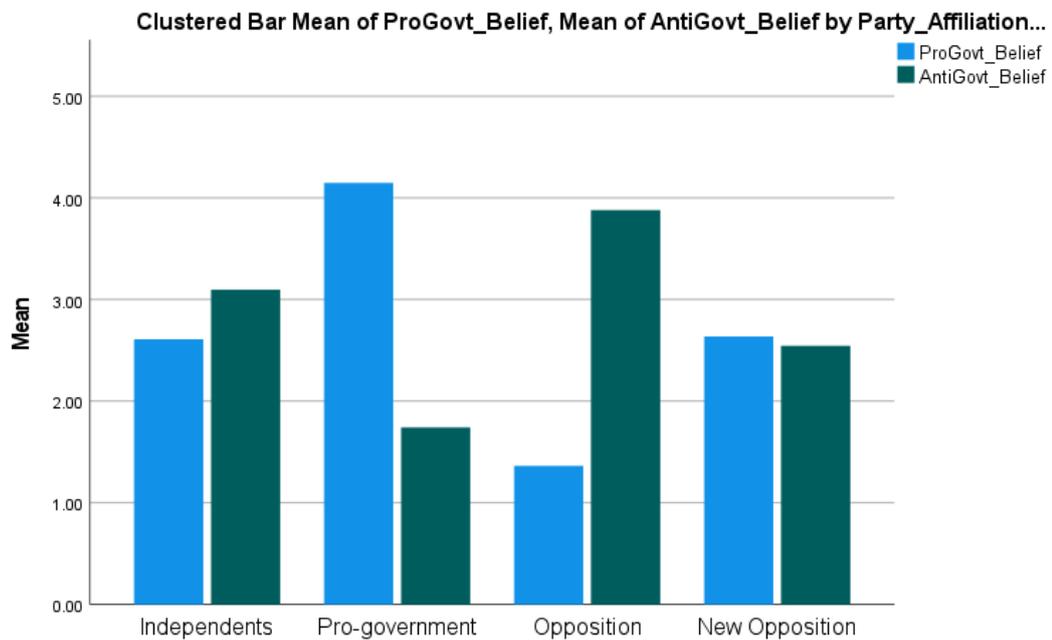
Figure 4.1 The distribution of party affiliation groups across pro-government and anti-government conspiracy beliefs

Note: Partisan conspiracy belief measure consisted of a 5-point response scale (1 = *completely disagree*, 2 = *slightly disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *slightly agree*, 5 = *completely agree*).

H1 predicted that the pro-government group would be more likely to believe in conspiracy theories blaming unspecified global and internal forces, so-called pro-government conspiracy theories compared to other party affiliation groups. Since the Levene's F test demonstrated that the homogeneity of variance assumption was not met across groups for the other dependent variable, pro-government conspiracy beliefs, $p = .000$; the Welch's F test was used to test the hypothesis. The result showed that participants affiliated with different political parties significantly differed from each other in terms of pro-government conspiracy belief scores, Welch's $F(3, 35.77) = 78.12$, $p = .000$. The Games-Howell procedure was conducted to analyze pairwise post hoc comparisons in pro-government conspiracy belief scores. Results supported the hypothesis that the pro-government group ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.02$) had a significantly higher average score in pro-government conspiracy beliefs than the opposition group ($M = 1.36$, $SD = .63$), independents ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.25$) as well as the new opposition group ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.18$), $p = .000$, $p = .000$, and $p = .009$, respectively. There was also a statistically significant mean difference between the new opposition group and the opposition group in pro-government conspiracy belief scores, $p = .023$. However, independents and the new opposition group did not show a significant mean difference in pro-government conspiracy beliefs, $p > .05$.

For a more profound outlook, conspiracy theories in the study were also analyzed individually to assess if there are statistically significant differences among party affiliation groups in terms of different theories, and to compare with the primary results made by two dimensions, pro-government and anti-government beliefs. The Games-Howell procedure was applied to examine pairwise group comparisons across four theories. Whereas the new opposition group was found to show significantly lower scores than the pro-government group in pro-government conspiracy theories; only for the Gezi Park theory, the new opposition group ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.34$) did not indicate a significant mean difference with the pro-government group ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.30$), $p = .095$. Nonetheless, the new opposition group ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 1.49$) statistically significantly differed from the pro-government group ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.19$) in the Turkish currency theory, $p = .011$. Another insight about the Turkish currency theory was that the new opposition group ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 1.49$) did not show a statistically

significant mean difference with the opposition group (M = 1.41, SD = .89) unlike the significant mean difference between the groups in anti-government conspiracy belief dimension. Among other groups, there were no findings different than the primary analysis. The means and mode values of the groups across four conspiracy theories are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Descriptive Statistics of Conspiracy Theories Across Party Affiliation Groups

	Gezi Park		July 15		Turkish currency		2015 General Elections	
	M	Mo	M	Mo	M	Mo	M	Mo
Pro-Government Group	4.19	5	1.48	1	4.11	5	2.00	1
Opposition Group	1.32	1	3.63	4	1.41	1	4.13	5
New Opposition Group	3.00	4	3.13	1	2.27	1	2.73	1
Independents	2.61	1	3.00	3	2.61	1	3.20	3

Note: Belief in theories was measured by 5-point response scale (1 = *completely disagree*, 2 = *slightly disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *slightly agree*, 5 = *completely agree*).

4.2 News Source Comparisons on Partisan Conspiracy Beliefs

In order to examine partisan conspiracy theories in relation to the use of specific TV channels as news sources, two independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare mean differences in pro-government and anti-government conspiracy beliefs in terms of the use of A Haber TV versus the use of Fox TV as a news media source. Results indicated that those who watch A Haber TV for the news (M = 3.97, SD = 1.30) showed significantly higher belief in pro-government conspiracy theories than those who do not (M = 1.98, SD = 1.19), $t(247)$ = -6.95, p = .000. On the contrary, those who watch A Haber TV for the news (M = 2.18, SD = 1.31) scored significantly lower than those who do not (M = 3.43, SD = 1.25) in anti-government conspiracy beliefs, $t(247)$ = 4.13, p = .000. Those who watch Fox TV for news (M = 3.70, SD = 1.11) demonstrated significantly higher belief in anti-government conspiracy theories than those who do not (M = 3.00, SD = 1.37), $t(245.14)$ = -4.48, p = .000. Besides, those who follow Fox TV

for the news ($M = 1.90$, $SD = 1.15$) showed significantly lower pro-government conspiracy belief scores than those who do not ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 1.41$), $t(245.36) = 2.68$, $p = .008$.

Two independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare anti-government and pro-government conspiracy belief scores between the levels of social media use for news. Results showed that those who never use social media or use social media relatively little for news ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.34$) were found to significantly score more in pro-government conspiracy beliefs than those who often use social media for news and those who use social media for news everyday ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.28$), $t(247) = 2.66$, $p = .008$. On the other hand, those who often or everyday use social media for news ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.29$) showed significantly higher scores in anti-government conspiracy theories than who never use or relatively little use social media for news ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.29$), $t(247) = -2.25$, $p = .025$.

Participants did not show any statistically significant mean differences in partisan conspiracy beliefs in terms of the use of YouTube, Facebook and Instagram for news, ps $> .05$. On the other hand, those who use Twitter as their news source ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.23$) showed higher anti-government conspiracy beliefs than those who do not use Twitter for news ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.43$), $t(108.60) = -2.03$, $p = .044$. Those who use Twitter as their news source ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 1.28$) showed less pro-government conspiracy beliefs than those who do not ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.34$), $t(247) = 2.38$, $p = .018$. Furthermore, those who use online collaborative dictionaries as their news source ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.09$) compared to those who do not ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.34$) demonstrated significantly higher anti-government conspiracy belief scores, $t(95.38) = -2.20$, $p = .030$. However, those who use dictionaries as their news source ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 1.02$) compared to those who do not ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.35$) showed significantly lower scores in pro-government conspiracy beliefs, $t(103.17) = 3.38$, $p = .001$.

Nevertheless, the mean differences in partisan conspiracy beliefs based on the news sources were not used to make inferences about the data. Yet, they were considered a guide to build a more rigorous model to assess potential predictor variables of partisan conspiracy beliefs. The news use variables that led to significant mean differences in

partisan conspiracy belief scores were selected to take into hierarchical multiple regression models to analyze whether the variables would explain statistically significant amount of variance after accounting for other essential predictor variables.

4.3 News Use Factors Predicting Partisan Conspiracy Beliefs

The study's second research question was what news use factors predict partisan conspiracy beliefs after accounting for conspiratorial predisposition, party affiliation, and demographic factors. To answer that, two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to explain the variation caused by the media factors in pro-government and anti-government conspiracy beliefs after accounting for the variance explained by important conceptual variables (conspiratorial predisposition, party affiliation) and demographic factors (age, gender). All categorical predictor variables except conspiratorial predisposition were dummy coded for the analyses. A total of 13 participants (5 age and gender missing, 8 gender other and preferred not to say) were automatically excluded from the regression analyses by SPSS, thus regression analyses were carried out with the remaining 236 participants.

Aiming to control for demographic factors, age and gender were entered in the model first and explained approximately 6% of the variance in pro-government conspiracy beliefs by significantly contributing to the model with F (2, 233) = 7.57, p = .001. In comparison, they significantly explained approximately 4% of the variance in anti-government conspiracy beliefs with F (2, 233) = 5.32, p = .006. Gender did not significantly predict pro-government conspiracy beliefs, however, being a female was associated with higher anti-government conspiracy beliefs, β = .14, p = .027. Age positively predicted pro-government conspiracy beliefs with a significant result β = .21, p = .001; whereas it negatively predicted anti-government conspiracy beliefs β = -.14, p = .031.

In the second step, the main variables of interest, conspiratorial predisposition, and party affiliation were added to the model. They additionally explained almost 45% of the variance in pro-government conspiracy theories, with a significant contribution to the model, F (6, 229) = 39.43, p < .001. Similarly, they explained approximately 30% of

the variance in anti-government conspiracy theories, significantly contributing to the model after controlling for age and gender, F (6, 229) = 19.58, $p < .000$.

In the final model, news use predictors with significant mean differences in partisan conspiracy beliefs summarized in the previous section (the frequency of social media use for news, Twitter and online collaborative dictionary use for news, and watching the news on A Haber TV and Fox TV channels) were added to the model to test their predictive power after accounting for demographic factors and conceptual variables. The frequent use of social media and following the news on online collaborative dictionaries did not significantly predict partisan conspiracy beliefs. Only watching the news on A Haber TV channel significantly and positively predicted pro-government conspiracy beliefs above and beyond the effects of party affiliation, conspiratorial predisposition, and demographics, $\beta = .13$, $p = .011$. On the other hand, Twitter use as a news source ($\beta = .12$, $p = .035$) and watching Fox TV channel for news ($\beta = .12$, $p = .042$) were statistically significant predictors for anti-government conspiracy beliefs even after accounting for conceptual and demographical variables. Following the news on Twitter and watching the news on Fox TV were found to be associated with higher anti-government conspiracy beliefs. The detailed summary of regression results are shown in Table 4.4 and Table 4.5.

Table 4.4. Hierarchical Regression Results for Pro-Government Conspiracy Beliefs

Variable	B	95% CI for B LL	UL	$SE\ B$	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Model 1						.06	.06**
Constant	1.55***	1.001	2.100	.28			
Age	.025**	.010	.040	.008	.21**		
Gender	-.29	-.63	-.037	.17	-.11		
Model 2						.51	.45***
Constant	.42	-.103	.95	.27			
Age	.015**	.004	.03	.006	.13**		
Gender	-.13	-.38	.12	.13	-.05		
Conspiratorial P.	.19**	.07	.31	.06	.15**		
Pro-Govt	2.58***	2.17	2.98	.21	.61***		
New Opposition	1.25***	.68	1.84	.29	.20***		
Independents	1.16***	.89	1.43	.14	.42***		
Model 3						.53	.02
Constant	.83*	.15	1.51	.345			
Age	.01	.00	.02	.01	.095		
Gender	-.11	-.36	.14	.13	-.04		
Conspiratorial P.	.18**	.06	.29	.06	.14**		
Pro-Govt	2.28***	1.80	2.73	.24	.54***		
New Opposition	1.20***	.60	1.79	.30	.19***		
Independents	1.06***	.78	1.35	.14	.38***		
A Haber TV	.66*	.15	1.17	.26	.13*		
Fox TV	-.05	-.31	.21	.13	-.02		
Social Media Use	-.07	-.38	.23	.15	-.02		
Twitter	-.18	-.46	.11	.15	-.06		
Dictionaries	-.15	-.46	.15	.16	-.05		

Note: CI = confidence interval, LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit. Pro-Govt, New Opposition, Independents are dummy variables for party affiliation, reference group is the opposition group. 'Social Media Use' represents frequent use of social media for news. Other news source variables stand for watching the news on A Haber TV and Fox TV; following the news on Twitter and online collaborative dictionaries (e.g. Ekşi Sözlük). *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 4.5 . Hierarchical Regression Results for Anti-Government Conspiracy Beliefs

Variable	B	95% CI for B LL	UL	SE B	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Model 1						.04	.04**
Constant	3.63***	3.08	4.18	.28			
Age	-.02*	-.03	.00	.01	-.14*		
Gender	.38*	.04	.71	.17	.14*		
Model 2						.34	.30***
Constant	3.33***	2.72	3.93	.31			
Age	-.01	-.02	.00	.01	-.10		
Gender	.08	-.20	.37	.15	.03		
Conspiratorial P.	.27***	.14	.41	.07	.22***		
Pro-Govt	-2.12***	-2.58	-1.65	.24	-.51***		
New Opposition	-1.28***	-1.96	-.61	.34	-.21***		
Independents	-.80***	-1.11	-.49	.16	-.29***		
Model 3						.37	.03
Constant	2.64***	1.86	3.42	.39			
Age	-.01	-.02	.01	.01	-.05		
Gender	.03	-.25	.32	.14	.01		
Conspiratorial P.	.27***	.14	.41	.07	.22***		
Pro-Govt	-1.79***	-2.31	-1.26	.27	-.43***		
New Opposition	-1.09**	-1.78	-.41	.35	-.18**		
Independents	-.66***	-.98	-.34	.16	-.24***		
A Haber TV	-.40	-.98	.18	29	-.08		
Fox TV	.31*	.01	.61	.15	.12*		
Social Media Use	.05	-.29	.39	.17	.02		
Twitter	.36*	.02	.68	.17	.12*		
Dictionaries	.20	-.14	.55	.18	.06		

Note: CI = confidence interval, LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit. Pro-Govt, New Opposition, Independents are dummy variables for party affiliation, reference group is the opposition group. 'Social Media Use' represents frequent use of social media for news. Other news source variables stand for watching the news on A Haber TV and Fox TV; following the news on Twitter and online collaborative dictionaries (e.g. Ekşi Sözlük). *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion of the Research Findings and Main Limitations

Building upon the high levels of party-based polarization (Somer 2020; Laebens and Ozturk 2021) and the uneven power distribution between the AKP government and the opposition in Turkey (Esen and Gümüşçü 2016), the present study investigated how individuals who feel close to different political parties vary in holding pro-government and anti-government conspiracy beliefs. By doing so, the study provided empirical data for the conception of partisan conspiracy beliefs in the unique political framework of Turkey. Furthermore, considering the significant relationship between news media use and partisan conspiracy beliefs (Garrett, Weeks, and Neo 2016; Hollander 2018), the study also explored what news sources people use predict partisan conspiracy beliefs beyond the traditional explanatory factors, i.e.,party affiliation, and conspiratorial predisposition, in the polarized media landscape of Turkey.

Before summarizing the main findings, it is important to remember that the study does not rely on large nationally representative sample. Since the study employed an online survey with convenience sampling based on voluntary participation, party affiliation groups were not evenly distributed. Thus, the findings can be neither attributable to the entire population of Turkey nor accepted as strongly accurate results due to the limited variability of the data and the possibility of a high margin of error. Nevertheless, the data provides significant empirical evidence and insights for the main research questions of the study as well as for future studies.

The first research question was how individuals with different party affiliations differ from each other in partisan conspiracy beliefs. Group comparisons revealed that participants showed different levels of belief in pro-government and anti-government conspiracy theories based on their party affiliation. The pro-government conspiracy theories in the study were directly in line with the conspiratorial narratives of the government on the given circumstances, targeting elusive malign powers from global financial centers to unspecified terrorist groups. In contrast, the anti-government

conspiracy theories blamed the government as the main conspirator behind these critical incidents. Partisan-motivated reasoning theory seems to be relevant here, as the results supported that those in the pro-government group (those who feel close to the AKP or the MHP) evaluated the conspiratorial information in parallel with the government's discourses for the events. They showed the highest belief in pro-government conspiracy theories while holding the least belief in anti-government conspiracies compared to other party affiliation groups. Nevertheless, although the MHP's stance has sharply transformed in favor of the AKP government after forming their alliance in 2018, it is still questionable whether all MHP supporters endorse the party's new discourses. Moreover, only four people felt close to the MHP in the 27-person pro-government group, so making inferences specific to MHP partisans may be misleading.

Those in the opposition group who felt close to either party (e.g., the CHP, the İP, the HDP) held significantly higher belief in anti-government conspiracy theories than the rest of the groups. They tended to disagree with pro-government conspiracy theories more so than the new opposition group and the independents. However, it is unclear whether all opposition parties create similar conspiratorial accounts. So, in the case of the opposition group, it cannot be theorized that those in the opposition group follow their party's conspiratorial discourses. On the other hand, the fact that the opposition group had higher beliefs in anti-government theories might stem from negative partisan identification, which is highly prevalent in Turkey despite the decrease in partisanship in recent years (KONDA 2019) and the threat perception that opponents might have against the AKP government (Laebens and Öztürk 2021). Trust in the government might be another significant contributor to future analysis.

In parallel with holding an independent position without any political party filter, those who do not feel close to any political parties were placed somewhere neutral on average in partisan conspiracy beliefs. On average, they scored slightly above the neutral in anti-government conspiracy beliefs and slightly below the neutral in pro-government conspiracy beliefs. Not having a psychological attachment to any party might be related to less partisan conspiracy beliefs. Nevertheless, future studies might illuminate the relationship between the independent group and partisan conspiracy beliefs in Turkey's highly polarized and authoritarian political context. The perception of the government

and negative party identification might be significant factors explaining the association in detail.

Those who feel close to the DEVA and the GP ranked at similar levels with the independents in partisan conspiracy beliefs. Those who feel close to these parties, which are actually in the opposition camp and construct their ideological discourse as a criticism of AKP authoritarianism, showed less anti-government conspiracy belief than the opposition group. This finding is worth discussing because it provided evidence for examining the new opposition group as a separate category in the context of partisan conspiracy beliefs. During the Gezi Protests and in the 2015 general elections, which were the subjects of the conspiracy theories, DEVA party leader Ali Babacan and GP leader Ahmet Davutoğlu held high-level positions in the AKP government. On the July 15 coup attempt, their AKP membership was still ongoing. Therefore, the fact that this group did not show a high belief in anti-government conspiracy theories like those who feel close to other opposition parties might be attributed to their evaluation of the conspiratorial information in a way that did not contradict their party leaders while they were in the government at that time. However, in the Turkish currency conspiracy theory about the currency crisis in the autumn of 2021, both leaders were on the opposition political scene with their new parties. Corresponding to this, the new opposition group indicated the least belief on average for the Turkish currency conspiracy theory among the other partisan conspiracy beliefs. Furthermore, although they showed significant differences with the opposition group in other theories, no significant difference was found between the two groups in this theory. This result is compatible with the fact that DEVA party leader Ali Babacan frequently criticizes the government's economic policies and emphasizes that poor management is responsible for the current unfavorable economic condition, unlike the period when he has been the minister of economy in the AKP government.

Since I approach partisan conspiracy beliefs in Turkey in terms of current sociopolitical polarization between the pro-government and anti-government blocs, I formed party affiliation groups through their general political position with the government. Thus, the results do not represent how participants who feel close to a specific political party show partisan conspiracy beliefs. Instead, the study tried to address partisan conspiracy

beliefs based on how the party with which the participants feel close was positioned with the AKP government in the light of partisan motivated reasoning theory. Nevertheless, measures assessing the perception of the government or trust in the government might more directly capture the participants' attitudes instead of the estimation based on party affiliations. Partisanship level might also be considered for a more detailed picture since the level of feeling close to a party might contribute to the extent of the beliefs.

The second research question was about which variables of news use contribute to partisan conspiracy beliefs after accounting for essential predictors, party affiliation, and conspiratorial predisposition. Those who watch the news on A Haber TV channel that broadcasts highly in favor of the government were more likely to believe in pro-government conspiracy theories. This finding also resonates with the fact that several researchers pointed out documentaries made and broadcasted by A Haber TV that included conspiratorial narratives of the government, such as "operation against independence, Gezi" and "the mastermind" (üst akıl) documentaries (Karaosmanoğlu 2021; Gürpınar 2020; Nefes 2017). However, news use questions were not content-specific; instead, they were based on the use of media outlets in general. How then can one explain the significant relationship between regular exposure to A Haber TV and pro-government conspiracy beliefs beyond the predictive effect of party affiliation? Garrett, Weeks, and Neo (2016) argued that the use of biased news outlets is related to exposure to information that is consistent with the outlets' interests rather than causing unawareness of the other side of the coin; therefore what requires more explanation is the partisan media's ability to promote political misperceptions, especially in a diverse media environment where people have so many alternatives to build their news diet. The power of A Haber TV to promote conspiracy theories and audiences' susceptibility to its conspiratorial messages was beyond this research's scope but could be interesting topics for future studies. Nevertheless, KONDA's research reports provided insights that most A Haber TV viewers prominently rely on television as their primary media source, so they might not have a diverse media diet (KONDA 2016; KONDA 2019). KONDA's 2019 media report highlighted that most of those who follow pro-government television channels such as A Haber TV do not use social media and the

internet as news sources and shape their world views only with the information and news flow of these channels (KONDA 2019, 13). Thus, the diversity of media diet might significantly contribute to the relationship between watching the news on A Haber and partisan conspiracy beliefs. However, the present finding provides strong evidence that using ideologically biased news outlets is associated with interpreting critical circumstances in the country in conformity with the outlet's framing.

On the other hand, watching the news on Fox TV was associated with higher levels of anti-government conspiracy beliefs. This finding presents a more complex picture to consider. Firstly, Fox TV may not be regarded as a partisan media outlet since it is a foreign-owned television channel having a relatively free broadcasting approach, including criticism of both the government and the opposition (Oğuz 2019). Hence, among other mainstream TV channels, Fox TV is the most-watched mainstream channel independent of the government. However, the channel's unique news programs featuring the anchorman's subjective commentary and Erdoğan's apparent blame against Fox TV led to the identification of the channel with the anti-government block in recent years. Similarly, KONDA (2019) found that the number of opposition voters among Fox TV viewers has increased over the years, while AKP and MHP voters have decreased. Nonetheless, there was no evidence to support that Fox TV promotes anti-government conspiratorial narratives or presents news only from an anti-government perspective. Thus, interpreting the positive association between anti-government conspiracy beliefs and regular exposure to Fox TV news beyond feeling close to opposition parties may require a more detailed analysis where possible interaction factors are considered. By influencing the perception of the government, news content that includes criticism of the government might be associated with the endorsement of anti-government conspiracy accounts.

Among all social media variables, only Twitter significantly predicted partisan conspiracy beliefs. Following the news on Twitter was related to higher belief in anti-government conspiracy theories. Although studies conducted in Turkey and other countries showed a negative relationship between conspiracy beliefs and Twitter use (Theocharis et al. 2021; Akyüz 2021; KONDA 2018), the present finding on the relationship might be related to Twitter's unique political position in Turkey. Twitter is

globally accepted as a news media (Kwak et. al. 2010). Twitter has also been crucial in Turkey's political landscape with the government-sponsored troll army, leaked tapes, and e-mails since the Gezi Protests (Bulut and Yörük 2017). Moreover, Twitter users were found to follow politicians more than their friends, family members, and relatives in Turkey (Bozdağ 2017, 46). Because it is a political communication source in Turkey, user-generated information and conspiracy theories about politics might be more prevalent on Twitter. Even so, further explanation is needed as to why Twitter use for news was positively associated with anti-government conspiracy beliefs when it was not significantly related to pro-government conspiracy beliefs.

Other social media use factors that were non-significant in the present data might require further analyses with a larger sample size. On the other hand, they might also be regarded as "too generic" variables to be associated with partisan conspiracy beliefs. Compared to Twitter's political function in Turkey, Facebook and Instagram stand for a more generic media use aimed at social connection. Apart from its wide variety of audiovisual content, YouTube might be a platform worthy of consideration and further investigation. With the increasing political pressure in the traditional media in recent years, YouTube has become a crucial independent news source in Turkey as many journalists turned to make their own news programs on YouTube. YouTube also accommodates several conspiracy theorist YouTubers who call themselves investigative journalists. Overall, diversity in news media diet, content-specific media questions, social media network diversity, and other related concepts can be further studied to illuminate the relationship between media use and partisan conspiracy beliefs in Turkey.

Eventually, explaining partisan conspiracy beliefs through media sources is tricky because it gives rise to a chicken-and-egg situation. What drives people to use specific news sources might make them more susceptible to specific conspiracy beliefs. Thus, a direct causal connection cannot be established by looking at these findings. In addition, news use questions were based on general use, thus to know the primary source of news participants would use might be more insightful to make assumptions. However, the significant associations the present study revealed might foster searching for further links between news use and partisan conspiracy beliefs in future studies.

5.2 Enemies-To-Be

One of the significant limitations was conducting a study on people's political views and beliefs in Turkey as they might hesitate to freely state their political thoughts given the rising authoritarian sociopolitical culture. In fact, conspiracy belief questions were designed to reveal two distinct political poles, especially in anti-government conspiracy beliefs participants were expected to respond to the theories that were directly accusing the government. As such, some participants shared their concerns after the survey, and one participant wrote manually to party affiliation answer box "let me write this too, then you can fully label me" even though it was stated that the survey was completely anonymous and a part of a master's thesis project. These hesitative thoughts of participants are also worth discussing in terms of that having political affiliations and beliefs can be perceived as a criminal act. The fear of "getting labeled" by attending survey research is highly concerning about the state of democracy in Turkey. However, it also well depicts the current polarized atmosphere.

Polarization refers to politics reduced to the either-or dichotomy (McCoy, Rahman, and Somer 2018). This political environment built on dualities creates a network of relations based on the friend/enemy opposition. Hence, conspiracy beliefs can be seen as both a cause and a consequence of a "system of prejudices, antagonisms and friend/enemy relationships" in Turkish politics (de Medeiros 2018, 185). Furthermore, conspiracy theories are not just an expression of a particular ideology but also the narratives that ground and feed that ideology, so they are both symptomatic and a strategic tool for consolidating increasing authoritarian power (Gürpınar 2020; de Medeiros 2018). For instance, Nefes (2017) asserted that the goal of the government's conspiracy framing regarding the Gezi Protests was to divide supporters of the AKP and protesters and undermine anti-government social movements. On the other hand, conspiratorial narratives are also indispensable for the opposition to make sense of the invincibility of the ruling AKP government as well as assuring "the good" us versus "the bad" them (Parlak and Tangün 2018). Moreover, as conspiracy builds a we-other dichotomy and perpetuates this separation over a perception of threat, it can easily mobilize the mass within the 'us' (Baştürk 2014, 117).

Consequently, each pole reinforces and reproduces the existing polarization by creating narratives through the enemies outside the 'us.' What is more nuanced about the conspiratorial context of Turkey is that the uneven political field between the government and the opposition (Esen and Gümüşçü 2016) created uneven enemies behind the conspiracies: elusive omnipotent entities against the rule of government and the government itself as a tangible conspirator to protect its sovereignty. In conclusion, belief in partisan conspiracy theories results from a dynamic interaction. The current sociopolitical polarization nourishes partisan conspiracy beliefs, while in turn, such beliefs shape the evolution of polarization, reinforcing the friend/enemy perception of politics. Only if they are consistent with preexisting beliefs and sentiments can conspiracy theories emerge, spread, and predominate (Gürpınar 2020, 4). Therefore, as long as polarization persists and we need an enemy to embody all our power struggles, and there will always be enemies-to-be.

It is vital for Turkey's democracy in the future that politicians put an end to polarizing politics and stop producing conspiratorial rhetoric to prevent the creation of enemies-to-be. The study's findings support that political actors and policymakers should work on forming a diversity-based political culture where different ideologies can coexist and discuss without a friend/enemy dichotomy. At the same time, ensuring the media's independence and maintaining well-established objective news sources can provide a buffer to the conspiratorial information flow spread by partisan media channels. To prevent biased information that can promote conspiracy beliefs, people should also diversify their media diet, and education programs for developing media literacy should be held.In reference to partisan motivated reasoning, the present study showed how people affiliated with distinct political party groups indicated different levels of conspiracy beliefs as well as conspiracy theories creating different enemies. This finding supported the argument of Nefes (2017) that people who hold conspiracy beliefs do more than attempt to understand reality rationally or irrationally; they also stand up for their political values and interests. Therefore, the present study provided evidence of the presence of partisan conspiracy beliefs as a significant phenomenon in Turkey. It extended previous work on conspiracy beliefs in Turkey by examining not only the conspiracy narratives created by the ruling party but also the conspiracy theories

constructed by the opposition. In addition, it suggested fruitful insights into the relationship between news source use and partisan conspiracy beliefs, given Turkey's polarized and suppressed media environment. Overall, the study has attempted to put forward quantitative data at the juncture of political psychology and media studies in Turkey. Future research can build on the findings by examining data from a representative national survey on partisan conspiracy beliefs.

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APPENDIX A

A.1 Informed Consent Form (Gönüllü Katılım Aydınlatılmış Onam Formu)

Bu araştırma çalışması Kadir Has Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Öğrencisi Didem Gölbaşı tarafından yürütülmektedir. Bu formun amacı ise katılımcıyı araştırma koşulları bakımından bilgilendirmek ve çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılması hususunda onayını almaktır. Yüksek lisans tez projesi kapsamında gerçekleştirilen bu çalışma, Türkiye'de son zamanlarda meydana gelmiş sosyal olay ve durumlar hakkındaki farklı düşünceleri öğrenmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ankete katılmadan önce bu bilgilendirme formunu okuyarak araştırmaya gönüllü olarak katılmayı onayladığınız durumda bu formu aşağıda yer alan kutucuktan elektronik olarak imzalayıp ankete başlayabilirsiniz.

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz takdirde karşınıza çıkacak online anket sorularını cevaplamanız beklenmektedir. Anket sorularını cevaplamak yaklaşık 10 dakika sürecektir. Çalışma bilimsel amaçlarla yapılmaktadır ve katılımcıların kişisel bilgilerinin gizliliğini esas olarak kabul etmektedir. Sorulara vereceğiniz cevaplar, anketin ilk aşamasından itibaren bir katılımcı numarası ile eşleşecek, sizden herhangi bir kişisel bilgi talep edilmeyecektir. Ankete kişisel bilgileriniz olmadan anonim bir şekilde devam edeceksiniz. Sorulara vereceğiniz anonim cevaplar yalnızca araştırmacı tarafından görülebilecek, istatiksel veri olarak analiz edilecek, akademik yayınlar için kullanılacaktır.

Çalışmayla ilgili oluşabilecek herhangi bir risk tespit edilmemiştir. Çalışmanın amacına ulaşması için sizden beklenen, bütün soruları eksiksiz ve size en uygun gelen şekilde cevaplamanızdır. Yanıtlarınız anonim istatistiksel veriler olarak kullanılacaktır. Araştırmaya katılmayı onayladığınız takdirde çalışmanın herhangi bir aşamasında sebep göstermeksizin anketi bırakma hakkına sahipsiniz. Bu durumda doldurmuş olduğunuz tüm anketlerin kayıtları imha edilecek ve çalışma kapsamından çıkarılacaktır.

Çalışmanın içeriği ile ilgili soru sormak, daha detaylı bilgi almak, veya araştırma sonuçlarını öğrenmek isterseniz aşağıdaki e-posta adresleri üzerinden araştırma yürütücüsü ve danışmanı ile iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

Araştırmaya katılmayı onayladığınız takdirde lütfen alttaki kutucuğu işaretleyiniz:

o Araştırma çalışması hakkında bilgi edindim ve yukarıda yazılanları okudum; bu çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

o Kabul etmiyorum ----- Teşekkürler!

A.2 Partisan Conspiracy Beliefs Questions (Partizan Komplo İnançları Soruları)

Anketin bu kısmında, son yıllarda Türkiye'de gerçekleşen önemli sosyal olaylar üzerine görüşler yer alacaktır. Bu görüşleri belirten ifadelere ne kadar katıldığınızı ya da katılmadığınızı 1=Kesinlikle katılıyorum 2= Biraz katılıyorum 3= Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4= Pek katılmıyorum 5= Kesinlikle katılmıyorum olacak şekilde değerlendiriniz.

2013 senesinde Taksim Gezi Parkı'nda gerçekleşen eylemler, son yıllarda Türkiye'de meydana gelmiş önemli olaylardan biridir. Bazı insanlar, bu protestoların birtakım terörist gruplar tarafından hükümeti devirmek için organize edilen eylemler olduğunu düşünmektedir. Bazıları ise böyle düşünmemektedir. Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadeye ne kadar katıldığınızı ya da katılmadığınızı belirtiniz:
Taksim Gezi Parkı'nda gerçekleşen protestolar birtakım terörist gruplar tarafından hükümeti devirmek için organize edilmiş eylemlerdir.
1. Kesinlikle katılıyorum
2. Katılıyorum
3. Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum
4. Katılmıyorum
5. Kesinlikle katılmıyorum

2016 yılında meydana gelen 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi, son yıllarda Türkiye'de gerçekleşmiş önemli olaylardan biridir. Bazı insanlar, 15 Temmuz tarihinde Türkiye'de yaşananların gerçek bir darbe girişimi değil, hükümet tarafından organize edilmiş bir tiyatro olduğunu düşünmektedir. Bazıları ise böyle düşünmemektedir. Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadeye ne kadar katıldığınızı ya da katılmadığınızı belirtiniz:

Türkiye'de 15 Temmuz 2016 tarihinde yaşananlar, gerçek bir darbe girişimi değil hükümet tarafından organize edilmiş bir tiyatrodur.

1. Kesinlikle katılıyorum

2. Katılıyorum

3. Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum

4. Katılmıyorum

5. Kesinlikle katılmıyorum

7 Haziran - 1 Kasım 2015 genel seçimleri arasında, Türkiye'de birçok farklı yerde ve tarihte terör olayları gerçekleşmiştir. Bazı insanlar, bu terör olaylarının hükümet tarafından önceden bilindiğini fakat kaos ortamından yararlanarak seçim tekrarıyla iktidarı yeniden sağlamak için engellenmediğini iddia etmektedir. Bazıları ise böyle düşünmemektedir. Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadeye ne kadar katıldığınızı ya da katılmadığınızı belirtiniz:

7 Haziran - 1 Kasım 2015 genel seçimleri arasında Türkiye'de gerçekleşen terör olayları, hükümet tarafından önceden biliniyordu fakat kaos ortamından yararlanarak seçim tekrarıyla iktidarı yeniden sağlamak için engellenmedi.

1. Kesinlikle katılıyorum

2. Katılıyorum

3. Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum

4. Katılmıyorum

5. Kesinlikle katılmıyorum

Bazı insanlar, Türkiye'de son dönemde döviz kurlarında yaşanan hareketliliğin küresel finans merkezlerinin Türk lirasına yaptığı operasyonlar yüzünden meydana geldiğini iddia etmektedir. Bazıları ise böyle düşünmemektedir. Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadeye ne kadar katıldığınızı ya da katılmadığınızı belirtiniz:

Türk lirasının değerinde yaşanan değişimler, küresel finans merkezlerinin operasyonları sonucunda gerçekleşmektedir.

1. Kesinlikle katılıyorum

2. Katılıyorum

3. Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum

4. Katılmıyorum

5. Kesinlikle katılmıyorum

A.3 Conspiratorial Predisposition Questions (Komplocu Eğilim Soruları)

Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelere ne kadar katıldığınızı ya da katılmadığınızı 1= Kesinlikle katılıyorum 2= Biraz katılıyorum 3= Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum 4= Pek katılmıyorum 5= Kesinlikle katılmıyorum olacak şekilde değerlendiriniz.

1. Hayatımızın çoğu, gizli yerlerden kurgulanan entrikalar tarafından kontrol ediliyor.
2. Ülkeyi gerçekten 'yöneten' insanlar seçmenler tarafından bilinmiyor.
3. Bir demokraside yaşıyor olsak da birkaç kişi her zaman her şeyi yönetecek.
4. Savaşlar, mevcut durgunluk ve seçimlerin sonuçları gibi büyük olaylar, geri kalanımıza karşı gizlice çalışan küçük insan grupları tarafından kontrol ediliyor.

A.4 Party Affiliation Questions (Parti Yakınlığı Soruları)

Kendinizi genellikle herhangi bir siyasi partiye yakın olarak düşünür müsünüz?
A. Evet
B. Hayır

Kendinizi hangi partiye daha yakın hissediyorsunuz?
A. AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
B. CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)
C. MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)
D. İyi Parti
E. Saadet Partisi
F. HDP (Halkların Demokratik Partisi)
G. DEVA (Demokrasi ve Atılım Partisi)
H. Gelecek Partisi
İ. Diğer: Belirtiniz: ………...

Kendinizi siyasi partilerden birine diğerlerinden biraz daha yakın hissediyor musunuz?

A. Evet

B. Hayır

Eğer kendinizi siyasi partilerden birine diğer partilerden biraz daha yakın hissediyorsanız bu hangi partidir?

A. AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)

B. CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)

C. MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)

D. İyi Parti

E. Saadet Partisi

F. HDP (Halkların Demokratik Partisi)

G. DEVA (Demokrasi ve Atılım Partisi)

H. Gelecek Partisi

İ. Diğer: Belirtiniz: ………...

A.5 News Use Questions (Haber Kullanımı Soruları)

Haberleri sosyal medyadan (YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, vb.) ne sıklıkla takip ettiğinizi size en uygun gelen seçeneği işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

1. Hiçbir zaman
2. Nadiren
3. Bazen
4. Sık sık
5. Her gün

Haberleri hangi televizyon kanalı/kanallarından takip ediyorsunuz? (Birden fazla seçenek işaretleyebilirsiniz).

A. Fox TV
B. A Haber
C. CNN Türk
D. TRT 1
E. Haber Türk

F. Halk TV

G. Diğer (Lütfen Belirtiniz).

Aşağıdaki sosyal medya platformlarından hangilerini haber kaynağı olarak kullanıyorsunuz? (Birden fazla seçenek işaretleyebilirsiniz).

A. YouTube

B. Twitter

C. Instagram

D. Facebook

E. Çevrimiçi Katılımcı Sözlükler (Ekşi Sözlük vb.)

F. Diğer (Lütfen Belirtiniz).

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