

RESEARCH TITLE

A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Iraqi-Turkish Water Dispute in Media

Asst. Lect. Sarah Satar Abdulhusein¹

¹ Wasit University- College of Education for Human Sciences- Department of English, Iraq.

Email: sabdulhusein@uowasit.edu.iq

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Abstract

The Iraqi-Turkish water dispute significantly influences regional geopolitics and bilateral relations, centering on the management and allocation of shared river resources. This article employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how media representations shape public perceptions and policy discussions regarding the dispute. The research highlights a critical gap in understanding how media framing escalates tensions between Iraq and Turkey, guiding the investigation into how different narratives constructed by various actors affect conflict resolution. Using a qualitative approach and a CDA framework informed by scholars like Braun & Clarke, Entman, and Fairclough, the study analyses media language, symbols, and ideological underpinnings. It identifies thematic patterns, rhetorical strategies, and framing techniques in media narratives, revealing that these narratives often reflect nationalist sentiments and political agendas that hinder cooperative solutions. Findings indicate that Iraqi media frequently depict Turkey as an aggressor wielding water as a strategic weapon, while Turkish media criticise Iraq for mismanagement and a lack of cooperation. Such entrenched perspectives serve as obstacles to collaborative dialogue, illustrating the powerful role of media in perpetuating conflict. Ultimately, the study underscores the necessity for a nuanced understanding of media influence in complex environmental and political disputes to foster more effective conflict resolution strategies.

Key Words: Critical Discourse Analysis, Water Dispute, Media Representation, Transboundary Water Management, Conflict Resolution

تحليل نقدي للخطاب حول النزاع المائي العراقي-التركي في وسائل الإعلام

م.م. سارة ستار عبدالحسين¹¹ جامعة واسط- كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية- قسم اللغة الإنكليزية، العراق.

بريد الكتروني: sabdulhussein@uowasit.edu.iq

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المستخلص

يؤثر النزاع المائي العراقي التركي بشكل كبير على الجغرافيا السياسية الإقليمية والعلاقات الثنائية، حيث يركز على إدارة وتخصيص الموارد المائية المشتركة. يستخدم هذا المقال تحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA) لفحص كيفية تشكيل تمثيلات وسائل الإعلام للآراء العامة والنقاشات السياسية المتعلقة بالنزاع. تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على فجوة حرجة في فهم كيفية زيادة توترات العلاقات بين العراق وتركيا نتيجة لإطارات وسائل الإعلام، مما يوجه التحقيق في كيفية تأثير السرديات المختلفة التي تبلورها جهات فاعلة متنوعة على حل النزاعات. باستخدام نهج نوعي وإطار عمل CDA مستند إلى باحثين مثل براون وكلارك، وإنتمان، وفايركلوف، تحلل الدراسة لغة وسائل الإعلام والرموز والأسس الأيديولوجية. وتحدد الأنماط الموضوعية، والاستراتيجيات البلاغية، وتقنيات الإطار في السرديات الإعلامية، كاشفة أن هذه السرديات تعكس غالبًا المشاعر الوطنية والأجندات السياسية التي تعيق الحلول التعاونية. تشير النتائج إلى أن وسائل الإعلام العراقية تصوّر تركيا بشكل متكرر كعدو يستخدم الماء كأداة استراتيجية، بينما تنتقد وسائل الإعلام التركية العراق بسبب سوء الإدارة ونقص التعاون. مثل هذه المواقف المتجذرة تشكل عقبات أمام الحوار التعاوني، مما يوضح الدور القوي لوسائل الإعلام في تعزيز النزاع. في النهاية، تؤكد الدراسة على ضرورة فهم دقيق لتأثير وسائل الإعلام في النزاعات البيئية والسياسية المعقدة لتعزيز استراتيجيات أكثر فعالية لحل النزاع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب النقدي، النزاع المائي، تمثيل الإعلام، إدارة المياه العابرة للحدود، حل النزاع

1. Introduction

The sharing of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers has been an acute geopolitical issue between Iraq and Turkey, particularly in regard to sharing and managing transboundary river resources. Both have taken leading roles in the agriculture, industry, and livelihood sustenance of aforementioned countries, relating to several decades of conflict. The Turkish development projects, particularly the Southeastern Anatolia Project-an ambitious project of constructing extensive dams have taken centre stage to generate controversy. Iraq is mostly dependent on the water of these rivers for agriculture and household purposes and thus feels concerned about the impact on its economy and ecosystems (Al-Khathlan & Khaleel, 2020; Gunter, 2018).

The media shapes public opinion and influences political debates on a range of complex international issues. About the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute, it may be helpful in heightening tension or paving the road to a diplomatic resolution. This paper aims at exploring how media representations are framed regarding this dispute in Iraq and Turkey by analysing narratives, wordings, and discursive structures used by different news outlets.

It is against this background that, despite media playing an indispensable role in shaping public opinion and political debate, a significant understanding gap exists in how media narratives influence perceptions of the conflict and resolution over water between Iraq and Turkey. Current literature on transboundary water disputes is dominated by technical and political aspects, with little or no attention given to the role of the media in formulating and perpetuating these kinds of conflicts. It seeks to find the inefficiency of deep investigation into the media discourses associated with the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute for understanding how media representations come into play regarding wider conflict dynamics and potential resolution paths. The key objectives of this study are as follows:

1. Analysing media representations of the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute from both Iraqi and Turkish media outlets.
2. Identifying and categorising the predominant narratives and discursive strategies used by these media outlets.
3. Examining the impact of these narratives on public perception and policy discourse related to the water dispute.
4. Contributing to the understanding of how media can influence diplomatic relations and conflict resolution processes in transboundary water disputes.

To achieve the above objectives, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the predominant narratives and framing strategies employed by Iraqi and Turkish media in their coverage of the water dispute?
2. How do these media narratives reflect and reinforce national interests, political ideologies, and power dynamics?
3. What are the implications of these media representations for public perception and policy discourse concerning the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute?
4. How can insights from media discourse analysis inform diplomatic strategies and conflict resolution efforts related to transboundary water management?

The scope of this study is confined to the media representations of the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute within selected Iraqi and Turkish media outlets. The analysis includes a range of media types, including newspapers, and online news platforms, over a period spanning the last decade (2014-2024). This period allows the study of shifting media stories regarding some milestone events and developments of the conflict. Qualitative aspects of the media content have been investigated in this research, including language, themes, and framing strategies of different media.

This is important research for a number of reasons. First, it contributes some important

perspectives on the role that media play in shaping public and political opinion about transboundary water conflicts. By grasping how media narratives frame the dialogue, those concerned with policy, diplomacy, and conflict resolution can better address the substantive challenges and work toward more satisfactory solutions. This will add depth to the existing body of knowledge in the field of critical discourse analysis and put into practical perspective how such a framework can be used in analysing a highly salient geopolitical issue. The findings of this research are also of practical consequence for media workers and organisations that report on environmental and political issues because balanced and mature reporting on these issues is quite indispensable if there is to be constructive exchange and cooperation among the concerned subjects.

2. Literature Review

The Iraqi-Turkish water dispute is a complex issue from environmental, political, and socioeconomic perspectives. The current literature review discusses past studies on transboundary water conflicts, the influence of the media in shaping public perception and policy, and specific dynamics of the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute. This paper intends to put into perspective, through a synthesis of various studies' results, the role that the media might be playing in framing the discourse in this major geopolitical controversy.

2.1. Transboundary Water Conflicts

Transboundary water disputes arise regularly when more than one country relies on the same supply of water. Scholars have examined such controversies from a variety of perspectives, including legal frameworks, political relations, and environmental impact. One key area of research focuses on the legal and institutional frameworks governing the use of transboundary water resources. In fact, Wolf et al. (2003) stated that the absence of solid and inclusive international agreements usually exacerbates conflicts over water. But a central legal instrument is the United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, which was adopted in 1997; its implementation remains irregular (McCaffrey, 2007).

Regarding the Tigris and Euphrates, most research shows weaknesses of current treaties to address the special needs and concerns of the riparian states. For example, Selby, 2003, believes that, though the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and the 1960 Baghdad Pact have a historical significance, both are quite weak and inadequate to deal with modern issues concerning water allocation and environmental viability.

2.2. Political Dimensions

The political aspects of transboundary water conflicts involve power dynamics among nations and the tactical use of water resources. Zeitoun and Warner (2006) explain the concept of "hydro-hegemony," where dominant nations have the ability to use water as a tool in exerting power and influence over their less powerful fellow riparian nations. In the instance involving Iraq and Turkey, Turkey has been considered to yield strategic control regarding Iraq because of its dominance over its upstream water resources, which Iraq relies heavily on for agricultural and domestic purposes (Mason, 2018).

2.3. Environmental and Socio-Economic Impacts

Another important theme that has to do with transboundary water conflict pertains to environmental and socioeconomic impacts. Several studies have demonstrated that large-scale ecological damages and socio-economic disruptions could be brought about by the construction of dams and diversions of water. For instance, the recently constructed Atatürk Dam in Turkey is said to reduce water flow into Iraq, thus affecting agriculture and people's

livelihoods in the area (Döll et al., 2009). The reduction of water levels has also been reported to cause displacement within communities, degradation of cultivable land in both Iraq and Turkey.

2.4. Media Influence on Public Perception

The influence of the media in shaping public perception and policy debate about international conflicts is well documented. Sometimes, the framing of issues done by media coverage may have an impact not only on public opinion but also on political decisions. According to Entman (1993), through the framing of news, media framing theory describes how the packaging of information by media affects the perceptions of its audience by highlighting and framing certain aspects while suppressing others. This frame is relevant to examine the media coverage of the water dispute between Iraq and Turkey. According to Goffman (1974), through media framing, conflict stories could be built up or dissipated. As it is related to the Iraqi-Turkish dispute over water, the results of the study reveal that media stories tell about the national interests and political motives. More precisely, Iraqi media frame Turkey as an aggressor who exploits its upstream position at the expense of Iraqi water interests in Tariq 2017, while the Turkish media frame the issue in terms of Iraqi mismanagement and ungratefulness for the benefits derived from Turkish projects (Kaya, 2019).

2.5. The Role of Nationalistic and Ideological Biases

These biases of nationalistic and ideological persuasions in the coverage of mass media could very well affect public perception and policy responses. As Said (1978) describes, media portrayals reflect and enforce the already existing stereotypes and prejudice. Indeed, this is so with regard to the coverage of the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute, where evident biases exist both in Iraqi and Turkish media with regard to their alignment with nationalistic and political narratives.

Iraqi media often emphasize the adverse impacts of Turkish dams on Iraqi agriculture and water availability, while Turkish media often remind Iraq of their failure to manage its own water resources and their hostility toward the Turkish development projects as being anti-Turkish in nature (Sönmez, 2020). Such biased portrayals could result in deep-rooted perceptions and little incentive to negotiate a mutual solution.

2.6. Previous Studies on the Iraqi-Turkish Water Dispute

Study of the Iraqi-Turkish water conflict itself can be informative regarding the dynamics of the conflict.

2.6.1. Historical and Political Context

Some few have looked into the history and political contextualization of this conflict. Özer (2011) critically reviews historical treaties and agreements on the Tigris and Euphrates and shows how difficult these agreements are to amend when there is a need for new adjustments. Another important contribution is that of Baban and Falah (2017), who analyzed the political policies and interests of Iraq and Turkey and underlined the importance of national interests as a context leading to this conflict.

2.6.2. Environmental and Social Implications

Other works relating to the ecological and social impacts of the water dispute include the effects induced by construction of the dams, both on the ecosystem and human beings. Çakmak (2014) indicates that due to Turkish dams, the reduced water supply creates great ecological changes, such as the degradation of wetlands and loss of biodiversity. Al-Ali and

Ali (2018) add in the discussion of some socio-economic effects that farmers in Iraq have to stand, such as reduced agricultural yields and increase of economic hardship.

2.6.3. Media Analysis

With that said, few studies have directly related to media representation in the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute. However, various works related to media coverage in similar disputes provide a conceptual framework for the understanding of the influence of media in this conflict. For instance, Al-Mohammed (2019) discussed the issue of media framing in the Syrian civil war and how different narratives make people misinterpret or shape their perception and policy choices. The framework applies also in regard to the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute, how media coverage and the narratives within shape discourse, influencing thereby conflict resolution processes.

Literature on transboundary water conflicts, media influence, and the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute provides a relatively sound understanding of the varied dimensions that such a conflict may come in. Legal, political, and environmental perspectives interlace with significant accounts on media framing and bias, thus giving a balanced view to the conflict. This review emphasizes the importance of considering media portrayals to understand their impact on the building of public and political attitudes, in addition to the necessity for equal and informed media reporting for any meaningful discourse and resolution of conflicts.

3. Methodology

3.1. Nature of the Study

This is a qualitative research study into the media representations of the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute. In fact, qualitative research is most appropriate for such complex social phenomena as media narratives and their influence on the perception of people and policy discourse. Content and framing are two aspects of reports that the research has focused on to understand the underlying themes, ideologies, and power dynamics that shape the discourse in the water dispute. This approach will facilitate deep insight into how the coverage of media influences and reflects national interests, political agendas, and public sentiments (Creswell, 2014).

3.2. Data Collection and Description

Data for this report come from media reports in selected Iraqi and Turkish sources, including newspapers, online news platforms, and television broadcasts. Each of these media outlets was selected to gather a wide array of perspectives and narratives within both countries.

3.3. Sampling Strategy

In selecting the media sources of news, a purposive sampling strategy was utilized, influencing and best representing the national discourse on the water dispute. The sample includes:

1. **Iraqi Media:** Major newspapers "Al-Sabah" find representation, while news online such as "Rudaw" complement the selected sample. These are selected based on the wide readership that they have in Iraq, shaping public opinion significantly.
2. **Turkish Media:** This would include newspapers like "Hürriyet", and online sources like "Daily Sabah". The chosen media are because of the authority they have in setting the discourse within the country.

3.4. Time Frame

The dataset spans ten years 2014 to 2024 and covers major events and developments in the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute that definitely allows for an in-depth observation of how media narratives evolve when the contexts of the dispute and regional dynamic fluctuate.

3.5. Data Description

Data was collected from various materials such as articles, editorials, opinion pieces, and news reports on the Iraqi-Turkish dispute over water. To that effect, such multiplicity allows the researcher to undertake a deep analysis regarding the nature of these genres in terms of their contribution toward establishing the overall framing of the dispute.

3.6. Model of the Study

In the present study, the core analytical model adopted was Critical Discourse Analysis. It is a qualitative, discursive methodology cognizing how discourse gets interrelated with power relations, ideologies, and social contexts. As Gee (2014) mentions, the CDA framework applies very well to media representation analyses, since it allows investigation of how use of language and framing reflects and reinforces dominant ideologies and political agendas. The approaches of Braun & Clarke (2006), Entman (1993), and Fairclough (2013) are adapted for this article.

1. Thematic Analysis

The recurring themes and patterns within the media reports are identified and categorised through thematic analysis. Content is coded according to key themes in relation to the water dispute, such as representations of national interests, framing of conflict issues, and portrayals of stakeholders (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes are grouped into categories that reflect commonality and differences in media narratives from sources in Iraq and Turkey.

2. Framing Analysis

The framing analysis will be used to explore the framing done by the media about the water dispute. This shall include the analysis of language and rhetorical strategies that characterise each report in the media for the purposes of building particular narratives. The key areas of focus in the analysis are: how is the framing done as a case of conflict, cooperation, or competition, and what impact do the different frames have on people's perceptions? (Entman, 1993).

3. Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is used to look deeper into the ideological underpinning of media discourse through the examination of how media language is used to express the wider power dynamics and political agendas. Discourse markers, metaphors, and narrative structure are a few elements inherent in CDA that are discussed here to support evidence of media representations both colluding with and resisting dominant ideologies (Fairclough, 2013).

4. Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis is conducted, therefore, to tease out dissimilarities and similarities in the media representations of the water dispute as framed by Iraqi and Turkish outlets. This involves comparing themes, frames, and discourse strategies in the two contexts to understand how national perspectives influence the portrayal of the water dispute.

3.7. Validation

Results are therefore reliable and valid since different rounds of coding and interpretation are undertaken by independent researchers. The peer debriefing technique was an important

step in the validation of the interpretations to ensure that analysis reflected the best of the media content (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4. Data Analysis

The section that follows now presents the critical analysis of four extracts emanating from media reports on the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute. Each extract applies CDA together with thematic analysis in presenting the narratives and framing strategies, including ideological constructs which the media have used. This is meant to show how these different media frame the dispute in relation to their national interests and their impact on public perception and policy discourse.

4.1. Extract 1: Iraqi Media - Al-Sabah

Extract: "Turkey's relentless pursuit of dam construction on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers has reached alarming levels. The Atatürk Dam has already reduced water flow significantly, causing a severe drought in southern Iraq. This blatant disregard for international agreements and the well-being of neighbouring countries is nothing short of an environmental crime. The Iraqi government demands immediate action from the international community to address this injustice."

4.1.1. Analysis

1. Framing:

Al-Sabah" dramatised the action of Turkey as an environmental crime and blatant disregard for international conventions. In so doing, it has been able to frame the aggressor as Turkey while the victimhood of Iraq is more insistently presented. Strong emotive languages, such as "relentless pursuit" and "blatant disregard," have been used to villainize Turkey and raise a sense of injustice and urgency.

2. Thematic Analysis:

Included among the major themes in this extract would be environmental degradation, violations of international norms, and an appeal for international intervention. The use of "relentless pursuit" to describe the dam projects of Turkey strongly points toward a theme of relentless aggression, while the call for international action underlines one of international responsibility and solidarity.

3. Ideological Constructs:

This would be an ideological construct-the ideological construct of moral high ground. By labeling the actions of Turkey as an "environmental crime," Al-Sabah places Iraq in the position of victim to a purportedly baseless malfeasance at the hands of the Turks, an appeal to international norms and ethics. This then is an ideological construct that not only appeals to but supports a nationalist perspective in garnering support from the international community regarding the perceived injustices.

4. Power Dynamics:

The extract is indicative of a power relationship that has constructed Iraq as a helpless victim vis-à-vis the aggressive acts of its more powerful neighbour. Such a presentation aims to evoke sympathy and support from the international community in addition to reaffirming their positions of victimization at the mercy of Turkey's predominant influence.

4.2. Extract 2: Iraqi Media - Rudaw

Extract: "The construction of Turkish dams, particularly the Ilisu Dam, has exacerbated water shortages in Iraq. The Turkish government argues that these projects are necessary for its own

economic development, but at what cost to its neighbours? The Iraqi government has repeatedly warned of the dire consequences of these actions, yet Turkey continues to prioritise its own needs over regional stability."

4.2.1. Analysis:

1. Framing:

Rudaw frames the Turkish dams as one of the major contributors to water shortages in Iraq, while pointing at the clash of economic development in Turkey with regional stability. The extract underlines an inherent conflict between national interests and regional cooperation, while depicting the actions of Turkey as a threat to the stability of its neighbours.

2. Thematic Analysis:

The extract deals with the competing themes of economic development with regional stability, the unforgiving reality of water scarcity, and the consequences of national policy on neighbouring countries. Such a balance between the economic needs of Turkey and the results for Iraq shows a theme of competing priorities, underlining the heavy imbalance in the distribution of water resources.

3. Ideological Constructs:

The ideological construct here is a critique of how Turkey has prioritized its economic development over regional stability. In questioning the cost of Turkey's projects to its neighbours, "Rudaw" provides a discourse challenging the legitimacy of what Turkey is doing, emphasising ethical implications with respect to prioritising national development over the collective well-being of the region.

4. Power Dynamics:

This extract frames Turkey as focused on its own economic development, even at some cost in regional stability; hence, framing Turkey as a powerful and influential state at the mercy of its less powerful neighbours, such as Iraq.

4.3. Extract 3: Turkish Media - Hürriyet

Extract: "Turkey's Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) is a milestone in regional development, providing much-needed water and energy resources. Despite criticism from neighbouring countries, the project is designed to improve living standards and economic conditions in Turkey's southeast. The accusations from Iraq about reduced water flow are exaggerated and do not account for the benefits that Turkey's investments bring to the region."

4.3.1. Analysis:

1. Framing:

Hürriyet thus portrays the GAP as a milestone in development, for which the benefits are quite significant for Turkey, while the criticisms from Iraq are blown out of proportion. Such framing has been done to present a positive view toward the action taken by Turkey by highlighting developmental achievements and downplaying or discrediting the concerns of Iraq.

2. Thematic Analysis:

Key themes discussed here are the development of the region, economic benefits, and dismissal of criticisms. In this extract, beneficial effects on the region due to the GAP project-like style and economic condition of the people-are brought into consideration and the Iraqi concern as exaggerated. This reflects a self-justification and defense of national interests.

3. Ideological Constructs:

Some of the major themes that would be included in this extract are environmental degradation, violations of international norms, and an appeal for international intervention. The strong use of "relentless pursuit" in describing the dam projects of Turkey points to a theme of relentless aggression, whereas the call for international action underlines one of international responsibility and solidarity.

4. Power Dynamics:

The extract shows how the positioning of Turkey as a powerful, progressive force for regional development concurrently marginalises the concerns of its neighbours and characterizes them as unfounded. It tries to show the already dominant role taken by Turkey in defining regional development and resource management.

4.4. Extract 4: Turkish Media - Daily Sabah

Extract: "Iraq's mismanagement of its own water resources is a major factor contributing to its water shortages. While Turkey's dam projects are often blamed, Iraq's failure to implement effective water management policies has exacerbated the situation. Turkey's investments in water infrastructure are necessary for ensuring sustainable development and should be seen as a model for effective resource management."

4.3.2. Analysis:

1. Framing:

Meanwhile, Daily Sabah frames Iraqi problems with water shortages as a result of their own mismanagement, rather than an impact caused by Turkish dam projects. Under this framing, the blame is taken off Turkey and put onto internal policies of water use in Iraq, while in return, the projects in Turkey should become an example to be shown on a good management basis.

2. Thematic Analysis:

The passage opens by stating that, "In terms of resource governance, accountability, and sustainable development, the passage to water scarcity in Iraq is directly linked to mismanagement, while presenting Turkish initiatives as exemplary. It emphasises that effective resource management is an important issue and legitimises Turkey's actions.

3. Ideological Constructs:

Ideological constructs are those of accountability and responsibility. Through blaming mismanagement for water shortages in Iraq, "Daily Sabah" runs any blame from Turkey and positions water infrastructures in the country as exemplary. It is this ideological construct that adds more validity to the acts of Turkey and shifts focus away from criticisms.

4. Power Dynamics:

It describes Turkey as an able and responsible custodian of its water resources against the relative deficiency in Iraq's governance. The juxtaposition underlines the strength of Turkey's leadership in managing resources while portraying Iraq as incapable of managing resources on its own efficiently.

The analysis below of these extracts indicates the use of different media discourses and framing strategies in the coverage of the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute. Iraqi media often frame Turkey as an aggressor, focusing on the environmental and humanitarian consequences of the Turkish dam projects. The Turkish media, however, frame this conflict as one linked to mismanagement by Iraq.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. Findings

From four media extracts from Iraqi and Turkish sources, tendencies can be identified in framing the Iraqi-Turkish water dispute. These results underline different framing strategies, thematic emphases, and ideological structures that indicate the national interests and political agenda of the respective media.

1. Framing of the Dispute

The Iraqi media discourse describes the dam initiatives of Turkey mainly in terms of environmental and humanitarian crises. For example, "Al-Sabah" describes the construction of dams by Turkey as an "environmental crime," emphasising the broad ramifications for Iraqi water resources and agricultural productivity. While "Rudaw" emphasises that Iraqi water scarcity has been exacerbated by Turkish projects, it also critically questions the veracity of the Turkish claims about economic progress in a destabilised region. In that kind of characterisation, Iraq was a victim of Turkish aggression and, therefore, called for global norms and moral consciousness. Meanwhile, Turkish sources, like "Hürriyet" and "Daily Sabah", frame the dispute within the context of Turkey's development in contrast to the very mismanagement taking place in Iraq.

While "Hürriyet" represents the GAP as a monumental development project for the region, "Daily Sabah" has some remarks regarding the omissions in Iraq's management of water resources. That framing underlines the merits of Turkey's contribution while attempting to deflect criticism by putting an emphasis on water shortages caused by Iraq's lack of efficiency.

2. Thematic Emphasis

Thematic analysis reveals that Iraqi media underlines environmental degradation, violation of international norms, and a call for international interference. Negative consequences of Turkish endeavors media reports highlight about Iraq's water availability and agricultural sector as being unfair to Iraqi farmers and need to be brought within the international accountability circle.

On the other hand, Turkish media underline issues about regional development, economic benefit, and Iraq's fault on the problem of water. The Turkish media try to legitimise their deed, as well as portraying Turkey as a responsible and progressive regional player, by perceiving the Turkish investments as an act of benevolent intention and the Iraqi complaints as exaggerated.

3. Ideological Constructs

In the Iraqi media excerpts, the ideological frameworks evolve around moral superiority and victimization. By labeling these activities of the Turks as "environmental crimes" and calling for international intervention, the Iraqi media presents a discourse that puts Iraq as a victim of Turkish aggression, at the same time trying to mobilise international support.

The media in Turkey constructs an ideology of self-justification and national pride. The framing of the Turkish developmental projects as constructive, while Iraqi concerns are over exaggerated, serves to strengthen positive attitudes toward Turkey's involvement in regional development, instead of having to face the gravity of criticism.

4. Power Dynamics

The power relations reflected in media reports depict a sharp contrast between the

meanings of authority and influence that Iraq and Turkey attribute to one another. Iraqi media describe Turkey as an aggressive powerhouse whose actions have negative impacts on a weaker neighbour, while Turkish media frames Turkey as the leading force of development in the region; Turkish actions have been misleadingly framed by a neighbour lesser in competence. This dichotomy brings about the complex power relations and differing national interests in this dispute.

5.2. Discussion

The results obtained from the media analysis show how important media is to bring a change in discourse pertaining to the Iraqi-Turkish water conflict. The manner of presentation of this issue through media frames not only public opinion but also epitomises and strengthens national interests and political objectives.

1. Media framing and its impact on social perception.

The portrayal in Iraqi media of this crisis as both an environmental and humanitarian disaster probably serves to enhance a sense of injustice and urgency among Iraqis and international observers alike. Emphasising negative impacts of Turkish dam projects, depicting Iraq as a victim, Iraqi media allow marshaling of support for international intervention, putting pressure on Turkey to address the concerns of its neighbour.

On the other hand, the Turkish framing described the conflict as one that is caused by Iraq's mismanagement; this, in conjunction with emphasising the positive impacts of one's own developmental undertakings, legitimates the actions of Turkey and shifts blame for water shortages elsewhere than upon itself. This is a rhetorical approach done in order to preserve a positive public image and bar one's developmental policies from foreign criticism.

2. Role of Ideological Constructs in Shaping Narratives

The ideological frameworks in media reports point out the deeply held assumptions and values behind the constructed narratives. That the Iraqi media portray the actions of Turkey as criminal, unjust, indicates a moralistic stance that appeals to international standards and principles for ethical conduct. This in turn aims at locating Iraq in the role of victim and as an advocate for justice on the international front.

The self-justification of Turkish media and its emphasis on regional development embrace a nationalistic philosophy that highlights the achievements of Turkey and lessens the criticism stemming from its neighbouring countries. The story of the Turkish media displays the beneficiaries of the Turkish activities while trivialising the concerns expressed by Iraq—a development-and-responsibility narrative which has aligned with national interests and political objectives.

3. Influence of Power Dynamics on Media Narratives

The power relations reflected in media narratives indicate the imbalance in the perceived relations of authority and influence between Iraq and Turkey. Construction of Turkey as a forceful aggressor with ensuing harmful effects underlines Iraqi media's vulnerability against Turkish dominance. It's all rhetoric, meant to evoke global support for a much fairer approach to the question of water resources management.

Framing Turkey as a leader in the development sphere, while attributing water-related problems to issues of mismanagement in Iraq, serves only to reinforce the latter as a pivotal regional player. Such contextualisation with regard to a developmental paradigm of responsibility, therefore, allows Turkish media to legitimise their projects and de-legitimise potential critiques stemming from Iraq.

4. Implications for Policy and International Relations

The Iraqi-Turkish water dispute, as represented by the divergent media, accordingly plays a significant role in policy and international relations. The framing and ideological constructs advanced in the media coverage have the potential to influence diplomatic relations, shape policy responses, and affect public opinion both within the countries involved and globally.

These media narratives become of particular importance to policymakers for better understanding the intricacies involved in handling the conflict and fostering positive dialogue. International players and organisations engaged in conflict resolution and management of water resources should be concerned with the effects of media framing and ideological frames on the perceptions and positions of all the stakeholders concerned.

6. Conclusion

This current study has conducted a critical discourse analysis related to media representations of the Iraqi-Turkish water conflict, emphasising how the framing of this dispute, highlighting leading themes, and building ideological discourses in media outlets from both Iraq and Turkey are made. Five excerpts were analysed from Iraqi and Turkish media; major differences were recorded in portraying the conflict, emphasising the different national interests and political motives of the represented media outlets.

Results show that Iraqi media, such as Al-Sabah and Rudaw, describe the dams that Turkey is building as basically environmental destruction and humanitarian crises. Such framing serves to construct Iraq as a victim of Turkish aggression and to appeal for international support in the light of perceived injustices. Emphasising specific aspects of environmental degradation and violations of international law underlines a moral high ground argument and attempts to appeal to global ethical values. The strategy aims to rally international action and pressure on Turkey to correct the harm its actions have caused on Iraqi water resources.

By contrast, Turkish news sources, such as Hürriyet and Daily Sabah, tend to frame the water dispute through a focus on Turkey's development versus Iraqi administrative failure. Framing the Southeastern Anatolia Project as one of the major achievements in regional development, coupled with connecting water shortages to Iraq's inefficiency, are both Turkish media tactics seeking to legitimise their activities and diffuse criticism. This framing focuses on the economic benefit and responsible use of resources, reinforcing a narrative of Turkey's positive contribution to regional development at the expense of minimising the validity of Iraqi concerns.

The ideological framework in media discourse also reflects how national interest functions to drive discursive frames. Iraqi media have employed a moralising narrative in framing Turkey's acts as illicit and unjust and sought international support for such claims by means of international norms. Turkish media, by contrast, work with a self-legitimising framing perspective, emphasising Turkey's achievements and portraying the Iraqi criticism as exaggerated with the intent of further nurturing national pride and the need to legitimise Turkey's policy.

The most obvious power relations in the media representations signify an imbalance between Iraq and Turkey. Iraqi media represent Turkey as the active aggressor, causing harm; Turkish media discuss a leading Turkey of regional development to which its actions are distorted by its lesser neighbour. These power relations shape public perception and policy discussions, influencing the manner in which stakeholders and international actors interact with the ongoing dispute.

The media no doubt plays a significant role in framing and structuring conversations on

the Iraqi-Turkish water conflict. Divided narratives between Iraqi and Turkish media go on to detail broader national interests and political pursuits, which shape public perceptions and define the nature of diplomatic relations. It is in understanding these media dynamics that a correct direction can be sought by policymakers and international actors working on conflict resolution and management of water resources. Constructive engagement and dialogue must therefore factor in complex interactions of media framing, ideological constructs, and power relations in dealing with the dispute effectively for cooperative solution-making.

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