

Article

Polarization of the Network Society in Türkiye: Disinformation and Perception Management on X Related to the Treaty of Lausanne

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Abstract

This study investigates the spread of disinformation and perception management on X concerning the Treaty of Lausanne, a pivotal 1923 agreement that defined the borders of modern Türkiye. By analyzing the hashtags #LozanHezimettir and #LozanDarbesi, we explore how social media discourse shapes public understanding of this historical event. Using a mixed-methods approach, we collected tweets containing these hashtags from X Dataset which was released in 2020 and analyzed their content, reach, and engagement metrics. The study applies the Hypodermic Needle Theory and Cultivation Theory to interpret the data, demonstrating that repeated exposure to disinformation influences users' perceptions of the treaty's significance. These findings highlight the challenges of maintaining an informed public in the digital age and emphasize the need for enhanced media literacy education. The research offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and social media companies in developing strategies to combat the spread of historical disinformation online.

Keywords: disinformation; X (formerly Twitter); the Lausanne Peace Treaty; the hypodermic needle model; Cultivation Theory

1. Introduction

This study explores the intricate relationship between disinformation, social media, and political dynamics in Türkiye, focusing on X (formerly Twitter). The purpose of this research is to investigate how disinformation campaigns related to the Treaty of Lausanne are disseminated on X and how they influence public perception and societal polarization. By examining specific hashtags, we aim to quantify the impact of disinformation and provide insights into the mechanisms of perception management.

The spread of disinformation on social media platforms, particularly regarding historical events like the Treaty of Lausanne, poses a significant threat to public understanding and societal cohesion in Türkiye. Despite the treaty's importance in shaping modern Türkiye, disinformation about its content and implications continues to circulate widely on platforms like X (formerly Twitter). This disinformation has the potential to distort public perception of national history, exacerbate political polarization, and undermine informed civic discourse.

This research paper investigates the dissemination and impact of disinformation on X (formerly Twitter) concerning the Treaty of Lausanne, employing Cultivation Theory and



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the Hypodermic Needle Model as its central theoretical framework. Cultivation Theory elucidates how persistent exposure to repeated disinformation narratives can gradually reshape public perception, cultivating an alternative reality that distorts historical facts. Complementing this, the Hypodermic Needle Model provides insight into the mechanics of this process, illustrating how such repetitive content acts like a slow infusion, directly influencing and altering accepted understandings over time. Together, these theories are vital for analyzing how coordinated disinformation operates within political discourse to effect long-term changes in collective memory and factuality.

Methodologically, the study employs a mixed-methods approach powered by data analysis in PowerBI. The process began with initial data exploration and preprocessing, filtering and standardizing tweets related to the treaty and extracting key hashtags like #LozanHezimettir and #LozanDarbesi. Quantitative analysis involved hashtag and engagement metrics—including a calculated engagement score—and temporal analysis to map the spread and identify potential coordinated campaigns. This was followed by a qualitative, manual content analysis of high-engagement tweets to identify recurring narratives and discursive strategies.

Crucially, to classify content as disinformation, the study applied a stringent set of criteria: factual inaccuracy against established history, low source credibility, detectable intent to mislead, and verification through cross-referencing with reputable fact-checking organizations such as <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com>. By integrating this rigorous empirical analysis with robust communication theories, this paper offers a comprehensive examination of how disinformation about a pivotal historical event is technically propagated, thematically constructed, and theoretically effective in reshaping public discourse, highlighting the profound implications for political practice and historical truth.

The problem is further compounded by the rapid spread of false narratives through politicized accounts, which can reach a wide audience before fact-checkers or accurate information can respond. The lack of comprehensive research on the dynamics of this specific type of disinformation in the Turkish context leaves a significant gap in our understanding of how to effectively combat it.

This study aims to address this problem by analyzing a unique dataset of tweets related to the Treaty of Lausanne, focusing on the mechanisms of disinformation spread, its impact on public discourse, and its potential role in societal polarization. By doing so, we seek to contribute to the development of effective strategies for combating historical disinformation and promoting media literacy in Türkiye.

The study is grounded in key communication theories, including the Hypodermic Needle Model and Cultivation Theory. The hypodermic needle model of media effects suggests the recipient of a media message directly received and fully accepted the message as it was intended (Floyd & Spratz, 2023, pp. 117–118); which is particularly relevant in understanding the rapid spread and impact of disinformation on social media platforms like X (Farkas & Schou, 2018, pp. 298–300). Originating in the early 20th century, this model posits that media can inject information, ideas, and propaganda into the public's mind, influencing their thoughts and behaviours without any resistance or critical thinking (Lasswell, 1927). This model assumes a passive audience that is susceptible to the powerful influence of media, which can shape perceptions and actions directly. The relationship between the Hypodermic Needle Model and disinformation is significant, particularly in the context of modern digital media. Disinformation—false or misleading information spread deliberately to deceive—can be seen as a contemporary application of this model. Social media platforms, like X (formerly Twitter), facilitate the rapid dissemination of disinformation, often reaching large audiences quickly and influencing public opinion before accurate information can counteract it (Vosoughi et al., 2018). X (formerly Twitter)

functions as a multifaceted platform that facilitates political and social expression through news, media content, and technological engagement, while also serving purposes such as information sharing, social interaction, information seeking, and mobilization. The model helps explain why disinformation can be so effective; it suggests that audiences may accept false narratives without scrutiny, especially when they align with pre-existing beliefs or emotions.

Cultivation Theory posits that long-term exposure to media content shapes an individual's perception of reality, highlighting how repeated exposure to disinformation can cultivate specific societal beliefs and attitudes over time (Gerbner et al., 1986). Cultivation Theory, developed by George Gerbner in the 1960s, posits that long-term exposure to media content shapes viewers' perceptions of social reality. Originally focused on television, the theory suggests that heavy media consumption leads individuals to adopt beliefs and perspectives that align with the media's portrayed world, regardless of its accuracy (Morgan et al., 2009). This theory emphasizes the cumulative effect of media exposure over time, rather than immediate impacts.

In the context of disinformation, Cultivation Theory provides a framework for understanding how persistent exposure to false or misleading information can gradually alter an individual's perception of reality. Social media platforms, with their algorithmic content delivery and echo chamber effects, create an environment where users are repeatedly exposed to certain narratives, including disinformation (Törnberg, 2018). This constant exposure can lead to the cultivation of beliefs that align with the false information, even if it contradicts objective reality.

The impact of disinformation through the lens of Cultivation Theory is profound and far-reaching. As individuals are consistently exposed to false narratives, they may develop distorted views on various issues, from politics to public health. This can lead to a fragmented society where different groups hold fundamentally different perceptions of reality based on their media consumption patterns (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Moreover, the theory helps explain why debunking disinformation can be challenging. Once false beliefs are cultivated through long-term exposure, they become deeply ingrained and resistant to change. This phenomenon contributes to the persistence of conspiracy theories and the polarization of public opinion on contentious issues (Garrett et al., 2016).

By applying these theories, this study seeks to unravel the nuances of how disinformation campaigns influence digital society's behaviour and contribute to political polarization. The findings underscore the importance of media literacy and critical thinking in combating disinformation and promoting informed civic engagement in the digital age. This research employs both the Hypodermic Needle Theory and Cultivation Theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of disinformation's impact. The Hypodermic Needle Theory helps explain the immediate, direct effects of disinformation on audiences, particularly in the context of viral social media content. Cultivation Theory, on the other hand, addresses the long-term, cumulative effects of repeated exposure to disinformation. By using both theories, the research can capture both the short-term, immediate impacts and the gradual, pervasive influence of disinformation on public perception and societal polarization.

While the hypodermic needle theory and Cultivation Theory were initially developed for traditional media, their application to social media environments remains relevant and insightful. These theories, when adapted to the digital age, provide a robust framework for understanding both the immediate and long-term effects of disinformation exposure.

The hypodermic needle theory, despite its original conception of a passive audience, can be reinterpreted in the context of social media to explain the rapid, viral spread of disinformation. In the digital ecosystem, users actively participate in information dissemination, inadvertently becoming "needles" themselves, injecting information into their

networks (Vosoughi et al., 2018). This reinterpretation aligns with the participatory nature of social media while maintaining the theory's core premise of direct and immediate effects. Similarly, Cultivation Theory, when applied to social media, acknowledges users' active role in curating their information environment. As users selectively expose themselves to certain narratives, they cultivate a particular worldview over time (Cheng & Chan, 2021). This process is especially relevant in understanding how echo chambers and filter bubbles contribute to the persistence of disinformation beliefs.

Moreover, recent studies have demonstrated the applicability of these theories to social media contexts. For instance, Tsay-Vogel et al. (2018) successfully applied Cultivation Theory to examine how Facebook use shapes users' perceptions of social reality. Similarly, Törnberg (2018) used a modified version of the hypodermic needle theory to explain the viral spread of fake news on social networks. By employing these theories, we capture both the immediate, viral nature of disinformation spread (hypodermic needle) and the long-term effects of repeated exposure (cultivation) in the social media landscape. This approach allows us to examine how users both passively consume and actively engage with disinformation, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

In this context, while we acknowledge the interactive nature of social media, we argue that the adapted use of Cultivation Theory and the hypodermic needle theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex dynamics of disinformation in the digital age. These theories, when reinterpreted for the social media context, offer insights into both passive consumption and active engagement with disinformation, making them highly relevant for our study.

The digital age has brought about significant challenges to maintaining the accuracy of information, especially within political conversations. This study examines the complex interplay between disinformation, social media, and political dynamics in Türkiye, with a specific focus on X. The research investigates how the frequency and volume of disinformation disseminated through politicized accounts correlate with the digital society's engagement and inadvertent distribution of disinformation.

At the heart of this study lies the recognition that political disinformation, emanating from politicized accounts on X, exerts a substantial influence on digital society's behaviour and fosters an environment of intense political loyalty and partisanship. This phenomenon draws parallels to Joseph Goebbels' "Big Lie" technique, wherein disinformation is utilized to manipulate public perspectives and achieve a desired viewpoint (Herf, 2006). The existence of this technique underscores the gravity of a given situation; the significance of suppressing opposing viewpoints sustains an illusion created by falsehoods.

The political context is crucial in understanding the impact of disinformation. Fake news spreading from politicized accounts can outpace the dissemination of real news, influencing online individuals who encounter it (Farkas & Schou, 2018, pp. 298–300). This rapid spread of disinformation has been observed in various political events globally, including the 2016 US presidential election and the Brexit referendum in the UK (Bradshaw & Howard, 2018). While disinformation in election and referendum campaigns is not a new phenomenon, the ease and speed with which information spreads via the internet and social media have greatly amplified the problem (Marshall & Drieschova, 2018, p. 95). Moreover, the use of disinformation through social media has become a new strategy for governments and opposition groups in many countries.

The spread of disinformation through social media reached its peak during the Russia–Ukraine war. Due to the increase in potentially fabricated content disseminated by Russia or pro-Russian entities, the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) Disinformation Unit (also known as the Permanent Reality Check Team) began auditing and verifying war-related social media content. This initiative was driven by the fact that many people get their news

from social media and form their opinions based on it. According to a report published in The Guardian on 17 January 2017 ([Theguardian, 2017](#)), the BBC aimed to verify obviously fabricated content and deepfake videos to convince the public that this content was created by a trusted news organization. Additionally, the UK government allocated more than 4 million GBP in extra funding to the BBC World Service to combat disinformation about the Ukraine crisis ([BBC, 2022](#)). In this context, the spread of disinformation during the Russia–Ukraine war not only caused confusion but also influenced the opinions of those following the war updates.

This research focuses on the Turkish context, acknowledging the systematic misuse of social media for disinformation campaigns. The study aims to quantify the volume of disinformation dissemination on X in Türkiye, utilizing specific hashtags for analysis. This approach aligns with previous research that has demonstrated the power of social media in shaping public opinion and creating divisions within societies ([Tucker et al., 2018](#)).

The methodology incorporates the hypodermic needle model and Cultivation Theory to unravel the nuances of disinformation’s effects on a digital society. These theoretical frameworks provide a robust foundation for understanding how repeated exposure to certain narratives can shape users’ perceptions over time ([Gerbner et al., 1986](#)).

As society grapples with the challenges posed by disinformation, developing critical thinking skills for evaluating information and promoting responsible use of media become crucial defences against the spread of disinformation. The prevalence of fake news has led to a state of epistemic cacophony, where objective truths are overshadowed by emotionally driven beliefs ([Dahlgren, 2018](#)), a situation which we call “post-truth”.

2. Implications for Democratic Discourse and National Identity Formation

The findings of this study have significant implications for democratic discourse and national identity formation in Türkiye, particularly in the context of discussions surrounding the Letter Revolution. The spread of disinformation on X related to this historical event demonstrates the complex interplay between social media, political narratives, and national identity construction.

Our analysis reveals that disinformation campaigns about the Letter Revolution on X have the potential to shape public perception and contribute to societal polarization. This aligns with findings from similar studies in other contexts. For instance, [Benkler et al. \(2018\)](#) found that disinformation on social media platforms played a significant role in shaping public opinion during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Similarly, [Tucker et al. \(2018\)](#) observed that social media-driven disinformation campaigns have contributed to political polarization in various European countries.

The impact of disinformation on democratic discourse is particularly concerning. As [Dahlgren \(2018\)](#) notes, the prevalence of fake news can lead to an “epistemic cacophony” where objective truths are overshadowed by emotionally driven beliefs. In the Turkish context, this phenomenon could potentially undermine constructive dialogue about the country’s historical legacy and future direction.

Moreover, the role of X in facilitating both the spread of disinformation and counter-narratives reflects the platform’s dual nature as a tool for both manipulation and civic engagement. This duality echoes findings by [Farkas and Schou \(2018\)](#), who observed similar patterns in their study of social media’s role in Danish political discourse.

The implications for national identity formation are equally significant. The Letter Revolution, as a pivotal moment in Turkish history, plays a crucial role in shaping contemporary Turkish identity. Disinformation campaigns that distort or misrepresent this historical event could potentially influence how younger generations perceive their national

heritage and identity. This aligns with observations by [Kaya and Tecmen \(2019\)](#), who found that social media narratives significantly impact youth perceptions of national identity in Türkiye.

Our findings also highlight the need for enhanced media literacy initiatives in Türkiye, similar to those proposed by [Bulger and Davison \(2018\)](#) in their global study on combating disinformation. Such initiatives could empower citizens to critically evaluate information they encounter on platforms like X, thereby strengthening democratic discourse and fostering a more nuanced understanding of national identity.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on media manipulation and public opinion formation in the digital age. By examining the spread of disinformation through politicized accounts and its impact on digital society, we aim to provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of information dissemination and consumption in the modern political landscape. The findings of this research have significant implications for understanding the role of social media in shaping political discourse and polarizing societies, ultimately informing strategies to combat disinformation and promote media literacy in the digital age.

3. Methodology and Data Collection

This study employs a comprehensive, mixed-method approach to analyze the spread of disinformation and perception management related to the Treaty of Lausanne on X. Our methodology combines quantitative data analysis with qualitative content analysis to provide a thorough understanding of how hashtags are used to shape public discourse about this significant historical event.

For this research, we utilized a pre-existing X dataset 2020 obtained from x.com ([Blog.x, 2020](#)), which included a wide range of tweets relevant to our study. The dataset (see Table 1) encompassed tweets containing the hashtags #LozanHezimettir and #LozanDarbesi as well as tweets that mentioned the Lausanne treaty without these specific hashtags. This dataset provided a rich resource for analyzing the discourse surrounding the Lausanne treaty over a defined period.

Table 1. Total amounts of tweets, retweets, quotes, likes, replies, and reaches from the X dataset.

36,948,536			
Total Tweets			
37,500,954	589,049	93,623,368	3,998,862
Total Retweets	Total Quote	Total Like	Total Reply
31,358,791	Date Range		
Total Reached	4 June 2009–21 April 2020		

The dataset which consists of 36,948,536 tweets included various attributes for each tweet, such as the tweet text, posting date and time, user information (anonymized to protect privacy), engagement metrics (retweets, likes, replies, quotes), associated hashtags, and user profile information. The comprehensive nature of this dataset allowed us to conduct a detailed analysis of the conversations and narratives surrounding the Treaty of Lausanne.

Our research focuses on the two most dominant hashtags—#LozanHezimettir and #LozanDarbesi—identified within a specifically bounded dataset. This dataset encompasses all X (formerly Twitter) content related to the Treaty of Lausanne posted between 4 June 2009, and 21 April 2020. The selection of these particular hashtags was driven by a quantitative threshold of participation; they emerged as the most frequently used and highly participated markers within the collected corpus. This methodological choice

prioritizes the analysis of narratives that achieved the broadest reach and engagement, as hashtags with minimal participation offer statistically less meaningful insight into widespread disinformation patterns. By concentrating on these peak-signal hashtags over the defined 11-year period, we aim to examine the core, most propagated discourse, thereby ensuring our analysis targets the content most likely to have cultivated public perception according to our theoretical framework.

To measure the reach and influence of hashtags on X, we utilized the PowerBI analyzer. This tool estimates the number of unique users who have seen or interacted with specific hashtags. It also provides an estimate of the potential influence of trending hashtags within the X community, indicating how widely a hashtag's message could spread and how many users it could potentially impact.

Using PowerBI, we focused on two key metrics related to hashtags on X:

1. **Hashtag Reach:** This metric estimates the number of unique users who have seen or interacted with the hashtags, providing an indication of the potential audience size for the hashtags.
2. **Influence of Trending Hashtags:** This metric estimates how widely a trending hashtag's message could spread within the X community and how many users it could potentially impact. This helps gauge the overall influence and effectiveness of the hashtag in shaping public discourse.

To calculate the number of interactions for a tweet, the number of followers of the user who posted it is taken into account, and for each reply, like, retweet, and quote, the number of followers of the interactants was summated and added to the number of followers of the account that sent the tweet (Belkaroui et al., 2015, p. 4).

Our methodology combines quantitative data analysis with qualitative content analysis to provide a thorough understanding of how hashtags are used to shape public discourse about this significant historical event.

In terms of data source and collection, we utilized a pre-existing X dataset obtained from x.com (Blog.x, 2020), which included 36,948,536 tweets from 7340 accounts that were permanently closed by X due to their association with spreading disinformation. The dataset spans from 4 June 2009, to 21 June 2020, providing a longitudinal perspective on disinformation trends.

The dataset includes various attributes for each tweet such as post, posting date and time, anonymized user information, engagement metrics (retweets, likes, replies, quotes), associated hashtags, user profile information.

4. Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process began with an initial data exploration and preprocessing phase in PowerBI, where we imported, cleaned, and prepared the dataset by filtering tweets related to the Treaty of Lausanne, standardizing text formatting, and extracting relevant hashtags such as #LozanHezimettir and #LozanDarbesi.

Next, a quantitative analysis was performed using PowerBI's data modelling and visualization capabilities. This included a hashtag analysis to calculate reach and assess the influence of trending hashtags, an engagement analysis which used a calculated metric combining the original poster's followers with the sum of retweets, likes, replies, and quotes, and a temporal analysis to identify patterns and potential coordinated campaigns through time-based visualizations.

We then conducted a qualitative analysis through manual content and discourse analysis on a subset of high-engagement tweets to identify recurring narratives and themes and to examine the language used to construct discourses about the treaty.

Finally, to classify posts as disinformation, we applied specific criteria. These were: factual inaccuracy against established historical facts; low source credibility from accounts known to spread false information; an apparent intent to mislead by creating a false narrative; and verification through cross-referencing claims with reputable fact-checking sources like <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com>.

In terms of integration of findings, we used PowerBI's reporting features to create interactive dashboards that combine quantitative metrics with qualitative insights. This allowed us to triangulate our findings and develop a comprehensive understanding of disinformation dynamics related to the Treaty of Lausanne on X.

Our study is limited by the closed nature of the dataset, which does not include information on the followers of users who engaged with the original posts. This constrains our ability to fully assess the reach of disinformation beyond first-order interactions.

By employing this comprehensive methodology centered around PowerBI, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of how disinformation about the Treaty of Lausanne spreads on X, its impact on public discourse, and its potential role in societal polarization in Türkiye.

In our data analysis using the X dataset, we calculated user engagement levels for tweets, focusing exclusively on closed accounts. This study adopts a closed data analysis approach, meaning the resultant values represent potential figures derived from within the dataset. The dataset provides follower counts for original tweets, allowing us to determine the number of retweets, likes, replies and quotes. However, it does not include information about the follower counts of users who retweeted these posts, nor follower counts of accounts who replied, liked, and quoted. Consequently, while we can approximate the reach of a tweet using the available data, a fully comprehensive assessment remains unattainable.

The absence of follower information for retweets, likes, replies, and quotes is a limitation of this study. Despite these limitations, the dataset offers a minimum potential volume of disinformation and valuable insights into how disinformation spreads on X and how users interact with it. While the lack of data on closed accounts and retweets restricts the scope of the study, the comprehensive nature of the dataset still provides a strong foundation for investigating how information spreads and how users engage with it, especially in the context of disinformation on social media.

5. Verification of Disinformation in Terms of the Treaty of Lausanne

In Türkiye's media landscape, two key non-governmental organizations, <https://teyit.org> and <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com>, have emerged as vital players in combating disinformation. Both are members of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), dedicated to maintaining information integrity through rigorous verification processes.

These organizations serve as authoritative platforms that examine the accuracy of information circulating across various online channels, including social media, blogs, and traditional news outlets. By conducting thorough research, <https://teyit.org> and <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com> aim to distinguish genuine information from disinformation, misinformation, and hoaxes, thereby promoting transparency and accountability in the information ecosystem. Their fact-checking processes involve detailed investigations into claims and narratives that gain traction online. By cross-referencing reliable sources, they assess the credibility of information, acting as a safeguard against the spread of false narratives that distort public opinion.

Importantly, these organizations do not limit their focus to political issues; their scope encompasses a wide range of subjects, reflecting a commitment to unbiased verification. Their work enhances media literacy and critical thinking skills among the public. As guardians of accurate information, <https://teyit.org> and <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com>

set a standard for the global media community, highlighting the need for collaborative efforts to counter disinformation. In an age of information overload, their initiatives are crucial for promoting an informed citizenry and maintaining the integrity of public discourse.

6. Analyzing Disinformation in the X Dataset

The analysis of this extensive dataset is a critical endeavour in uncovering the far-reaching impact of disinformation campaigns on X. The platform has identified and permanently closed 7340 accounts associated with the Erdoğanist circle that were disseminating disinformation ([Blog.x, 2020](#)). The revelation these closures sheds light on the proactive measures taken to hold the dissemination of disinformation. The dataset contains 36,948,536 tweets from the closed accounts, posted between 4 June 2009, and 21 June 2020. This significant number indicates the extent of disinformation that may have been spread online over those years.

Employing the advanced analytical tool PowerBI in spreadsheet format was imperative in managing and comprehending the vast 5 GB Excel dataset extracted from X. This technology helped us sort through the complex data, find links between accounts, identify groups working together to spread disinformation, and understand the main topics these false stories focus on.

The utilization of hashtags as a focal point of analysis presents a nuanced understanding of how these closed accounts operated within the social media ecosystem. By tracing the trajectory of specific hashtags, analysts can trace the evolution of false narratives, their spread across networks, and the potential amplification of disinformation through unsuspecting users.

7. The Lausanne Peace Treaty as the Disinformation Case

The Lausanne Peace Treaty (1922–1923) is an important treaty that consists of five chapters and 143 articles. Politicians, political scientists, and historians have disagreed about the Lausanne Peace Treaty's effects on the Republic of Türkiye's successes and failures in national borders and world politics. The representatives of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye and those of the UK, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Portugal, Belgium, the USSR, and Yugoslavia signed the Lausanne Peace Treaty ([Treaty of Lausanne, 1923](#)). The borders between Türkiye and Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Greece, as well as the Straits, minorities, war reparations, and the Ottoman debt were all addressed and resolved at the Lausanne Conference. The Lausanne Agreement brought an end to Greece's Anatolian experience ([Clogg, 2013](#), p. 214). The reorganization took place in the political, judicial, economic, and social ties between Türkiye and the European nations. With this agreement, every country on the globe recognized the New Turkish State's independence ([Mango, 1999](#), p. 276). With the agreement and even during the Lausanne Conference, Mosul (today a city within the borders of Iraq and on the Turkish border), Dodecanese, and some islands in the Aegean Sea, including Lesbos, Lemnos, Chios, Samothrace, Samos, and Icaria, have been led to controversy ([Shields, 2011](#), p. 145; [Hanioglu, 2011](#), p. 198). The Lausanne treaty is not only a topic of discussion among scholars and politicians but also a tool for the Erdoğanist circle to distance its base from republican ideas and create societal polarization. The chief negotiator of Türkiye at the Lausanne Conference, commissioned by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was İsmet İnönü. He was also a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic, as well as a member of the Republican People's Party (RPP). The RPP is currently the main opposition party in Türkiye and the most powerful opponent to Erdoğan and his ruling party, the Justice and Development Party (JDP). In this sense, the Lausanne Peace Treaty is a battleground to undermine the RPP's roots, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's achievements, and Kemalist ideals in Türkiye. On 29 September 2016, President

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan claimed that attempts had been made to portray the Lausanne Peace Treaty as a victory instead of a loss (BBC, 2016).

The JDP government in Türkiye has strategically used the Treaty of Lausanne to support its political goals by promoting nationalism and national identity. This treaty, which is historically significant for Türkiye, has been exploited in various ways for political gain. For example, in 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan claimed that it was imposed on Türkiye and did not represent the will of the Turkish people. Moreover, he stressed Türkiye's national and spiritual values, arguing that some aspects of the treaty conflicted with the country's historical legacy. Besides highlighting territorial losses caused by the treaty, Erdoğan stirred nationalist feelings (BBC, 2016).

Erdoğan's comments illustrate how the Treaty of Lausanne today serves as a political tool to enhance the government's popularity by appealing to nationalist sentiments. Such statements are designed to increase public support and protect political interests. This example shows the treaty's vulnerability to political manipulation and how the government incorporates historical events into its political messaging to strengthen its support. These strategies are viewed as deliberate efforts to rally public nationalism and reinforce the government's political position.

The issue that Erdoğan and his supporters constantly bring up is that the situation of the Aegean was not solved with the treaty. This is a real debate that has already divided politicians and historians. There is also a claim stating that the Treaty of Lausanne is ending in 2023 circulating in the public and social media. One of the disseminators of this claim is a Facebook group called Türkiye Century Begins (see Figure 1, Facebook, 2022).

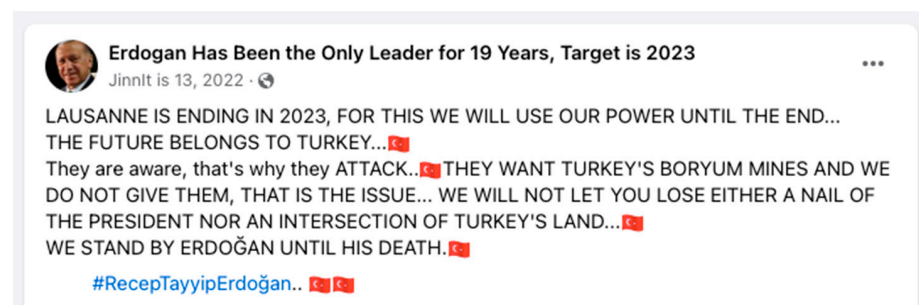


Figure 1. The Lausanne treaty is ending in 2023 allegation.

After this allegation, two more claims of unknown origin were circulated on social media and among the public.

In sum, according to these allegations:

1. The Lausanne treaty will be over in 2023. This is the main allegation that has been circulated in the social media sphere.
2. The Republic of Türkiye will not be able to extract underground resources until the treaty is over because there are classified articles in the Lausanne treaty.
3. Mosul will be included in the borders of the Republic of Türkiye as well as other lands lost in 1923, once the treaty expires.

The first two of these have created confrontational discussions in traditional mainstream media many times. This study focuses on these allegations to reveal disinformation disseminated by the closed accounts and will measure the volume of disinformation using top hashtags related to the Lausanne treaty.

8. Fact Check: The Lausanne Peace Treaty

The detailed research conducted by <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com> on the full text of the Lausanne Peace Treaty reveals that the agreement did not end in 2023 and that there

are no classified articles ([dogrulukpayi, 2022](#); [teyit, 2019](#)). In addition, the treaty does not have a clause stating that Türkiye is not allowed to use its underground resources, and there is no evidence that there is a secret clause about it. In addition, one citizen, in his application numbered 2,201,301,208 to the T.C. Presidential Communication Center (CIMER) on 20 March 2022, asked, “Are there any secret articles in the Lausanne Peace Treaty and does this treaty prevent Türkiye from extracting its underground resources?” The answers to the questions, dated 26 April 2022, were “Neither is there a classified article in the Treaty of Lausanne nor an article preventing Türkiye from hoisting mines,” ([hurriyetdailynews, 2022](#)). In this sense, it is clear that CIMER’s answer to the question of the citizen as a state institution overlaps with the <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com> fact-check study. In this regard, allegations that the Lausanne Peace Treaty contains secret articles, that it will expire in 2023, and that the treaty prohibits Türkiye from accessing its underground mines until 2023 have been refuted. As a result, it is clear that the information which has spread on social media is disinformation.

On the other hand, the third allegation that Mosul will be included on Türkiye’s border after the Treaty ended is a hoax circulating on X and other social media platforms. The claim that Mosul will become part of Turkey after the Lausanne Treaty concludes is not supported by evidence. This assertion is neither corroborated by the full text of the Lausanne Peace Treaty nor by fact-checking sources such as <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com> and <https://teyit.org>.

The investigation into the Lausanne Peace Treaty and its associated disinformation highlights the pervasive challenges posed by false narratives in the digital age. The comprehensive examination by <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com> and <https://teyit.org> has unequivocally debunked several persistent myths: the treaty does not expire in 2023, it contains no secret articles, and it does not restrict Türkiye from exploiting its underground resources. Furthermore, the response from the T.C. Presidential Communication Center (CIMER) corroborates these findings, affirming that there are no classified clauses in the treaty that would inhibit Türkiye’s mining activities. This alignment between state responses and independent fact-checking organizations underscores the reliability of these conclusions.

9. The Lausanne Peace Treaty Allegations on X

In our careful study of disinformation, we looked closely at hashtags. We found two important hashtags that many people used when talking about the Lausanne Peace Treaty. Among the 7340 accounts, the hashtags #LozanHezimettir and #LozanDarbesi emerged as prominent focal points of engagement, manifesting a heightened level of interest and interaction within the X ecosystem.

These hashtags, like digital breadcrumbs, serve as markers that guide our exploration of the Lausanne Peace Treaty discourse within the expansive realm of social media. By focusing on these hashtags, we aim to discern the extent of their reach and impact on a broader spectrum of X users. The selected hashtags encapsulate a range of sentiments and perspectives, reflecting a multiplicity of interpretations surrounding the historical context and consequences of the Lausanne Peace Treaty. From assertions of “defeat” (tr. hezimet) with #LozanHezimettir to claims of a coup (tr. darbe) with #LozanDarbesi, these hashtags encapsulate distinct narratives that have taken root within the X discourse.

Our method combined these hashtags with the keyword “Lozan” (Lausanne) to capture a wide range of discussions about the treaty. We analyzed engagement metrics like likes, retweets, and replies with these hashtags and keywords. This helped us measure how far these stories spread beyond the original posters. Our approach helped us understand

how information spreads, how users interact, and how disinformation about the Lausanne Peace Treaty might create divisions.

9.1. #LozanHezimettir

The hashtag #LozanHezimettir (Lausanne is a Defeat) has been utilized in 884 tweets by 7340 accounts (see Table 2). The first tweet appeared on 29 September 2016, and the last was posted by a now-closed account on 4 August 2019. These tweets were retweeted 1671 times and quoted 27 times. When assessing the combined follower count of users who engaged with this hashtag, it is estimated that 2,845,307 individuals were exposed to these posts. This significant reach highlights the power of social media in amplifying narratives, whether factual or misleading and underscores the importance of understanding the dynamics of information dissemination in digital spaces.

Table 2. The number of interactions under #lozan-hezimettir.

Tweet Count	884
Retweet Count	1671
Reply Count	100
Quote Count	27
Like Count	2736
User Reached	2,845,307

When we narrowed the focus, using content analysis, on the allegation regarding the Lausanne treaty ending in 2023 as a parameter under the hashtag #LozanHezimettir, 26 tweets were posted which emphasized that the treaty ended in 2023 (see Table 3). The first instance among the accounts appeared on 30 September 2016 and was transmitted to 265,200 users. When the X dataset was investigated, five tweets were found within 26 which allege the treaty would finish in 2023, and these five tweets were sourced from an active X account with the username @DENZ123456. The tweet body is “#LozanHezimettir Lausanne was part of the big plan. It was going to end in 2023. They want to seize Türkiye before the treaty ends. They are in pain” (X, 2016). The rest of the tweets mostly include hate speech and counter-discourses of the Lausanne Peace Treaty.

Table 3. The number of interactions regarding 2023 allegations under #lozanhezimettir.

Tweet Count	26
Retweet Count	0
Reply Count	0
Quote Count	0
Like Count	0
User Reached	265,200

The second allegation, that Türkiye will not be allowed to mine their natural resources until the Treaty is over, was found in seven tweets claiming that Türkiye’s mining activities are restricted until the treaty ends. This disinformation was disseminated to 254,625 X users (see Table 4). When the tweets were investigated, it appeared that these tweets not only consist of disinformation but also there is also hate speech against the RPP and their heritage.

When the X database was investigated in terms of the third allegation, the amount of disinformation disseminated by X users was enormous, and the number of people who

were exposed to disinformation was overwhelmingly high. According to the analysis of the dataset, 35 tweets involved disinformation, and 125 retweets, two replies, one quote, and 106 likes contributed to the dissemination of it (see Table 5).

Table 4. The number of interactions regarding restricted mine allegations under #lozanhezimettir.

Tweet Count	7
Retweet Count	0
Reply Count	0
Quote Count	0
Like Count	0
User Reached	254,625

Table 5. The number of interactions regarding restricted Mosul allegations under #lozanhezimettir.

Tweet Count	35
Retweet Count	125
Reply Count	2
Quote Count	1
Like Count	106
User Reached	1,016,460

As a result, all three allegations of disinformation potentially reached 1,536,285 X users. Moreover, 125 retweets, two replies, one quote, and 106 likes have been counted that contributed to disinformation. In this sense, 68 tweets out of 884 disseminated disinformation. When tweets, retweets, and quotes are each considered as posts, the total number of posts is 196. On the other hand, there are a total of 2682 posts under the hashtag.

Regrettably, it has come to our attention that 302 posts were interacted with and have been identified as disseminating disinformation under the hashtag #lozanhezimettir, using the three specific allegations. These posts have reached a substantial number of 1,536,285 users, leading to the exposure of X users to disinformation, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. This total number of interactions is higher than if the users hadn't been involved in disinformation. Notably, a concerning 5.57% of the disinformation has affected a significant 53.99% of the users (see Figure 2). This analysis shows that the rapid pace of the nature of social networks is able to impact an enormous number of users. Even though the volume of disinformation is low, the impact of the is relatively high.

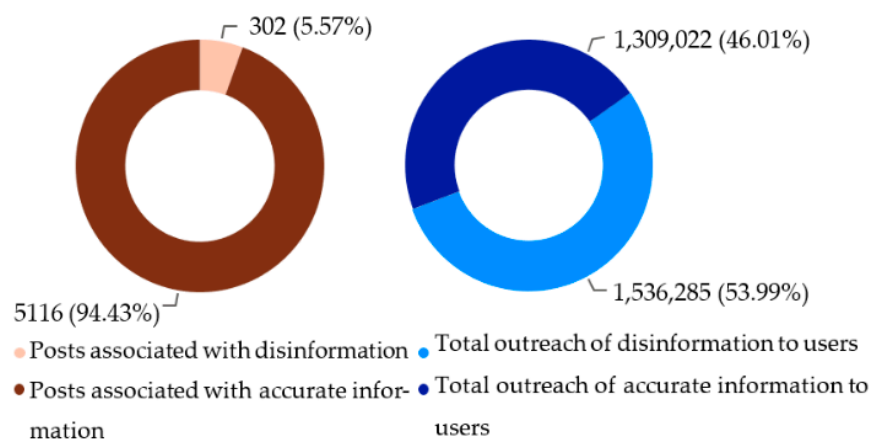


Figure 2. The volume of disinformation on X in the dataset under #lozanhezimettir.

9.2. #LozanDarbesi

The analysis of tweets using the hashtag #LozanDarbesi (Lausanne Coup) reveals significant insights into the dissemination of information on X. Between 25 July and 27 August 2017, a total of 377 original tweets, 810 retweets, and one quote were posted under this hashtag (see Table 6). These posts collectively reached an audience of 423,488 users, as calculated based on the number of followers of the accounts involved. This data underscores the potential reach and impact of social media campaigns, highlighting how quickly information—whether accurate or misleading—can spread across platforms like X. This rapid dissemination exemplifies the challenges of managing narratives in the digital age and emphasizes the importance of media literacy and critical engagement with online content to discern fact from fiction. In the context of controversial issues, internet users often engage in selective exposure by seeking information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs or desired viewpoints. The primary motivation is not the pursuit of objective truth, but rather the confirmation and reinforcement of their established perspectives.

Table 6. The number of interactions under #lozandarbesi.

Tweet Count	377
Retweet Count	810
Reply Count	7
Quote Count	1
Like Count	308
User Reached	423,488

Upon examining the content and discourse of the tweets, it was found that the majority of them conveyed hateful messages against the Lausanne Peace Treaty. Founded 34 tweets when the tweets under the hashtag were filtered using the keyword “2023” and examined the hashtag with the “2023” parameter using content analysis, it was observed that tweets emphasize the importance of 2023 as well as that the lost lands would be taken back and Islam (see Table 7). The number of users impacted by this disinformation was 126,369. In light of these findings, it was concluded that 34 of the tweets under the #LozanDarbesi hashtag were sources of disinformation. According to our analysis, 34 tweets that were posted were retweeted from a total of six different tweets. Therefore, none of the tweets are source tweets; they are all retweets. The most frequently retweeted tweet among these is still being spread from an account named @hanne12meryem, which claims that the lands allegedly lost on account of the Treaty of Lausanne in 2023 will be regained. The tweet reads as follows: “Deaf İsmet made a #LozanDarbesi (coup) in my country. . .! Despite all treacherous traitors, we will reclaim our lands. Everything will change in 2023” (X, 2017).

Table 7. The number of interactions regarding 2023 allegations under #lozandarbesi.

Tweet Count	34
Retweet Count	0
Reply Count	0
Quote Count	0
Like Count	0
User Reached	126,369

As a result, the analysis of the #LozanDarbesi hashtag on X revealed that the majority of tweets conveyed hateful messages against the Lausanne Peace Treaty. The interactions number 1503, including 377 tweets with 810 retweets, 308 likes, 7 replies, and one quote, reaching a total of 423,488 users. It was found that 34 tweets disseminated disinformation regarding the treaty, based on the third allegation.

These findings underscore the importance of heightened attention to monitoring and addressing disinformation on social media platforms. A notable 2.26% of the total tweets from the closed accounts were found to spread disinformation. These findings resonate with prior research that underscores the challenges posed by disinformation campaigns in the digital age (Grinberg et al., 2019; Vosoughi et al., 2018). While the hashtag had a reach of 423,488 individuals, disinformation was disseminated to 126,369 of them. Therefore, a concerning 29.84% were involved in disseminating disinformation either voluntarily or involuntarily. This statistic raises alarm about the efficacy of disinformation campaigns and the extent to which such campaigns can manipulate public discourse. According to our data analysis, 2.26% of disinformation impacted 29.84% of users (see Figure 3).

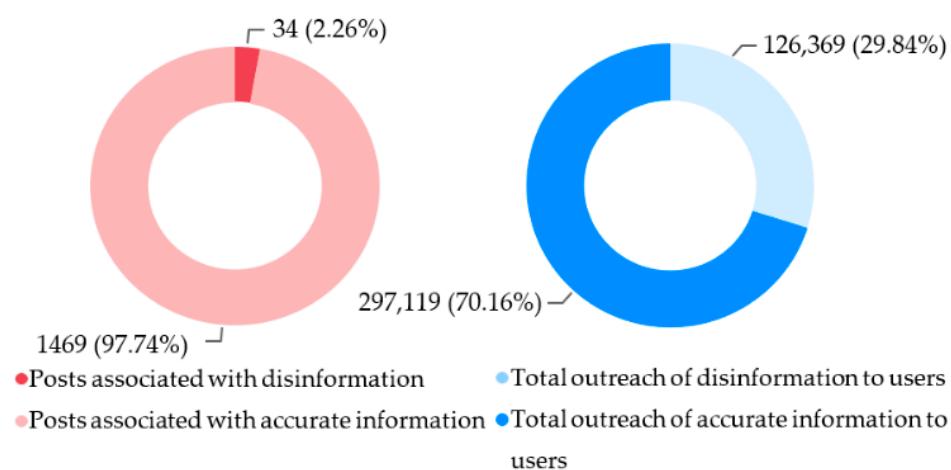


Figure 3. The volume of disinformation on X in the dataset under #lozandarbesi.

Upon investigation of the hashtag, no evidence was found to support the dissemination of disinformation about Türkiye being prohibited from mining its resources until the Lausanne treaty expires as well as Mosul being taken back in the treaty.

10. Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis of the two hashtags related to the Lausanne Peace Treaty provides a valuable insight into the prevalence of disinformation and hate speech on social media platforms. The hypodermic needle model, which suggests that media messages are directly injected into the minds of the audience without any critical thinking, is evident in these findings. However, it is important to note that the participatory culture of social media also plays a crucial role. This culture, where users actively create and share content, is linked to other accounts, with individuals themselves serving as reference points. This interconnection creates a diverse ownership of the various narratives and is significantly impacted by perception management. Understanding this dynamic is essential for developing effective strategies to combat the spread of disinformation online. Therefore, it is important to examine the details of the findings and explore the implications of these in greater depth. The dissemination of disinformation and hateful messages regarding the Treaty of Lausanne has the potential to shape the narrative surrounding the issue. It is essential to enhance awareness and implement effective measures to identify and address

disinformation on social media platforms, as it can have significant implications for social and political issues.

The findings from the analysis of the hashtags #LozanHezimettir and #LozanDarbesi reveal significant insights into the spread of disinformation and its impact on public perception. The hashtag #LozanHezimettir was used in 884 tweets by 7340 accounts, reaching an estimated 2,845,307 users. Among these, 68 tweets, 125 retweets, two replies, one quote, and 106 likes disseminated disinformation, impacting 1,536,285 users. Similarly, the hashtag #LozanDarbesi appeared in 377 original tweets, reaching 423,488 users, with 34 tweets spreading disinformation to 126,369 users. The disinformation under these hashtags primarily revolved around three main claims: the Lausanne treaty ending in 2023, Türkiye being restricted from mining until the treaty's expiration, and Mosul becoming part of Türkiye after 100 years. These claims were strategically designed to evoke strong nationalist sentiments and manipulate public perception.

The hypodermic needle theory can be applied to understand the impact of these disinformation campaigns. The rapid spread and significant reach of disinformation under the hashtags #LozanHezimettir and #LozanDarbesi illustrate how false narratives can be quickly disseminated to a large audience, influencing their perceptions. The theory posits that the audience is passive and susceptible to the media's influence, which aligns with the observed phenomena where a small number of disinformation tweets had a disproportionately large impact on the audience. For instance, the claim that the Lausanne treaty would end in 2023 was first posted on 30 September 2016 and reached 265,200 users. This demonstrates how a single piece of disinformation can be rapidly propagated, shaping the perceptions of a large audience. The hypodermic needle theory helps explain how these false narratives are "injected" into the public discourse, leading to widespread belief in disinformation.

Cultivation Theory, which suggests that long-term exposure to media content shapes an individual's perceptions of reality, is also relevant in this context. The repeated exposure to disinformation under the hashtags #LozanHezimettir and #LozanDarbesi can cultivate a distorted perception of the Lausanne treaty among the X users. The theory posits that continuous exposure to certain media messages can lead to the gradual shaping of beliefs and attitudes. The data shows that disinformation tweets were repeatedly retweeted and liked, indicating continuous exposure to these false narratives. For example, the claim that Türkiye's mining activities are restricted until the treaty's expiration was disseminated to 254,625 users through repeated tweets and retweets. This repeated exposure can lead to the cultivation of a belief that these false claims are true, influencing public perception over time.

The strategic use of disinformation under these hashtags serves as a tool for perception management. By spreading false narratives about the Lausanne treaty, the disinformation campaigns aim to shape public opinion and foster nationalist sentiments. This aligns with the broader goal of perception management, which involves influencing how people perceive and interpret information. The analysis reveals that a small percentage of disinformation tweets had a significant impact on the audience. For instance, 5.57% of the disinformation under #LozanHezimettir reached 53.99% of the users exposed to the hashtag. This illustrates the effectiveness of disinformation campaigns in managing public perception and highlights the challenges in combating false information on social media platforms.

Our findings underscore the importance of media literacy and responsible sharing in combating disinformation. The significant reach and impact of disinformation under the hashtags #LozanHezimettir and #LozanDarbesi highlight the need for increased vigilance and critical thinking among social media users. Educating the public about the tactics

used in disinformation campaigns and promoting responsible sharing practices can help mitigate the spread of disinformation.

The analysis of the hashtags #LozanHezimettir and #LozanDarbesi provides an understanding into the dynamics of disinformation and perception management on social media. The findings reveal that a small number of disinformation tweets can have a disproportionately large impact on public perception, illustrating the power of social media in shaping public discourse. The application of the hypodermic needle theory and Cultivation Theory helps explain the observed phenomena, highlighting the direct influence of disinformation on the audience and the gradual shaping of beliefs through repeated exposure. These theories provide a framework for understanding how disinformation campaigns can effectively manage public perception and foster nationalist sentiments.

The disinformation campaign surrounding the Treaty of Lausanne does not merely spread false facts; it systematically constructs and reinforces rival realities, actively pulling users into opposing camps. This process is driven by two powerful behavioural engines, as explained by Cultivation Theory and the Hypodermic Needle Model. First, the sheer repetition of hashtags like #LozanHezimettir and #LozanDarbesi over a long period (2009–2020) works like a drip-feed. Each exposure subtly normalizes the embedded narrative—whether of national betrayal or triumph—gradually cultivating it as a “common sense” truth within specific echo chambers. Users are not just seeing a claim; they are being slowly acclimated to a worldview.

Second, this content is engineered for high emotional engagement. By analyzing tweets with the highest calculated engagement scores, we see that the most successful disinformation employs potent language, us-versus-them framing, and appeals to identity. This triggers instinctual responses—outrage, pride, defensiveness—which bypass critical scrutiny. When users retweet or reply, often from accounts with high follower counts, they are not just sharing information; they are performing allegiance to their “side,” signalling their belonging to a community defined by this narrative.

The temporal analysis, revealing coordinated bursts of activity, acts as a social cue. When users see a hashtag suddenly trending, it creates a bandwagon effect and a sense of urgency, pressuring them to engage quickly and align publicly. This transforms abstract historical debate into a live, tribal conflict. The qualitative analysis confirms this, showing how recurring narratives frame the treaty not as a complex historical event, but as a clear-cut symbol of victory or humiliation. This binary framing leaves no room for nuance.

The polarization occurs because the disinformation ecosystem rewards users for adopting and defending a simplified, emotionally charged position. It offers social validation within an in-group while painting the other side as not just wrong but morally or patriotically deficient. The slow cultivation of an alternative reality, combined with the hypodermic injection of high-emotion, identity-based content, effectively rewires the social discourse. It moves users from being passive consumers of information to becoming active participants in a polarized conflict, where their engagement deepens the divides of the disinformation originally created.

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