Losing Territorial Sovereignty and Resource Access: Computational Text Evidence from Turkiye

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Abstract

This article investigates the sources of elite perceptions of territorial sovereignty and resource access in maritime disputes. I argue that three types of adversary-initiated events—bilateral maritime boundary agreements, offshore licensing, and resource discoveries—alter the perceived maritime status quo and heighten domestic concerns over losing sovereign rights and future resource access. I use novel data from 912 Turkish parliamentary speeches (1996–2024) and apply a set of computational text-analysis methods to measure sovereignty- and resource-related rhetoric. I then link these measures to original event-level data from the Eastern Mediterranean to identify how rival actions reshape elite assessments. The results show that offshore licensing produces large bipartisan increases in sovereignty rhetoric, while confirmed discoveries further fuel concerns over territorial sovereignty and resource access. Maritime boundary agreements activate the most securitized form of sovereignty rhetoric, which strongly predicts subsequent involvement in militarized interstate disputes. These findings clarify how external shifts place ruling and opposition actors in a shared domain of losses and generate domestic pressures for escalation.

Introduction

What drives elite perceptions of losing territorial sovereignty and resource access in maritime disputes? Territory lies at the heart of much of international conflict, yet contemporary disputes increasingly center on the sea rather than land (Hensel et al., 2008; Mitchell, 2020; LaSpisa, 2025). From the South China Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean and the Arctic, states contest maritime boundaries whose legal status remains unsettled and whose economic and strategic value continues to grow. A pressing concern, then, is to understand when and why competing maritime claims escalate into militarized confrontations. This paper examines how political elites interpret shifts in the maritime status quo to explain the domestic microfoundations through which territorial disputes escalate into militarized inter-state disputes (MIDs).

Although territorial control has become less profitable on land and is constrained by post–WWII norms of territorial integrity (Gartzke, 2007; Zacher, 2001; Coe and Markowitz, 2021; Altman, 2020), maritime disputes have risen substantially in the same period (Hensel et al., 2008; Mitchell, 2020; LaSpisa, 2025). Disputed maritime areas are often suspected of containing oil and natural gas reserves, and thus elevate the salience of the dispute to states (Owsiak and Mitchell, 2019; Mitchell, 2020). Indeed, since offshore resource extraction technologies became available, the rate at which states militarize maritime disputes has significantly increased (Nyman, 2015). At the same time, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) creates legal ambiguity over maritime boundaries by allowing states to advance overlapping exclusive economic zone claims (Yüksel, 2024). This ambiguity weakens the constraining effect of territorial integrity norms at sea (Glaser, 2013; LaSpisa and Mitchell, 2025) and produces an environment in which states interpret rival advances as potential territorial losses that threaten access to offshore resource potential.

While a substantial body of research links natural resources to the onset and militariza-

tion of territorial disputes (Hensel et al., 2008; Colgan, 2013; Mitchell, 2020; Lee and Mitchell, 2019; Yüksel, 2024; LaSpisa, 2025), we know far less about domestic micro-foundations of military escalation over contested maritime areas. Recent research suggests that leaders are constrained while claiming resource-rich territory because opposition parties expect unequal distribution of benefits from resource extraction and make it difficult to justify the integrity of territorial claims (Lee, 2024*a*,*b*). However, it is unclear whether the political cost of opposing the underlying claim outweighs the political benefits of parochial interest accusations, especially when sovereignty and resource access are threatened by other disputants.

I argue that three types of adversary-initiated events trigger bipartisan concerns over territorial sovereignty and resource access by leading to de facto changes in the existing maritime status quo. First, bilateral maritime boundary agreements between other disputant states can redefine the maritime status quo by formalizing a boundary that excludes a rival claimant. Such exclusion signals a shift in the prevailing maritime order and is interpreted by the excluded state as a direct threat to its sovereign rights and future access to natural resources. Second, offshore licensing rounds initiated by adversaries shift the maritime status quo by authorizing foreign firms to survey, drill, or explore resources in contested zones and internationalize the dispute by embedding multinational corporate interests and the political backing of their home governments. These fuel domestic concerns over losing territorial sovereignty and resource access. Third, confirmed offshore discoveries near contested areas heighten both sovereignty and resource-access anxieties by increasing the commercial value of adjacent maritime zones and encouraging foreign firms to pursue future exploration rounds despite geopolitical risk. Such discoveries signal long-term extraction potential and raise concerns that early investment will shape future transit infrastructure and permanently erode the excluded state's sovereign claims. Finally, adversary-initiated changes to the territorial status quo make it politically costly for opposition parties to challenge the government's underlying territorial claim. Instead, opposition actors have stronger

incentives to signal resolve by defending sovereign rights while shifting criticism toward the government's inability to sufficiently safeguard territorial sovereignty.

To evaluate these expectations, I assembled a novel dataset of Turkish parliamentary speeches delivered between 1996 and 2024 that directly address maritime disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean. Using keyword-based retrieval followed by qualitative validation, I identify 912 speeches, which I link to novel annual data on maritime boundary agreements, offshore licensing rounds, offshore resource discoveries, and militarized interstate disputes in the region. I detect elite perceptions using a combination of multilingual FastText embeddings and a semi-supervised dynamic keyATM model. The embeddings show that terms associated with territorial sovereignty and energy access consistently co-locate, indicating that parliamentary rhetoric blends these themes rather than treating them as separate issues. The dynamic topic model recovers three interpretable topics—sovereignty, resources, and Blue Homeland[1]. I then use topic proportions as my dependent variables in subsequent statistical analyses.

The empirical results provide support for my theoretical propositions. Offshore licensing by rival states produces bipartisan increases in sovereignty rhetoric among both government and opposition elites. Second, discoveries made by rivals near contested areas further increase sovereignty and resource-access rhetoric. Third, maritime boundary agreements do not significantly affect sovereignty or resource topics, but cause a statistically significant increase in Blue Homeland rhetoric, suggesting that delimitation agreements activate the most securitized strand of domestic rhetoric. Finally, I show that increases in Blue Homeland rhetoric increase the likelihood of MIDs involving Turkey by around 30 percentage points. These findings shed new light on how adversary-initiated shifts to the territorial status quo fuel bipartisan domestic concerns over territorial sovereignty and resource access.

[1]Blue Homeland (Mavi Vatan) is a naval doctrine developed by Turkish maritime strategists that frames large parts of the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Seas as integral to Turkey's sovereign homeland, thereby securitizing maritime disputes and justifying forward-leaning naval postures.

This article makes two important contributions to research on territorial dispute escalation. First, it provides the first large-N computational text analysis of elite rhetoric in this context, offering systematic evidence on how adversary-initiated changes to the maritime status quo shape domestic perceptions of territorial sovereignty and future resource access. By doing so, I elucidate one of the first microfoundational accounts of militarization in maritime disputes and complement/extend existing observational work linking natural resources to claim onset and militarization (Hensel et al., 2008; Nyman, 2015; Mitchell, 2020; Yüksel, 2024; LaSpisa, 2025).

Second, the results contribute to debates on when external threats produce domestic unity (Kobayashi and Katagiri, 2018; Myrick, 2021; Carothers, 2023; Yeung and Xu, 2025) and, more broadly, to research on the role of domestic opposition in signaling resolve during international crises (Fearon, 1994; Schultz, 2001; Weeks, 2008; Shea, Teo and Levy, 2014). While recent scholarship argues that leaders may avoid advancing claims over resource-rich territories because opposition parties expect unequal distributional gains (Lee, 2024*a*,*b*), my findings show very limited partisan heterogeneity. Instead, these shifts generate bipartisan concerns, with opposition parties rarely contesting the underlying integrity of the claim. Opposition elites find it politically more beneficial to criticize the government's failure to protect sovereign rights. These suggest that external threats can reduce partisan fragmentation even in polarized environments and narrow the bargaining range in inter-state disputes by raising the domestic political costs of diplomatic compromise.

This article proceeds as follows. In the second chapter, I discuss the literature on the rising prevalence of maritime disputes. I then elaborate on my theoretical propositions. The third chapter discusses data collection and research design. The fourth chapter highlights empirical strategy and results. The final chapter finishes with a concluding discussion of broader implications.

Literature Review and Background

Since the late 20th century, the frequency of territorial wars has consistently declined. This decline is attributed to two main factors: the reduced profitability of territorial conquest and the emergence of territorial integrity norms. First, some scholars argue that incentives for territorial conquest have waned as the economic gains from coercive rent extraction have diminished, a process influenced by factors such as nationalism, capital flight, and free trade (Kaysen, 1990; Rosecrance, 1999; Gartzke, 2007; Gartzke and Hewitt, 2010). Nevertheless, this argument does not fully explain why states may refrain from capturing resource-rich territories. While some contend that energy-importing states may find it profitable to seize such areas (Coe and Markowitz, 2021), others have found that states dependent on energy export revenue are more likely to adopt assertive strategies to capture resource-rich territories (Markowitz, 2020; Markowitz et al., 2020; Markowitz, 2023).

Second, the emergence of the territorial integrity norm in the international system has constrained states' ability to claim new territories. This norm evolved under U.S. leadership following World War II and was endorsed by international organizations such as the UN. In the aftermath of two devastating global conflicts and with the looming threat of nuclear war, there was widespread recognition that territorial disputes significantly increased the risk of major conflicts. The norm reduces territorial aggression by fostering both a fear of international retaliation and a moral obligation among nations to respect established borders (Zacher, 2001; Hensel, Allison and Khanani, 2009; Altman, 2020). However, Altman (2020) recently found that the territorial integrity norm did not eliminate territorial conquest altogether but rather altered its form, with challenger states increasingly targeting small, sparsely populated territories lacking defensive military garrisons.

Maritime disputes have become increasingly prevalent in the post-1945 era despite the broader trends indicating a decline in the profitability of territorial conquest and the emer-

gence of territorial integrity norms designed to constrain aggression (Hensel et al., 2008; Nemeth et al., 2014; Mitchell, 2020; Yüksel, 2024; LaSpisa, 2025). Figure 1 displays the number of active maritime boundary disputes and new offshore resource discoveries by region. First, many contested offshore areas contain substantial reserves of economically critical resources, notably oil and natural gas, which can significantly increase the economic profitability associated with capturing maritime territories and increase the tangible salience of maritime claims (Owsiak and Mitchell, 2019; Mitchell, 2020; LaSpisa, 2025). Indeed, Nyman (2015) demonstrates that developments in offshore resource extraction technologies have systematically increased the frequency with which states militarize maritime disputes. Figure 2 further illustrates the geospatial evolution of offshore resource discoveries over the last century by resource type.

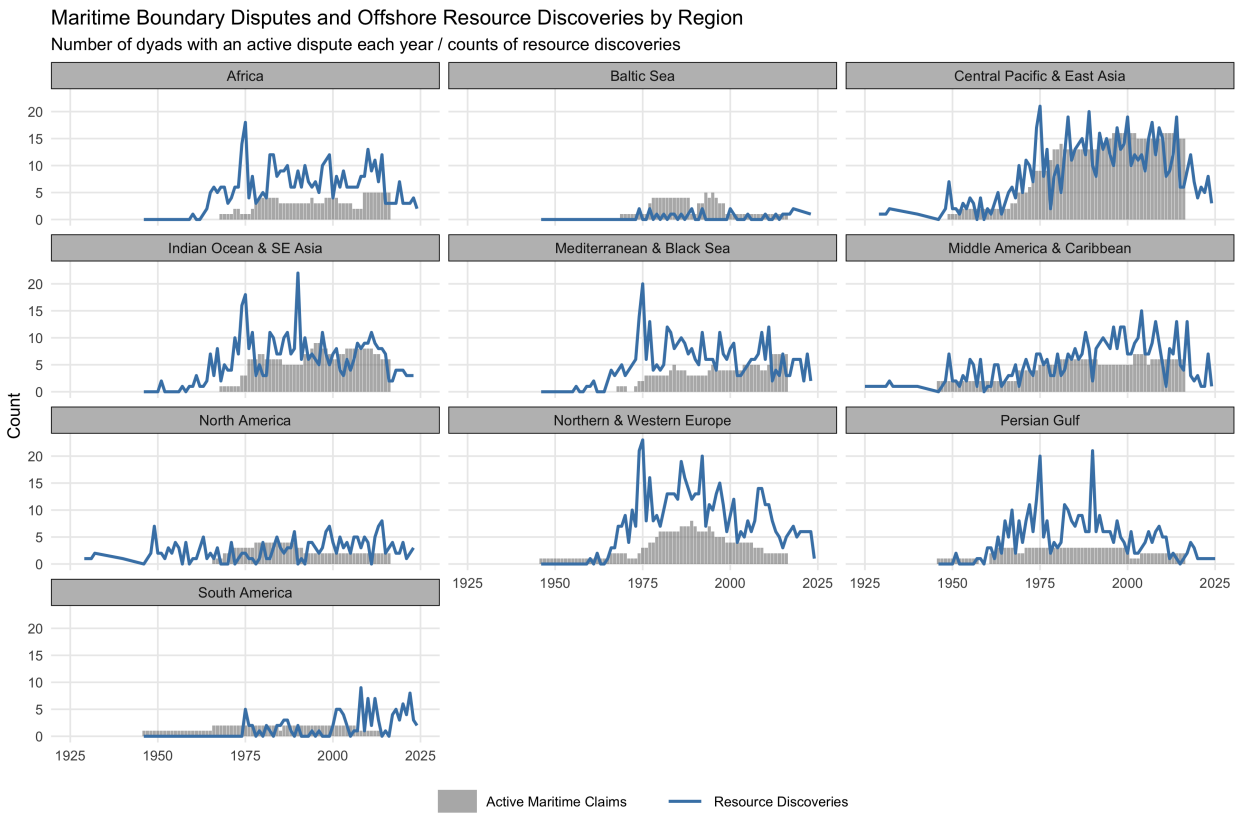

Figure 1: Created using data from the Maritime Boundary Making Dataset (Yüksel, 2024) and GEM Oil and Gas Tracker Dataset

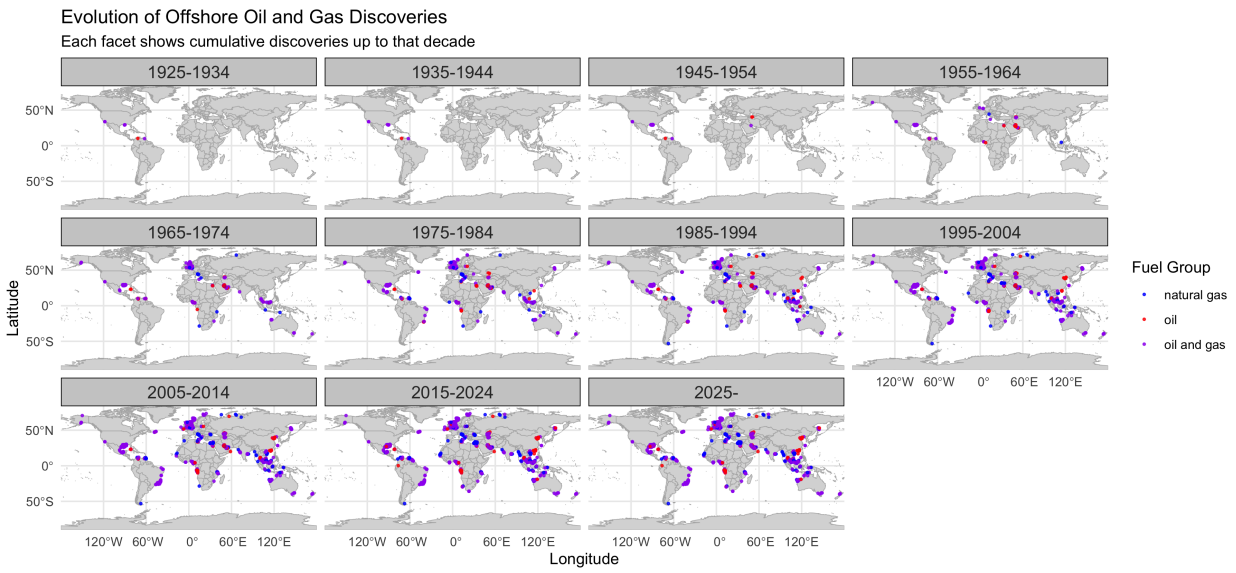

Figure 2: Hundred Years of Offshore Energy Discoveries: Created using the GEM Oil and Gas Tracker Dataset

Second, territorial integrity norms are looser in maritime disputes compared to disputes over land territories (Shaffer, 2011; Glaser, 2013; Yüksel, 2024; LaSpisa and Mitchell, 2025). This is because maritime disputes typically involve competing sovereignty claims over areas where territorial boundaries have not yet been clearly defined or legally settled. On land, clearly demarcated borders, combined with international recognition and enforcement mechanisms, significantly raise the normative and diplomatic costs associated with territorial aggression. In contrast, maritime boundaries often remain ambiguous and subject to divergent interpretations under international law, particularly within the framework provided by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Although UNCLOS establishes general guidelines, such as granting states' rights over Exclusive Economic Zones

(EEZs) extending up to 200 nautical miles, it leaves considerable room for conflicting claims, especially in areas with overlapping jurisdictions or disputed island sovereignty (Nemeth et al., 2014; Østhagen, 2020; Yüksel, 2024). Consequently, the inherent legal uncertainty surrounding maritime borders lowers the normative barriers against unilateral state behavior, weakening the constraining influence of territorial integrity norms in maritime disputes.

This legal uncertainty over ownership has important implications for whether states assess maritime disputes as potential territorial gains or losses. According to prospect theory, as articulated by Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 1982), decision-makers evaluate outcomes relative to a reference point and are particularly sensitive to losses, often weighing the pain of a loss more heavily than the benefit of an equivalent gain. For example, consider a student aiming to achieve a grade of 90 on an exam. In this case, the student's reference point is the target score of 90; receiving any score above 90 will be viewed as a gain, whereas any score below 90 will be perceived as a loss. This shows that if the point of reference shifts, individuals' preferences may also change, even when the underlying facts and probabilities remain constant.

Scholars have previously applied prospect theoretic logic to understand the escalation of territorial disputes (Levy, 1996, 2000; Levy and Thompson, 2011; Butler, 2007; Braniff, 2018; Zhou, Goemans and Weintraub, 2025). This logic suggests that states are more inclined to take risks to avoid territorial losses than to achieve equivalent territorial gains. In other words, a state may be more likely to go to war to prevent losing territory than it would be to acquire new territory with similar value (Levy, 2000; Levy and Thompson, 2011). In maritime disputes, prospect theoretic logic implies that conflict escalation may be driven more by the defensive reaction to avoid perceived territorial losses than by the offensive desire for territorial expansion.

In territorial disputes, reference points are essential benchmarks defining what constitutes a territorial gain or loss. States could base their reference points on genuine or aspirational

levels. It is often difficult to pinpoint genuine reference points as territorial bargaining unfolds in a highly strategic environment in which states are motivated to influence the reference points of adversaries and frame any concessions they might make as incurring unacceptable losses while portraying any compromises by their adversaries as merely foregone gains (Levy, 2000; Butler, 2007). Gur (2025) argues that governments strategically frame maritime disputes as potential territorial losses and simultaneously deploy energy security narratives to gather public support, constrain domestic opposition, and signal stronger resolve to adversaries in territorial disputes. By portraying concessions as significant losses, leaders tie their hands domestically to shift the adversary's reference point.

On the other hand, the existing status quo often serves as a reference point in territorial disputes. For instance, in maritime disputes, where boundaries often remain undelimited, the prevailing status quo typically functions as the default reference point. Under such circumstances, any unilateral geopolitical maneuver by an adversary that shifts this status quo is perceived as a loss, prompting states to respond aggressively to prevent de facto territorial changes. While existing research on prospect-theoretic applications in international relations has examined the consequences of loss framing, there is little research on the sources of elite perceptions of territorial sovereignty loss and resource access.

Theory: Adversary-initiated Events that Fuel Domestic Anxiety

Whether a state perceives itself to be in the domain of potential territorial losses or gains may depend on decisions taken by adversaries in maritime disputes. I argue that three types of geopolitical moves can trigger elite perceptions of loss of territorial sovereignty and resource access: (1) bilateral maritime boundary agreements, (2) offshore licensing, and (3) the discovery of energy resources. Each of these events can shift the perceived status quo,

either by formalizing control over contested maritime territory or by altering expectations about the value and future accessibility of resources in disputed areas.

Maritime Boundary Agreements

Maritime disputes are characterized by legal uncertainty over ownership, and states often attempt to manage this uncertainty through bilateral negotiations and delimitation agreements (Yüksel, 2024). Previous work shows that Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) declarations and boundary agreements can encourage negotiations by clarifying ambiguous claims and creating focal points for settlement (Nemeth et al., 2014). At the same time, such agreements frequently provoke diplomatic backlash from excluded states that maintain overlapping maritime claims. When two states formalize a maritime boundary that disregards a third party's claims, the excluded state may perceive the agreement as a direct threat to its territorial sovereignty and its future access to offshore resources.

A key reason is that boundary agreements differ qualitatively from other forms of maritime activity. While offshore licensing and exploratory drilling can often be delayed, disrupted, or blocked by coercion, delimitation agreements reduce the reversibility of the territorial status quo by establishing formal legal claims that shape future negotiations and arbitration processes. Even when contested, such agreements can anchor expectations about rightful ownership, invite third-party recognition, and shift the baseline for subsequent diplomatic bargaining. As a result, excluded states may interpret boundary agreements less as marginal setbacks and more as long-term threats to the territorial order governing disputed maritime space.

For example, Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia have long-standing disputes over the offshore gas fields known as Dorra (Arash) in the Persian Gulf. These disputes date back to the 1960s, when Iran awarded offshore exploration rights to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, while Kuwait granted similar rights to Royal Dutch Shell, resulting in overlapping claims in

the northern part of the field. The issue was reignited in 2001 when Iran initiated unilateral drilling activities in the field, prompting Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to formalize a maritime boundary agreement that included provisions for the joint development of offshore resources (Forbes, 2005). Diplomatic tensions further escalated in 2022 when Saudi Arabia and Kuwait signed a memorandum of understanding for joint resource exploration. In response, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh declared the agreement illegal and emphasized that Iran reserves the sovereign right to exploit and invest in disputed maritime zones. This case illustrates how bilateral agreements that exclude claimants can escalate diplomatic tensions and reinforce perceptions of sovereignty erosion (Al Jazeera, N.d.; Hrioua, 2023).

Another example is the 2019 maritime boundary agreement signed between Turkey and Libya's Government of National Accord, which delineated Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) across contested areas of the Eastern Mediterranean. The agreement disregarded the claims of Greece, prompting diplomatic backlash. The European Union condemned the deal and responded by imposing sanctions on individuals and entities involved in Turkey's subsequent drilling activities in disputed maritime zones (Council of the EU, 2024). In 2020, Greece and Egypt responded with their own bilateral delimitation agreements that disregard the Turkey-Libya deal. These have resulted in instances of threat of war and instances of military brinkmanship that resulted in the collision of Turkish and Greek navy vessels. This logic leads to my first hypothesis:

H1 (Boundary Agreement): When a foreign adversary signs a bilateral maritime boundary agreement that excludes other claimants, it will increase domestic elite rhetoric emphasizing threats to both territorial sovereignty and future resource access.

Offshore Licensing for Resource Exploration

Second, states may unilaterally declare EEZs to initiate offshore resource exploration, particularly when they possess the technological and administrative capacity to do so. However, exploration and development involve substantial financial and technical demands that many states cannot meet independently (Nyman, 2015). As a result, states frequently open international licensing rounds to attract investment from multinational energy firms to explore and develop offshore resource fields. These decisions can heighten perceptions of territorial sovereignty loss and fears over diminished access to future resource flows. I argue that offshore licensing escalates sovereignty anxiety among excluded states through two mechanisms.

First, offshore licensing constitutes a direct challenge to traditional notions of territorial sovereignty by establishing legal and operational frameworks for seismic exploration, drilling, and resource extraction in contested maritime zones. By licensing foreign or state-owned firms, states assert control over disputed areas and effectively initiate de facto changes to the territorial status quo by formalizing previously abstract claims. For other claimant states, such actions fuel anxieties about losing territorial sovereignty and future access to resources, thereby increasing the level of risk that leaders and the public are willing to accept to prevent these losses. In response, states often pursue a range of coercive strategies—from diplomatic protests to military escalation—to disrupt offshore exploration activities in contested maritime zones.

In 2014, China's deployment of the HYSY-981 exploratory oil rig in disputed waters near the Paracel Islands triggered a military escalation with Vietnam, which responded by deploying law enforcement vessels. China further escalated with a fleet of approximately 130 vessels, including coast guard and naval ships, declaring the rig a "mobile national territory." Despite this show of force, Vietnam maintained its presence, leading to several clashes and widespread anti-China protests in Vietnam. Although China eventually withdrew the rig one month earlier than planned, many observers attributed this to Vietnam's clear signaling

of its risk acceptance to defend its territorial sovereignty (Green et al., 2017, pp. 201–223). A similar escalation occurred in 2000 when Suriname used military force to remove a Canadian drilling rig licensed by Guyana from contested waters, leading to an international crisis. Guyana asserted its right to develop offshore resources, while Suriname claimed territorial violation. The dispute halted development for years until international arbitration ruled in favor of Guyana, declaring Suriname's use of force unlawful (Foek, 2005; Reuters, 2007). These cases illustrate how offshore licensing and exploration can trigger sovereignty anxiety, prompting states to use military force to prevent changes to the territorial status quo.

Second, offshore licensing internationalizes disputes by introducing third-party actors, namely, multinational energy firms and, by extension, their home governments, into what were previously dyadic conflicts. These firms, once granted exploration rights, often begin seismic surveying or exploratory drilling that operationalize the claim and entrench foreign economic interests in the disputed zone. Because many of these firms are headquartered in powerful states, their presence can trigger diplomatic entanglements that complicate the dispute's resolution. For example, the United States initially maintained a neutral stance on maritime disputes between Turkey and Cyprus. However, this posture began to shift following the involvement of U.S.-based energy firms in Cyprus's offshore licensing blocks, such as Noble Energy's (later acquired by Chevron) discovery of the Aphrodite gas field in 2011, and, later in 2017, ExxonMobil's acquisition of an exploration license for concession Block 10. U.S. foreign policy grew more aligned with the emerging Cyprus–Greece–Israel energy partnership. In 2019, during a visit to Greece, U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo stated, "We've made clear that operations in international waters are governed by a set of rules. We've told the Turks that illegal drilling is unacceptable, and we'll continue to take diplomatic actions to ... ensure that lawful activity takes place." (Reuters, 2019).

For excluded states, this dynamic reduces their bargaining leverage by altering both the legal and political context of the dispute. It becomes more difficult to negotiate directly or

bilaterally when the dispute is no longer limited to two national governments but now implicates corporate interests, international legal frameworks governing investment protection, and the foreign policy calculations of third-party states. This embedded web of economic and geopolitical interests further reinforces perceptions of marginalization and long-term loss of territorial control. As a result, excluded states may view such developments not only as threats to their territorial sovereignty but also as structural shifts in power that limit their ability to influence future resource access or regional order. I consider these dynamics in my second hypothesis:

H2 (Offshore Licensing): When a foreign adversary initiates offshore licensing in contested waters, it will increase domestic elite rhetoric emphasizing threats to both territorial sovereignty and future resource access.

Discovery of Resources

Third, the discovery of offshore oil and gas reserves in or near contested maritime zones heightens both sovereignty-related and resource-access anxieties among rival claimants. First, discoveries strengthen the discovering state's de facto control over nearby maritime areas, shifting bargaining power even when the find lies just outside the immediate contested coordinates. Early operational activity, geological continuity, and the prospect of follow-on exploration create a material foothold that rivals interpret as an emerging form of ownership. Because confirmed discoveries often attract additional foreign partners and increase commercial appetite for new offshore licensing rounds, elites in neighboring states anticipate that extraction activity may diffuse toward the contested zone, improving the discovering state's bargaining positions and thus fueling fears of permanent territorial loss.

Second, discoveries amplify energy access–related anxieties by raising the expected economic value of adjacent maritime areas and reshaping expectations about future export and

transit infrastructure. Proven reserves, unlike untested prospects, signal commercial viability and elevate the perceived long-term costs of exclusion from future production, pipelines, and offshore transport routes. As LaSpisa (2025) shows, discoveries—not production—are the strongest predictors of new maritime claim initiation precisely because the discovery phase generates heightened uncertainty over the extent and direction of future extraction. This uncertainty increases incentives for rival states to assert or expand their own claims to avoid being sidelined from eventual resource development.

The underlying logic is not only about securing known reserves but also about preempting the loss of future resources and the sovereignty over maritime areas where they might be found. Discoveries reshape expectations about how extraction may extend across geologically connected basins, prompting rivals to accelerate licensing efforts, revive dormant claims, or issue diplomatic protests. For example, ExxonMobil's 2015 discovery in Guyana's Stabroek Block led Venezuela to declare the drilling illegal, expand its maritime claims, and threaten foreign firms operating in the area. Tensions escalated further in 2023 when a Venezuelan naval vessel entered Guyanese waters near active production sites, prompting Guyana to lodge a formal protest and rally international support (Al Jazeera, 2013; AP News, 2023).

H3 (Resource Discovery): When offshore energy resources are discovered near contested areas, it will increase domestic elite rhetoric emphasizing threats to both territorial sovereignty and future resource access.

Domestic Politics of Resource-Rich Territory

While states may differ internally in their partisan politics, the perception of territorial sovereignty loss or exclusion from resource access can generate bipartisan convergence among the elites, particularly when the triggering event originates from a foreign adversary. Putnam's seminal work argues that international bargaining is best understood as two-level

games, where leaders must simultaneously navigate foreign adversaries and domestic constituents (Putnam, 1988). The stance of domestic political opposition in international disputes can help signal a stronger resolve (Fearon, 1994, 1997; Schultz, 1998, 2001; Weeks, 2008; Snyder and Borghard, 2011) and at the same time constrain executive ability to conduct foreign policy when opposition can block and limit political gains from war (Shea, Teo and Levy, 2014; Levy and Mabe, 2004). The literature on the "rally-round-the-flag" effect shows that external threats can produce domestic unity, with public support for incumbents increasing under foreign threat (Mueller, 1970; Brody, 1991). However, the magnitude of the rally effect may be contingent upon several factors, such as bipartisan support (Baker and Oneal, 2001; Gowa, 1998; Schwartz and Tierney, 2025), and trust in the government (Hetherington and Nelson, 2003).

Recent work suggests that the unifying impact of external threats is not automatic. Studies emphasize that partisan divisions can persist even under external threat, especially in polarized political environments. Myrick (2021) finds that responses to foreign threats are often filtered through partisan lenses, with elite polarization transforming shared threats into divisive issues. When external threats are framed with partisan cues or interpreted through existing political cleavages, they may deepen rather than reduce polarization. This dynamic is further conditioned by elite distrust, domestic identity divisions, and political ideology. For instance, Carothers (2023) shows that domestic identity divides can prevent unity even under severe external threats, as seen in Taiwan's divided response to Chinese pressure, while South Korea's lack of such identity rifts enabled bipartisan convergence against Chinese sanctions. Kobayashi and Katagiri (2018) demonstrate that in Japan-China territorial disputes, the rally effect did not occur universally but was instead driven by the "reactive liberal" effect—liberals, rather than conservatives, became more supportive of the conservative leader under perceived threat. Finally, Yeung and Xu (2025) shows that in the United States, bipartisan recognition of the China threat increased support for

hawkish foreign policy preferences among both Democrats and Republicans, but did not reduce affective polarization.

Moreover, the domestic distribution of benefits associated with territorial claims can further complicate elite convergence. Some research suggests that governments may refrain from advancing claims over resource-rich territory when the opposition expects an unequal domestic distribution of resource benefits, which can constrain elite consensus and make it difficult for leaders to sustain such claims (Lee, 2024*a*,*b*). However, other studies find that governments can strategically use territorial loss and energy security frames to mobilize public support for the use of force in disputes over resource-rich areas (Gur, 2025). These findings indicate that the impact of external threats on domestic unity is highly conditional, shaped by elite cues, identity divides, ideological predispositions, and the framing of the threat.

In territorial disputes, the political cost of opposing a government's territorial claim can outweigh the benefits of emphasizing potential distributional inequalities, particularly when the dispute involves a rival state or unfolds in a polarized political environment. My argument is straightforward: in disputes centered on core national security issues—such as territorial sovereignty and energy access—adversarial actions that visibly alter the perceived territorial status quo are likely to generate bipartisan elite anxiety. When sovereignty or access to natural resources is perceived to be under threat—whether through offshore licensing, boundary agreements, or resource discoveries—opposition parties may find it politically costly to directly challenge the government's claim. Instead, they are more likely to converge around the defense of national sovereignty, positioning themselves as protectors of national interests rather than undermining the government's bargaining position. Rather than disputing the country's territorial claim itself, opposition parties have greater incentives to shift their criticism toward the government's diplomatic failures or inability to effectively protect territorial rights. More formally, to test this argument, I formulate my fourth hypothesis:

H4 (Bipartisan Alingment): When foreign adversaries induce de facto shifts to the maritime status quo, they will not produce heterogeneous partisan responses; instead, such events will generate similar domestic elite rhetoric across ruling and opposition parties.

Research Design

Case Selection: Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean

The Eastern Mediterranean is a semi-enclosed sea that includes several coastal states, such as Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, and Syria. There are several maritime disputes in which states make overlapping claims. Turkey in the EastMed presents a clear temporal variation to examine how de facto shifts to the maritime status quo lead to securitized rhetoric on sovereignty and resource access, and how this rhetoric is associated with the subsequent militarization of maritime disputes. Since the early 2000s, regional actors such as Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, and Greece have moved to bilaterally delimit exclusive economic zones (EEZs), launch offshore licensing rounds, and discover substantial gas deposits. In response, Turkey has issued diplomatic protests, advanced its own claims anchored in the "Blue Homeland" doctrine, initiated unilateral exploration, and signed its own continental shelf agreements with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Libya that are contested by Greece and Cyprus. These disputes between Turkey-Cyprus and Turkey-Greece have escalated into several instances of threat to use force, show of force, and naval brinkmanship. These enable observation of the domestic political elite's reactions to both perceived losses and strategic gains.

Second, my case selection strategy employs the logic of most and least likely case study designs for theory testing. A most-likely case is one where the theory is expected to hold—if it fails there, it likely fails more broadly. A least-likely case is one where the theory is least expected to hold—so if the predicted outcome occurs, it strengthens confidence in the

theory's validity (Levy, 2008). This setting makes Turkey a most likely case for observing elite anxiety about sovereignty and resource exclusion. It is the state most consistently targeted by rival maritime agreements and licensing rounds. At the same time, it is the least likely case for testing whether such external pressure produces bipartisan elite convergence. Over the past decade, Turkey has shifted toward a highly polarized, competitive authoritarian regime in which government and opposition rarely agree on any major issue, including foreign policy.

Data

To evaluate my argument, I constructed a novel speech-year level dataset from Turkish Grand National Assembly records between 1996 and 2024. I use yearly time identifiers because foreign-policy issues in parliament are not necessarily discussed immediately after events occur. A maritime agreement or licensing round may happen early in the year, but only enter parliamentary debate months later, if at all. Monthly or quarterly coding would therefore create misleading gaps where nothing appears, simply because foreign-policy debates are irregular and crowded out by other agenda items.

I compile all available digitized parliamentary records and apply Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to convert these documents into machine-readable text. To identify speeches related to maritime disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean, I conducted a keyword-based search of Turkish parliamentary transcripts using terms commonly associated with maritime conflicts. These included references to Doğu Akdeniz (Eastern Mediterranean), Mavi Vatan (Blue Homeland), deniz sınırı (maritime border), deniz yetki alanı (maritime jurisdiction), kıta sahanlığı (continental shelf), and münhasır ekonomik bölge (exclusive economic zone). I then qualitatively assessed all identified speeches to determine whether they explicitly referred to maritime disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. This process yielded 912 parliamentary speeches spanning 1996–2024.

I then collect metadata on each speech, including the year it was delivered, the speaker's political party affiliation, and gender. Using this information, I created a dummy variable distinguishing between ruling-party (1) and opposition (0) speakers. Although Turkey has a multi-party system, this binary coding reflects the political realities of the period. During single-party governments, AKP functioned as the governing bloc, and all other parties operated as opposition. After the 2017 constitutional referendum and the shift to the presidential system, parties began running on formalized electoral alliances, producing two coherent blocs in presidential elections: the ruling alliance and the opposition alliance. I therefore coded MPs within the ruling alliance as 1 and those within the opposition alliance as 0.

Third, I collect new event-level data on maritime disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean. This includes annual records of resource discoveries, maritime boundary agreements, offshore licensing rounds, and militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) involving all coastal states. These data are drawn from multiple sources, including the Global Energy Monitor Oil and Gas Extraction Tracker, official licensing announcements, the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, and reputable international news outlets covering the region, such as Reuters, Al Jazeera, and BBC World.

To construct my key independent variables, I generate dummy variables that identify instances relevant to Turkey's maritime claims. The core indicators capture rival-led delimitation agreements, offshore licensing rounds, and resource discoveries that contradict Turkish claims or occur in areas proximate to Turkish claimed maritime zones. These events directly challenge Turkey's preferred territorial status quo and serve as the primary test of my argument. I also create two additional dummy variables capturing Turkey's own national exploration licensing and delimitation agreements. These allow me to compare whether bipartisan unity expected under external threats extends to when Turkey initiates national exploration and bilateral delimitation agreements.

Finally, I also generate a measure that records all offshore licensing and energy discoveries

in the Eastern Mediterranean, including those of Israel, Egypt, and Lebanon. These broader developments signal information about the region's overall resource potential and affect the commercial feasibility of proposed export routes, thereby contributing to wider perceptions of resource access anxiety even when not initiated by disputants in uncontested areas.

Empirical Strategy and Methods

I employ a range of unsupervised and semi-supervised machine learning methods to test my hypotheses. First, I use a multilingual embedding model fine-tuned for Turkish to identify whether and how territorial disputes are referenced in parliamentary speeches. Second, I apply dynamic keyword-assisted topic modeling to construct my dependent variables as annual topic shares. Third, I use sentiment analysis to further assess whether the tone of ruling and opposition parties diverges over time.

To prepare the text for these models, I apply several standard preprocessing steps, including tokenization, stopword removal, and stemming, specifically those that are curated for the Turkish language (Bird, Klein and Loper, 2009; Onaldi, 2018). These steps ensure that word representations focus on substantive content rather than grammatical variations. I further apply bigram detection and incorporate both unigrams (individual words) and bigrams (frequently co-occurring word pairs) in my analysis. The inclusion of bigrams enhances contextual understanding, as word meanings can shift when they appear together (Mikolov et al., 2013).

Word Embeddings Analysis

I use multilingual FastText word embeddings, a pre-trained model trained on all Wikipedia entries in Turkish[2]. I then apply K-Means clustering[3] to identify thematically coherent groups of words. This approach enables me to evaluate whether resource-related language is embedded within broader sovereignty or national security frames in parliamentary discourse.

The clustering of word embeddings in Figure 3 illustrates how energy resources are framed in Turkish parliamentary discussions on Eastern Mediterranean disputes. Words with similar meanings appear closer together. In contrast, words that are contextually different are spaced farther apart. Words such as "energy," "oil/gas," "security," "sovereignty," and "national" appear in close proximity within the vector space, suggesting that discussions of energy are strongly linked to national security concerns rather than being treated as purely economic issues. The co-location of terms such as "war" and "protection" further reinforces the idea that energy resources are framed as strategic assets, potentially justifying defensive or escalatory actions. The results show that when MPs talk about maritime disputes, they integrate resource-related themes into broader narratives of territorial sovereignty.

[2]Multilingual FastText embeddings represent each word as a combination of character-level subword units, an advantage for agglutinative languages such as Turkish(Grave et al., 2018). Each word is mapped to a 300-dimensional vector based on its distributional context. For visualization, I apply t-Distributed Stochastic Neighbor Embedding (t-SNE), a non-linear dimensionality reduction algorithm that preserves local semantic relationships when projecting high-dimensional vectors into two dimensions (van der Maaten and Hinton, 2008). This method captures how parliamentary speeches on Eastern Mediterranean disputes conceptually relate to territorial sovereignty and resource access themes. FastText's subword architecture is particularly well-suited for Turkish, ensuring that morphologically related terms occupy nearby positions in the semantic vector space. Using these embeddings, I reduce the 300-dimensional vectors into a two-dimensional representation

[3]K-means is an unsupervised machine learning algorithm that partitions data into k distinct clusters, where each data point (word) is assigned to the nearest cluster center based on its cosine similarity in the vector space (Pedregosa et al., 2011).

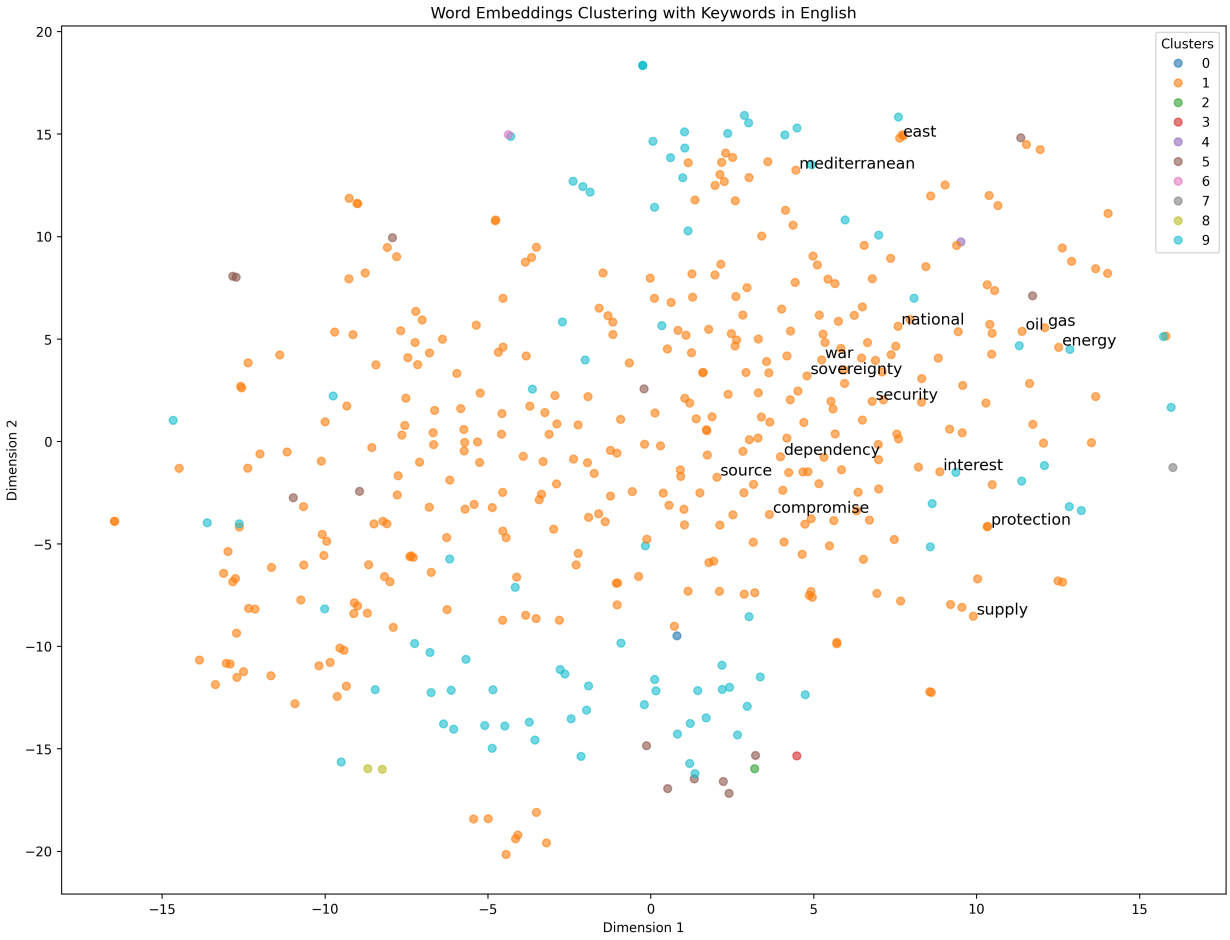

Figure 3: Word Embeddings Clustering of Speeches on Maritime Disputes

Dynamic Keyword-Assisted Topic Modeling

To generate my main dependent variable, I employ a semi-supervised topic modeling approach (dynamic keyATM) that enhances traditional topic models by incorporating predefined keywords and a structured temporal component (Eshima, Imai and Sasaki, 2024). Unlike widely used unsupervised models such as Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) or Structural Topic Models (STM), which often require extensive post hoc interpretation and may generate topics lacking clear substantive coherence, dynamic keyATM improves measurement validity by anchoring topics to theoretically meaningful keywords while still allowing for the discovery of emergent themes. The model balances preselected keywords with data-driven topic discovery, reducing issues like topic overlap and label switching that affect unsupervised models. This balance between supervision and exploration ensures that the estimated topics remain directly aligned with the study's theoretical framework while also discovering other potential rhetoric that aligns with my theoretical framework. Another key advantage of dynamic keyATM is its ability to model time-dependent shifts in topic prevalence through a Hidden Markov Model (HMM) structure, which assumes that each time period belongs to a latent discrete state. This approach allows for smooth temporal transitions, offering a more nuanced understanding of how topics evolve compared to models that rely solely on time-fixed effects.

To estimate my models, I define two sets of keywords related to resources and sovereignty. For the resource topic, I used the following keywords: enerji (energy), gaz (gas), petrol (oil), kaynak (resources), ulusal (national), çıkar (interest), and savaş (war). For the sovereignty topic, I use egemenlik (sovereignty), bölge (region), birlik (unity), alan (area), hak (right), and koruma (protection). Figure 4 displays the keywords' proportions in identified topics. Keyword proportions above 0.1% indicate that the model's keywords appear a reasonable number of times in the corpus, ensuring that they are meaningfully associated with the latent topic.

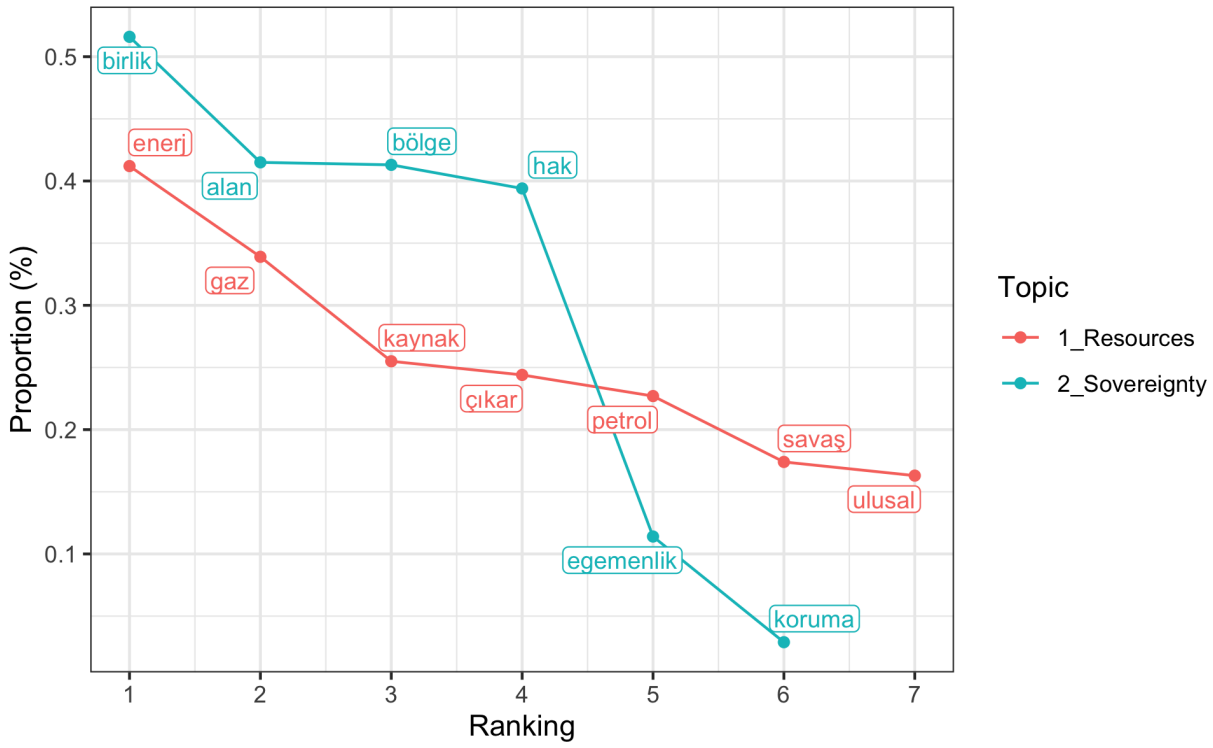

Figure 4: Keyword Proportions

In addition to these keyword-assisted topics, the model identifies six additional topics. One of these topics includes keywords such as Mavi (Blue), Vatan (Homeland), askeri (military), kuvvet (force), tezkere (memorandum), and Libya. I also include this topic in my analysis as it directly relates to Turkey's Blue Homeland doctrine, which securitizes Turkey's maritime claims and access to offshore resources in the region.

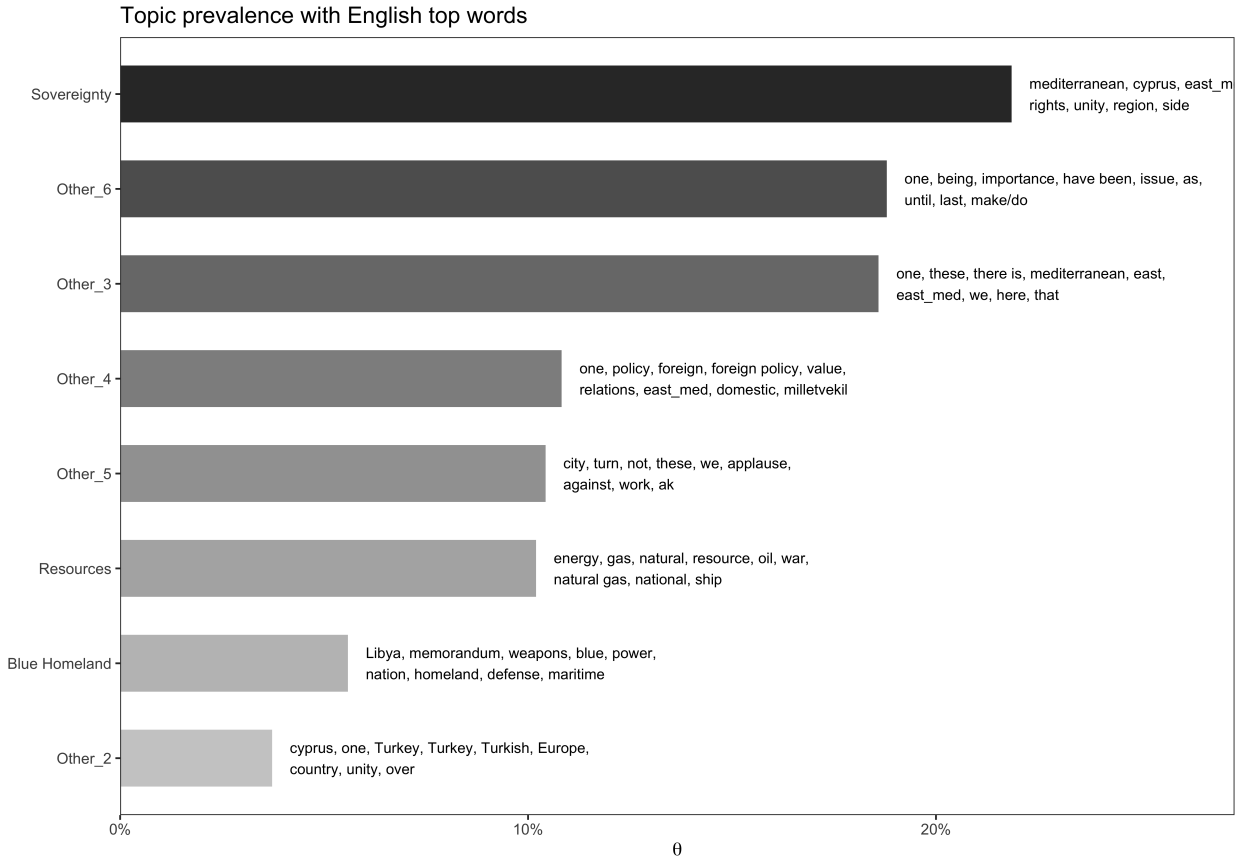

Figure 5: Top Probability Words Annotated in English

To further validate the identified topics, I generate a density plot (Figure 6) illustrating the distribution of speech-level topic proportions. The Resources and Blue Homeland topics are highly skewed toward lower values, indicating that most parliamentary speeches devote only a small fraction of their content to these themes. In contrast, the Sovereignty topic displays a much more even distribution across speeches, suggesting a consistently

higher baseline emphasis on territorial sovereignty. Taken together, these patterns imply that sovereignty rhetoric functions as a broad, generic register of foreign policy discourse, whereas Blue Homeland rhetoric represents a more specific and strategically mobilized form of nationalist framing—one that explicitly justifies coercive measures to secure national interests.

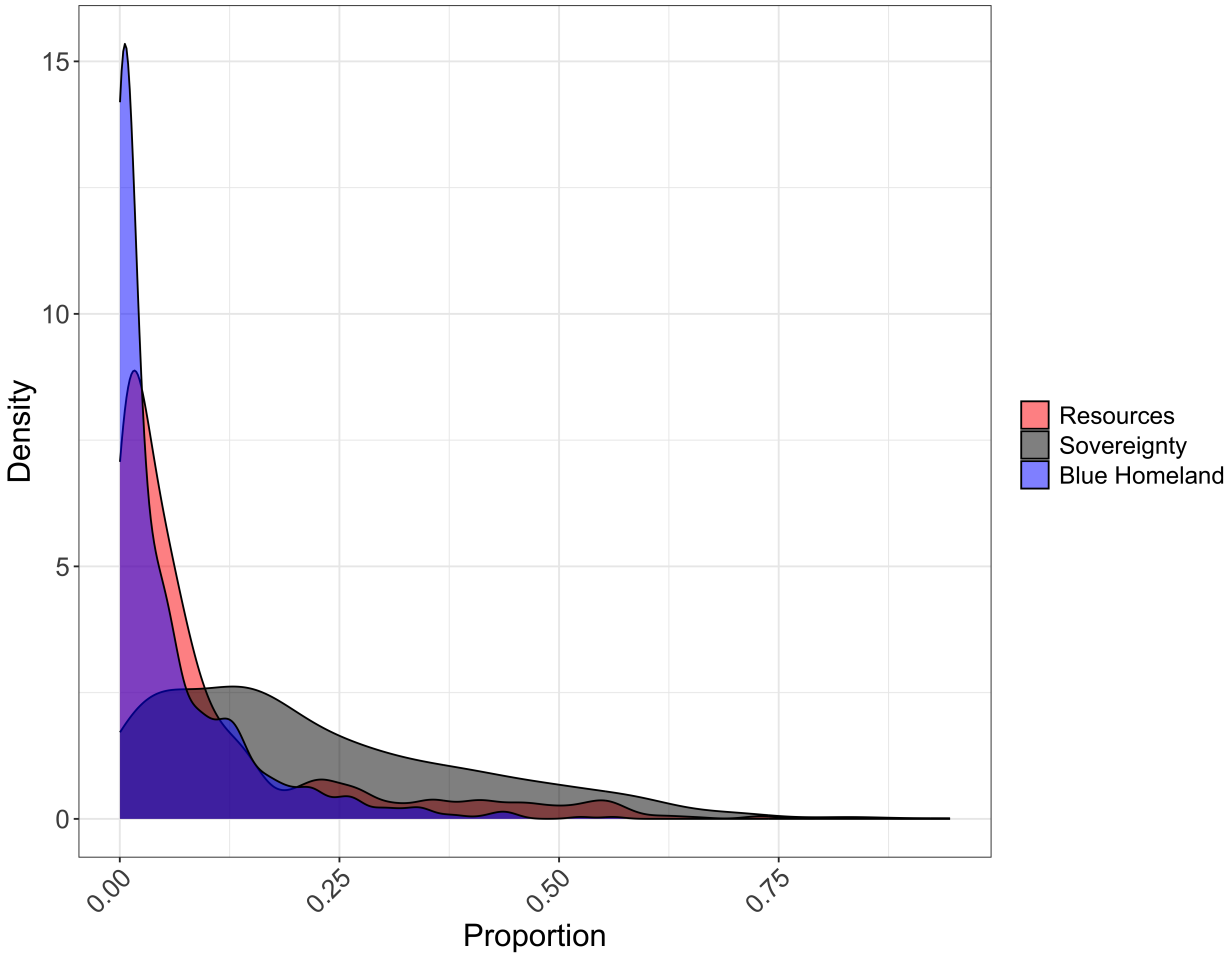

Figure 6: Density Plots for Sovereignty, Resources, and Blue Homeland Topics

Following the estimation of the keyATM model, I calculate the proportion of each speech allocated to each topic (theta values) and use these as dependent variables in subsequent statistical analyses. Figure 7 displays the evolution of these topics over time. The shaded

regions (or error bars) represent the 90% confidence intervals, providing a measure of uncertainty around the estimated topic proportions.

Before conducting statistical analysis, I first examine key trends in parliamentary rhetoric in relation to major regional developments in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

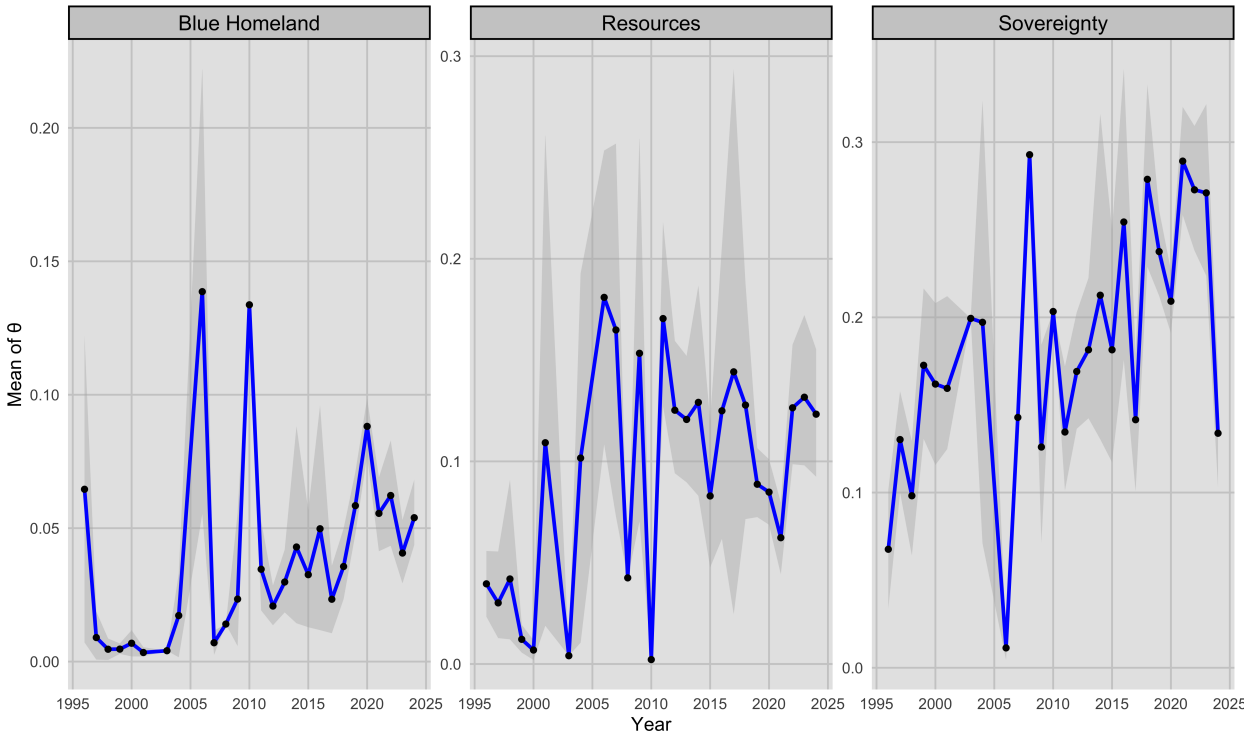

Figure 7: Time Trend of Estimated Topics

The time trends of topics (7) suggest that parliamentary attention to these issues closely aligns with significant geopolitical events. First, there is an initial increase in discussions in 2007, coinciding with the signing of the first maritime delimitation agreement between Cyprus and Lebanon. This agreement set a precedent for regional claims over offshore energy reserves and sparked further negotiations among Eastern Mediterranean states. A more pronounced surge occurred in 2010, following the release of the US Geological Survey (USGS) landmark assessment of the region's hydrocarbon potential. The report estimated 1.7 billion barrels of recoverable oil and 122 trillion cubic feet of recoverable natural gas, highlight-

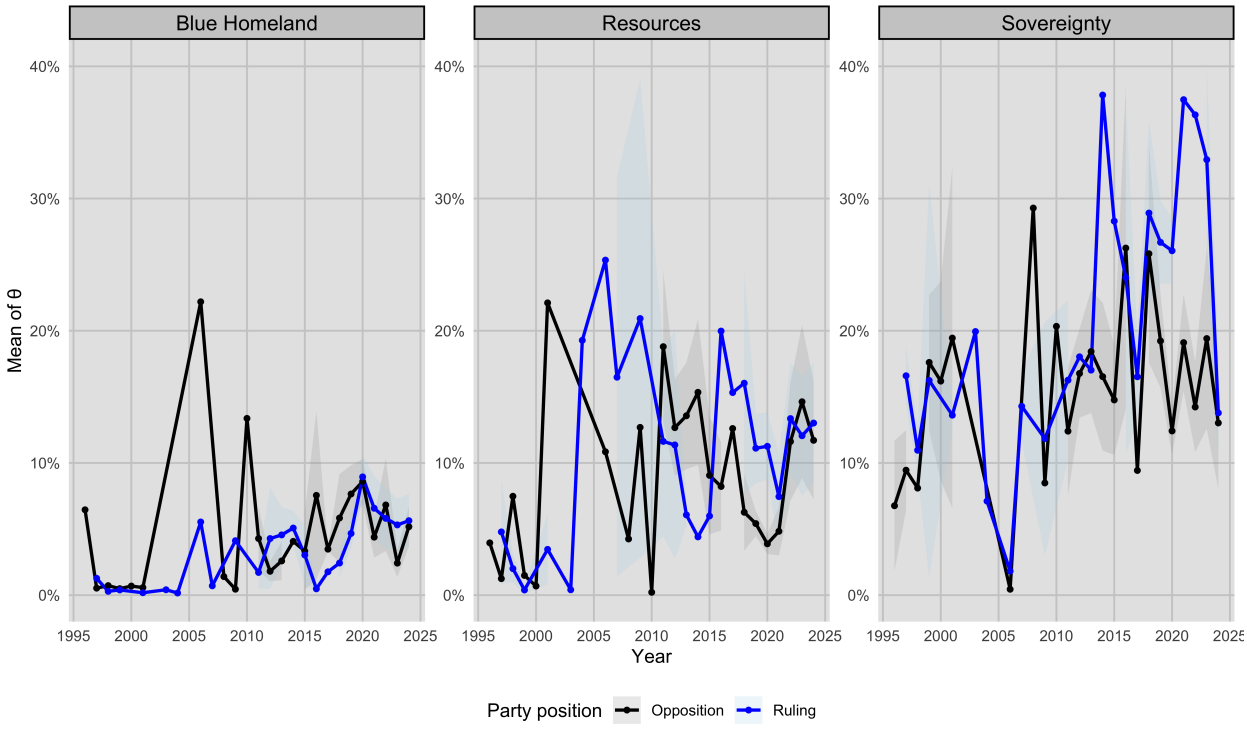

Figure 8: Time Trend of Estimated Topics by Party Position

ing the strategic importance of the energy resources of the Eastern Mediterranean. The same period also saw increased diplomatic activity, with multiple states initiating offshore licensing rounds. In particular, Cyprus launched its first offshore licensing round in 2007, and subsequent licensing rounds in 2010 and 2011 contributed to the continued increase in parliamentary discussions about energy security and sovereignty.

Following these developments, parliamentary discourse on resource-related issues remained elevated throughout the early 2010s, coinciding with the discovery of significant gas fields, such as Israel's Leviathan field in 2010 and Cyprus's Aphrodite field in 2011. These discoveries intensified regional competition, particularly between Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus, over exclusive economic zone (EEZ) claims. The sharp rise in sovereignty-related discussions in 2019–2020 aligns with Turkey's maritime delimitation agreement with Libya, which provoked naval confrontations between Turkish and Greek forces during Turkey's

seismic survey in the disputed area and was met by Greece's own delimitation deal with Egypt. The concurrent surge in resource-related discussions suggests these tensions were not merely about sovereignty but also reflected competition over newly discovered energy reserves. Together, these trends imply that unilateral moves by disputant states can trigger both territorial loss perceptions and resource anxiety.

Results and Discussion

To evaluate my propositions, I estimate both OLS with party fixed effects and linear time trends and beta regression models using the θ values as the dependent variable, representing the percentage of each speech associated with the identified topics. Since the dependent variable is a percentage constrained between 0 and 1, OLS may occasionally produce predictions outside these limits. To account for this, I also provide results from Beta regression models, which are better suited for modeling bounded outcomes (Kubinec, 2023).

To isolate the effect of my key independent variables, I include a set of speech-level controls. I adjust for speaker characteristics (gender and party position) and include party fixed effects, along with indicators for speeches delivered by senior officeholders such as the president and foreign, energy, and national security ministers. To account for the electoral environment, I add election-year fixed effects. I also control for the annual number of militarized interstate disputes, since heightened military activity may independently increase sovereignty- or resource-related rhetoric. Finally, I include a variable marking the operationalization of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), which institutionalized a new regional energy order excluding Turkey; this variable equals 1 from 2019 onward. I also present additional models in the appendix using the lagged version of IVs for robustness. The substantive conclusions remain unchanged.

Table 1 shows that when adversaries induce de facto shifts to the maritime status quo through offshore licensing, resource discoveries, and bilateral delimitation agreements, po-

Table 1: Determinants of Parliamentary Rhetoric: OLS and Beta Regression

	Ordinary Least Squares			**Beta Regression**		
	Sovereignty	Blue Homeland	Resources	Sovereignty	Blue Homeland	Resources
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Rival Delimitation	−0.022	0.034***	−0.023	−0.067	0.386***	−0.099
	(0.024)	(0.012)	(0.021)	(0.124)	(0.131)	(0.135)
Rival Licensing	0.066***	−0.001	−0.024	0.460***	−0.088	−0.162*
	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.089)	(0.095)	(0.096)
Rival Discovery	0.035**	0.013	0.010	0.223**	−0.066	−0.133
	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.014)	(0.089)	(0.093)	(0.094)
US Geological Survey	0.165	0.062	−0.077	0.941	1.100	−0.912
	(0.163)	(0.082)	(0.141)	(0.881)	(0.776)	(1.021)
Gender	−0.017	0.001	0.000	0.010	0.018	−0.090
	(0.024)	(0.012)	(0.020)	(0.117)	(0.123)	(0.125)
Party Position (Ruling = 1)	0.059**	0.007	−0.020	0.523***	−0.024	0.034
	(0.025)	(0.013)	(0.022)	(0.064)	(0.067)	(0.069)
Election Year	−0.001	−0.010	0.034**	0.041	−0.040	0.112
	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.089)	(0.096)	(0.096)
MIDs	0.023	0.005	−0.006	0.156*	−0.001	0.018
	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.092)	(0.098)	(0.098)
EastMed Gas Forum (EMGF)	0.029	0.008	0.018	0.333***	−0.082	−0.239*
	(0.025)	(0.013)	(0.022)	(0.128)	(0.135)	(0.136)
Constant	0.105***	0.025	0.153***	−1.952***	−3.091***	−2.008***
	(0.036)	(0.018)	(0.031)	(0.145)	(0.154)	(0.153)
Time Trend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Party Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Observations	827	827	827	827	827	827
R^2/Pseudo-R^2	0.200	0.080	0.068	0.105	0.089	0.024

$^{*}p < 0.10$; $^{**}p < 0.05$; $^{***}p < 0.01$.

litical elites allocate a greater share of their speeches to Sovereignty and Blue Homeland rhetoric.

First, in both OLS (Model 1) and Beta regression (Model 4), offshore licensing is positively associated with sovereignty rhetoric at the $p < 0.01$ level, confirming that these events heighten perceived threats to territorial sovereignty. Offshore licensing alters the maritime status quo and is interpreted not as routine commercial activity but as a geopolitical move that legitimizes rival claims. Anecdotal evidence suggests that states frequently respond with force at this stage: Turkey deployed naval assets to block exploratory drilling by foreign companies licensed by Cyprus (İpek and Gür, 2022), China has repeatedly confronted Vietnamese and Philippine drilling vessels in the South China Sea (Luo, 2023), and Venezuela detained two ExxonMobil exploration ships operating under a Guyanese license in contested waters (Reuters, 2018). Second, rival discoveries also increase sovereignty rhetoric, though with smaller coefficients and significance at the $p < 0.05$ level. These results provide empirical support for H2 and H3.

By contrast, none of the main independent variables show significant effects in Models 3 and 6 when Resource rhetoric is the dependent variable. While this pattern does not fully align with theoretical expectations, the null results are sensitive to how discoveries are coded. When I replace the key IVs with versions incorporating discoveries by all regional actors, the effects become significant: resource discoveries are positively associated with resource rhetoric at the $p < 0.1$ level in OLS and at the $p < 0.05$ level in Beta regression (Appendix Table A.2). This shift supports the expectation that discoveries—regardless of whose jurisdiction they occur in—reveal information about broader regional resource potential and increase the commercial feasibility of proposed export infrastructure. Israel's Leviathan discovery, for example, strengthened the logic of the proposed EastMed pipeline, an export route that bypasses Turkey entirely, raising elite concerns about long-term exclusion from regional energy architecture. These provide further confidence in H3.

Finally, Models 2 and 5 show that rival bilateral delimitation agreements primarily increase Blue Homeland rhetoric rather than general sovereignty rhetoric, indicating that delimitation constitutes a distinct form of status-quo shift. Unlike licensing rounds or discoveries, which threaten access to offshore resources, delimitation agreements formally redraw maritime boundaries and institutionalize Turkey's exclusion from areas it claims as its continental shelf. Blue Homeland rhetoric blends legal arguments with an explicitly military doctrine aimed at securing Turkey's maritime jurisdictions and access to energy reserves across the Eastern Mediterranean, Aegean, and Black Sea. Consistent with H1, exclusionary delimitation agreements push elites toward more securitized sovereignty rhetoric.

In the next section, I examine whether these effects produce heterogeneity along partisan lines.

Domestic Politics of Resource-Rich Territory

The interaction models in Table 2 and the predicted probability plots in Figure 9 show very limited partisan heterogeneity. For the Sovereignty topic, none of the rival-event interactions are significant, and prediction plots show parallel movements for government and opposition MPs. This indicates that rival licensing and discoveries generate bipartisan increases in sovereignty rhetoric, consistent with the expectation that external status-quo shifts place both blocs in a shared domain of perceived losses. These null results provide support for H4.

Statistically significant partisan differences emerge only in two narrow cases. First, rival discoveries produce a stronger Blue Homeland response among opposition MPs, while the ruling party slightly scales back its emphasis. This pattern reflects concerns about future exclusion from regional energy arrangements and deteriorating bargaining leverage. In these moments, opposition MPs benefit from adopting a more hardline security frame, signaling that the government is not projecting sufficient resolve to protect Turkey's bargaining position.

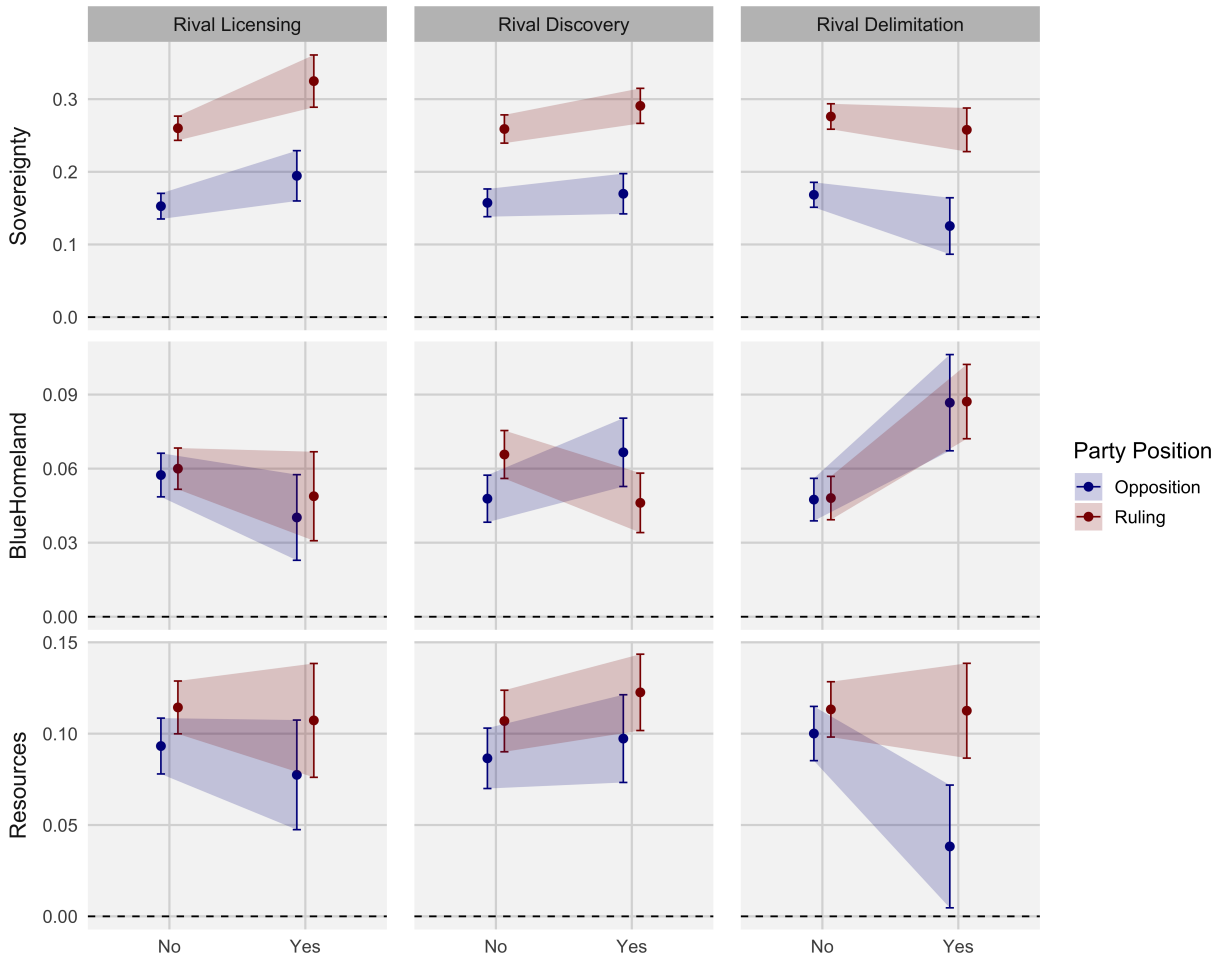

Figure 9: Effect of rival licensing, discovery, and maritime delimitation on parliamentary rhetoric, by party position.

Second, rival delimitation sharply decreases Resource rhetoric among opposition MPs but has no meaningful effect on the ruling bloc. This pattern does not challenge my theoretical expectations; if anything, the opposite direction would have been more problematic. Had the opposition increased resource rhetoric while the government avoided it, the result could plausibly be interpreted as supporting the distributional logic emphasized by Lee (2024*a*,*b*), in which opposition actors highlight potential uneven gains from resource-rich territories. Instead, opposition MPs reduce their emphasis on resource access following exclusionary delimitation and simultaneously increase their Blue Homeland rhetoric. This substitution indicates that delimitation does not activate distributional concerns but rather triggers a shift toward a more hardline, security-oriented frame. Indeed, parliamentary debates contain several instances in which opposition MPs criticized the government for calling off Turkey's seismic exploration ships during tense standoffs, framing such decisions not as distributional choices but as failures to project sufficient resolve. In this context, opposition elites use heightened Blue Homeland rhetoric to pressure the government for a stronger bargaining posture, without implying that narrow constituencies would capture resource gains.

Table 2: Interaction Models with Party Position

	Sovereignty Topic			Resource Topic			Blue Homeland		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Rival Delimitation	−0.023	−0.022	−0.042	−0.024	−0.023	−0.056**	0.033***	0.034***	0.029*
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.030)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.026)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.015)
Rival Licensing	0.058***	0.066***	0.066***	−0.031	−0.024	−0.024	−0.007	−0.001	−0.001
	(0.022)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Rival Discovery	0.035**	0.034	0.036**	0.010	0.006	0.011	0.013	0.028***	0.013
	(0.017)	(0.021)	(0.017)	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.008)
Party Position	0.055**	0.058**	0.054**	−0.024	−0.023	−0.027	0.004	0.016	0.006
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Geological Survey	0.166	0.165	0.183	−0.077	−0.079	−0.048	0.063	0.067	0.067
	(0.163)	(0.163)	(0.163)	(0.141)	(0.141)	(0.141)	(0.082)	(0.081)	(0.082)
Gender	−0.018	−0.017	−0.020	0.000	0.000	−0.004	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Election Year	−0.002	−0.001	−0.001	0.033**	0.035**	0.034**	−0.011	−0.012	−0.010
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)
MID (t)	0.025	0.024	0.024	−0.004	−0.005	−0.005	0.006	0.003	0.005
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)
EastMed Gas Forum	0.030	0.029	0.029	0.020	0.019	0.019	0.009	0.004	0.008
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Time Trend	0.004	0.004	0.004*	−0.002	−0.002	−0.001	0.001	0.002	0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Rival Delimitation × Party Position			0.033			0.054**			0.009
			(0.029)			(0.025)			(0.015)
Rival Licensing × Party Position	0.016			0.014			0.014		
	(0.030)			(0.026)			(0.015)		
Rival Discovery × Party Position		0.003			0.009			−0.030**	
		(0.025)			(0.021)			(0.012)	
Intercept	0.107***	0.105***	0.107***	0.156***	0.154***	0.156***	0.027	0.021	0.025
	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Party Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	827	827	827	827	827	827	827	827	827
R^2	0.200	0.200	0.201	0.068	0.068	0.073	0.081	0.087	0.081
Adjusted R^2	0.161	0.160	0.162	0.022	0.022	0.027	0.036	0.042	0.035
Residual Std. Error	0.160 (df = 787)			0.139 (df = 787)			0.080 (df = 787)		
F Statistic	5.057*** (df = 39; 787)			1.473** (df = 39; 787)			1.787*** (df = 39; 787)		

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

To further evaluate domestic political dynamics, I used a transformer-based sentiment analysis model fine-tuned for Turkish language. Figure 10 displays the average sentiment of parliamentary speeches over time, disaggregated by party position. [4]

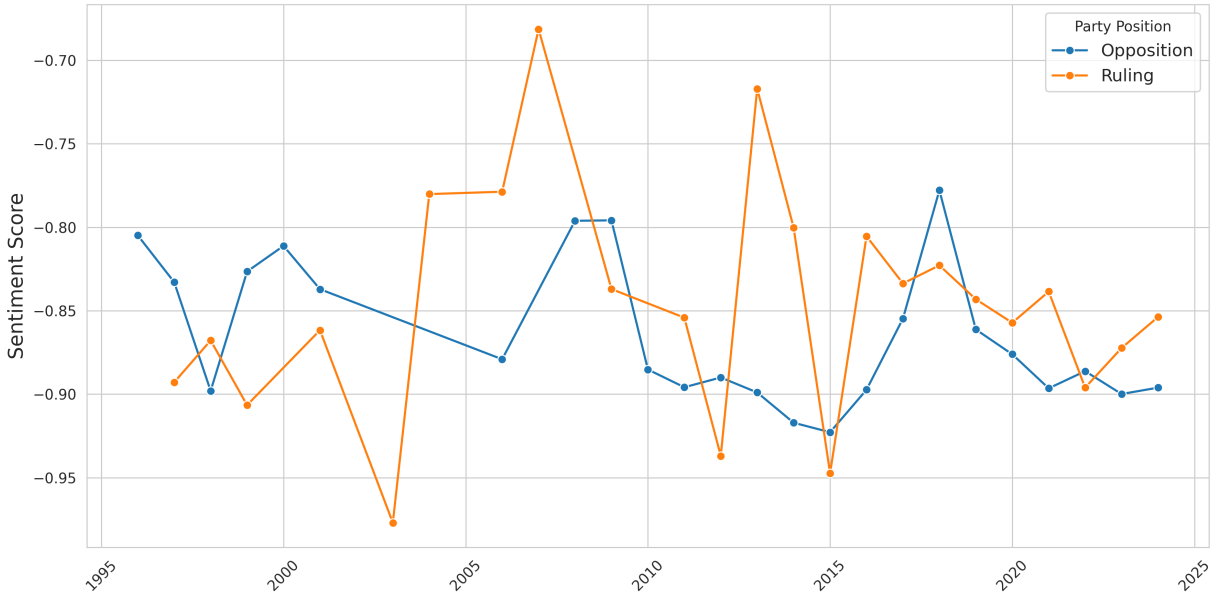

Figure 10: Sentiment Analysis by Party Position over Time

The results show that resource-related territorial disputes often produce bipartisan convergence, particularly during periods of heightened geopolitical tensions. Both ruling and opposition MPs exhibit simultaneous drops in sentiment in years marked by major Eastern Mediterranean confrontations. This is consistent with the interpretation that external status-quo shifts place all political actors in a shared domain of perceived losses and trigger a common defensive posture. In addition, the figure reveals systematic asymmetries that align with the heterogeneity patterns documented in the interaction models. The ruling party's

[4]Specifically, I employ the `savasy/bert-base-turkish-sentiment-cased` model, a BERT-based architecture pretrained on a large Turkish corpus and fine-tuned on a diverse set of Turkish texts, including movie reviews, product reviews, and tweets (Yildirim and Asgari-Chenaghlu, 2021; Yildirim, 2024). Each speech is divided into overlapping 128-token chunks to ensure full coverage within model limits, and sentiment scores are assigned to each chunk based on the model's confidence in classifying them as positive or negative. The final sentiment score for each speech is calculated as the average of these chunk-level scores and then aggregated by year and party

sentiment is more volatile, alternating between sharply negative reactions during escalatory episodes and more moderated tone in years where diplomatic engagement becomes salient. The opposition, by contrast, maintains a consistently negative baseline in later years, reflecting a strategy centered on sustained criticism of the government's ability to defend maritime claims and bargaining leverage.

Parliamentary Rhetoric and Militarized Inter-State Disputes

The final step in the analysis examines how parliamentary rhetoric aligns temporally with Turkey's involvement in militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) over contested maritime areas. I use speech-level topic proportions as predictors and estimate a series of logistic lead and lag models. The lead models test whether rhetoric in year t is associated with MID involvement in $t+1$ and $t+2$, and the lag models assess whether rhetoric in $t-1$ or $t-2$ corresponds to MID involvement in t. This structure clarifies temporal ordering by showing whether rhetorical shifts tend to precede, coincide with, or follow militarized activity, without treating rhetoric as an exogenous driver of escalation or assuming it independently produces conflict.

Each model includes party fixed effects and a linear time trend. The time trend captures gradual changes in Turkey's foreign-policy environment without using year fixed effects, which would absorb most meaningful temporal variation in MID involvement. I also do not control for rival licensing rounds, boundary agreements, or resource discoveries. These events are upstream geopolitical shocks that influence both rhetorical responses and militarized behavior. Conditioning on them would introduce what Cinelli, Forney, and Pearl (2022) identify as a *bad control*: a post-treatment variable lying on the causal pathway from external shocks to downstream outcomes. As Hernán and Robins (2020) emphasize, adjusting for variables shaped by earlier causes can block or distort the very mechanisms under study. In this context, rival actions are antecedent drivers of securitized discourse; including them would obscure, rather than clarify, whether heightened rhetorical emphasis corresponds with

subsequent MID involvement.

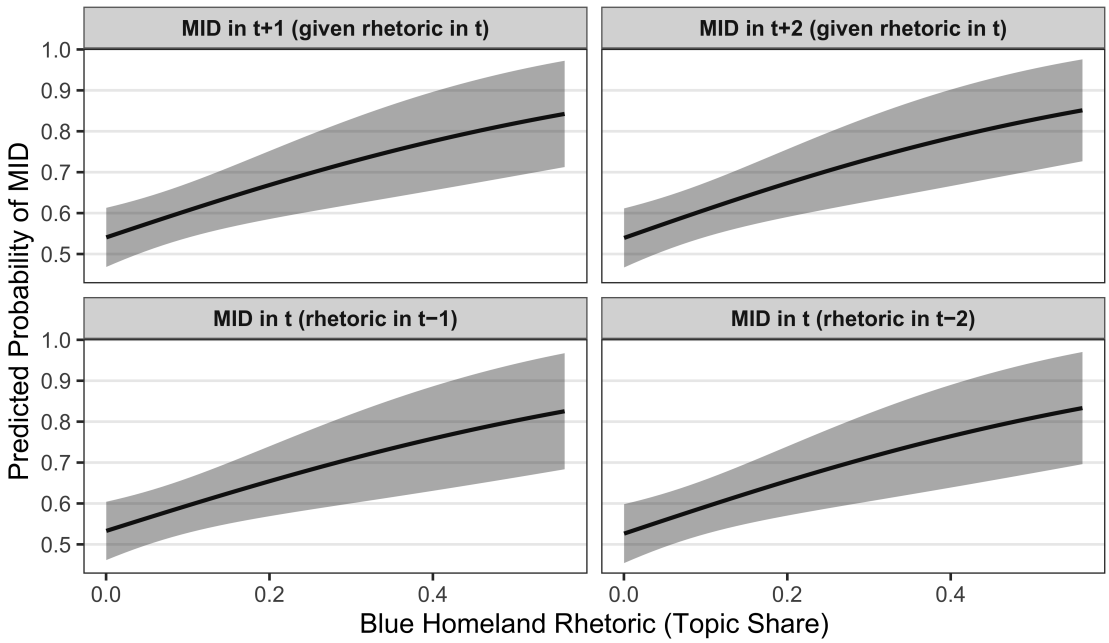

Figure 11: Blue Homeland Rhetoric and Likelihood of Militarized Inter-State Disputes

Across all specifications, the findings are consistent. Among sovereignty, Blue Homeland, and resource topics, only the Blue Homeland rhetoric is significantly associated with Turkey's subsequent involvement in MIDs. Figure 11 shows that moving from the minimum to maximum observed values of the Blue Homeland topic increases the probability of MID involvement in the current or following two years by roughly 29–31 percentage points. This pattern does not imply that rhetoric itself is a sufficient causal trigger. External maritime actions by rivals—licensing rounds, boundary agreements, and resource discoveries—are the primary forces shifting the underlying status quo. Rather, Blue Homeland rhetoric functions as a downstream indicator of elite threat perceptions generated by upstream adversarial actions. In these moments, perceived losses of territorial sovereignty become politically salient and domestic constraints on military escalation loosen. Overall, the temporal evidence aligns with the argument's core mechanism: external shifts in the maritime status quo heighten per-

ceptions of loss, and these same periods exhibit a markedly higher probability of militarized involvement.

Generalizability and Scope Conditions

Although the empirical analysis centers on the Turkish case in the Eastern Mediterranean, the mechanisms identified here plausibly extend to other political systems where opposition actors face incentives to avoid appearing weak on territorial issues. In hybrid or semi-authoritarian regimes, opposition parties often operate under intense nationalist pressure, and the political costs of undermining the country's claim are higher than expected political gains from emphasizing involvement of parochial interests.

A recent example from the escalation of maritime disputes between Venezuela and Guyana illustrates how similar dynamics emerge in other semi-authoritarian contexts. After Exxon-Mobil's 2015 discovery of substantial offshore oil reserves off the Essequibo coast, opposition leaders María Corina Machado and Edmundo González Urrutia publicly reaffirmed Venezuela's long-standing claim, even while condemning both Chávez's earlier accommodation and Maduro's handling of the dispute. While some opposition leaders signal restraint by emphasizing legal and diplomatic channels for resolution, at the same time, they adopt a very similar rhetoric to the government about the underlying claim as such: "the Essequibo is ours, and we will defend it with all the means at our disposal, within the framework of international law." (Ellis, 2025) These demonstrate that similar mechanisms are observable in other semi-authoritarian regimes.

Similar dynamics can also arise in full democracies. Even when political parties expect resource benefits to be distributed unevenly, democratic leaders operate with short time horizons and anticipate alternation in power. Undermining a state's position in an ongoing resource-rich dispute risks imposing self-inflicted costs on future governments. This logic helps explain cross-party alignment in cases such as Greece's stance on maritime zones in the

Eastern Mediterranean, Japan's consensus over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, and Norway's cohesion on Arctic boundary questions with Russia.

Furthermore, similar dynamics are especially likely to be observed in net energy-importing states, where potential access to offshore resources carries broader national security and macroeconomic relevance. Finally, this argument does not speak to when new territorial claims arise. Instead, it explains how pre-existing claims evolve once other disputants induce de facto shifts to the existing perceived status quo. Under these conditions, energy-linked sovereignty concerns may plausibly generate broad domestic political incentives for elite convergence and lower domestic political cost of military escalation.

Conclusion and Broader Implications

In this article, I examined how adversary-initiated events alter the perceived maritime status quo and intensify domestic concerns over losing sovereign rights and resource access. Using a novel dataset of 912 Turkish parliamentary speeches (1996–2024) and computational text-analysis methods, I measured sovereignty and resource rhetoric and linked these patterns to event data from the Eastern Mediterranean. The results show consistent patterns with my theory. Offshore licensing drives bipartisan increases in sovereignty rhetoric, confirmed discoveries heighten both sovereignty and resource-access concerns, and maritime boundary agreements fuel the most securitized sovereignty rhetoric, which increases the likelihood of subsequent MIDs. In conclusion, these findings highlight how external shifts create shared loss perceptions among domestic elites, narrowing diplomatic options and increasing pressures for military escalation.

These findings have important implications for our broader understanding of territorial dispute escalation. First, my analysis underscores how the logic of loss aversion fundamentally shapes state behavior in disputes over resource-rich maritime territories. When adver-

saries' geopolitical actions create perceptions of potential territorial loss, states become more willing to pursue riskier, militarized responses to prevent or reverse these perceived losses. Indeed, anecdotal evidence presented throughout this article illustrates how states frequently deploy military force in maritime disputes to obstruct adversaries' offshore resource exploration and extraction activities.

Second, recent research by Lee (2024*a*,*b*) presents compelling geo-spatial and experimental evidence suggesting that states in the Western Hemisphere often refrain from claiming resource-rich territories due to domestic distributional conflicts. In contrast, my findings indicate that domestic opposition parties may align with the government when territorial sovereignty is explicitly threatened by external adversaries, prioritizing nationalist sentiments over distributional grievances. Alternatively, opposition actors may find it politically advantageous to criticize government policies as insufficiently protective of national interests. This bipartisan perception of potential territorial loss amplifies nationalist rhetoric, shrinking diplomatic space available for territorial compromise by raising the domestic political costs associated with concessions. Thus, adversarial geopolitical actions inadvertently foster internal political dynamics that increase the likelihood of militarized outcomes.

This discrepancy between findings points to important avenues for future research. Future studies should investigate conditions under which states unite around territorial sovereignty and resource access domestically or experience internal division driven by concerns about uneven distributional benefits of resource acquisition. Examining how regime type, adversary characteristics, and domestic institutional contexts (e.g., corruption levels or transparency in resource management) moderate elite responses can clarify when resource-rich territories generate internal consensus versus contention. Such research would deepen our understanding of how domestic politics influence states' decisions to escalate territorial disputes.

Finally, these findings have implications for how governments and external actors manage maritime disputes before they escalate. For policymakers, the results suggest these status-

quo shifts can trigger domestic political dynamics that reduce room for concessions and increase escalation risks. Managing maritime disputes, therefore, requires attention not only to interstate bargaining but also to how external moves reshape domestic elite incentives and constrain diplomatic flexibility. For multinational energy firms, the analysis highlights that investment decisions in contested maritime zones can become focal points of domestic sovereignty politics, exposing firms to heightened geopolitical and security risks even before production begins.

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A Appendix

Contents

A.1 KeyATM Model Convergence

Figure A.1 displays the evolution of alpha values over iterations across different latent states. The stabilization of values over time indicates that the model has converged, ensuring the robustness of topic estimates.

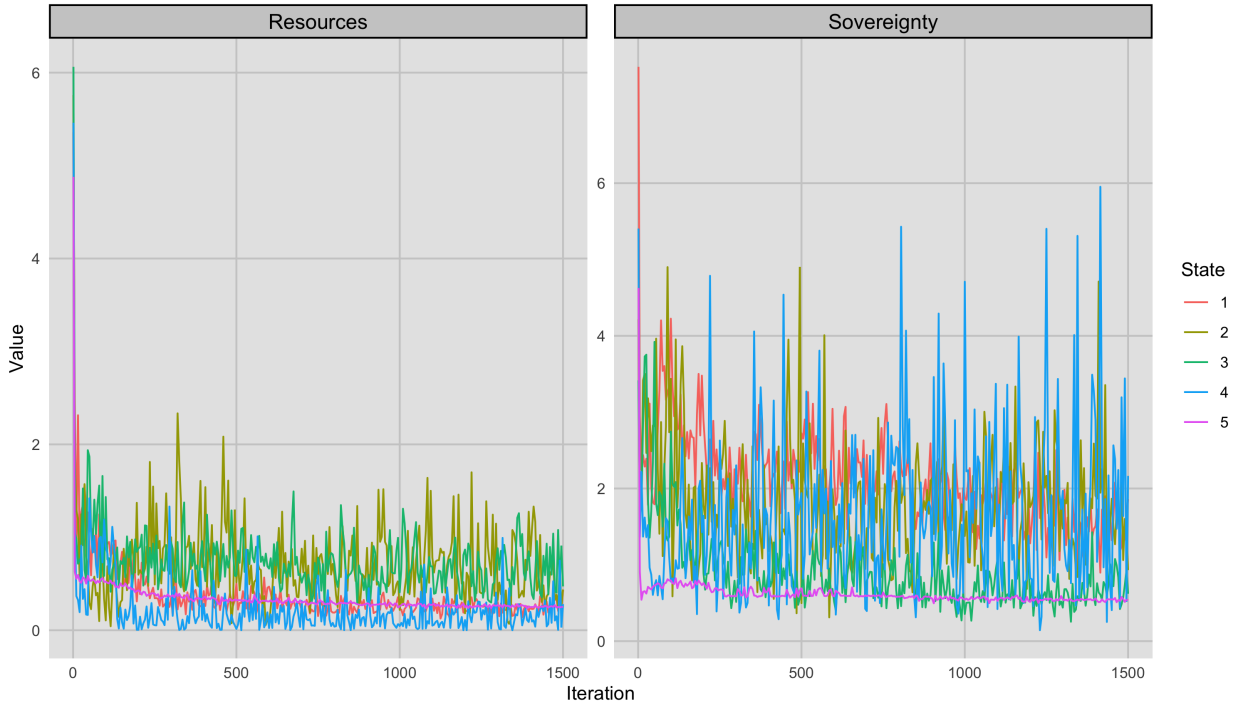

Figure A.1: Convergence Diagnostics of the Dynamic keyATM Model

A.2 Validation: Text-Netwrok Analysis

Here, I constructed a word-similarity network to verify that FastText embeddings capture meaningful semantic relationships among key terms. After generating vector representations for each Turkish term, I computed pairwise cosine similarities and retained only edges above a 0.6 threshold to highlight the strongest connections. To aid readability, node labels are automatically translated into English via the Google Translate API. Figure A.2 displays this

network, allowing readers to inspect clusters of closely related concepts and corroborating the results presented in the main text.

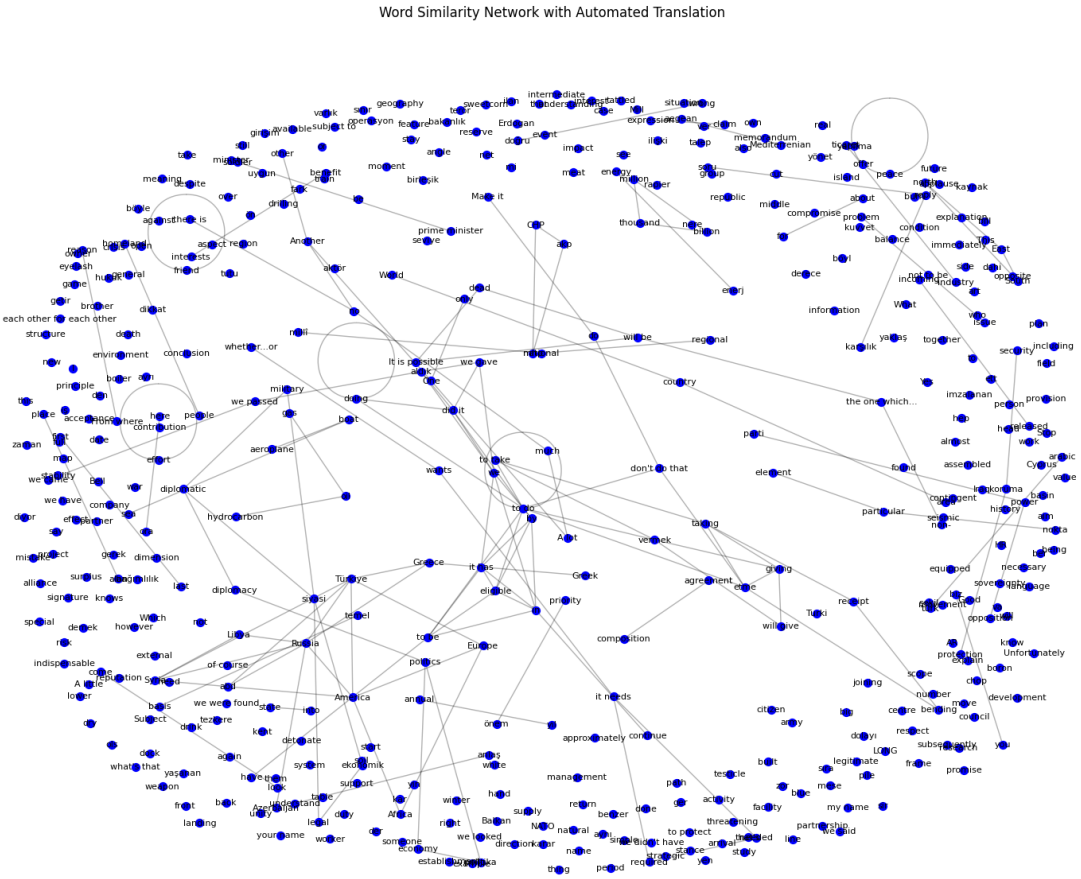

Figure A.2: Word Similarity Network for Parliamentary Speech Data

A.3 Time Trend of Key Events

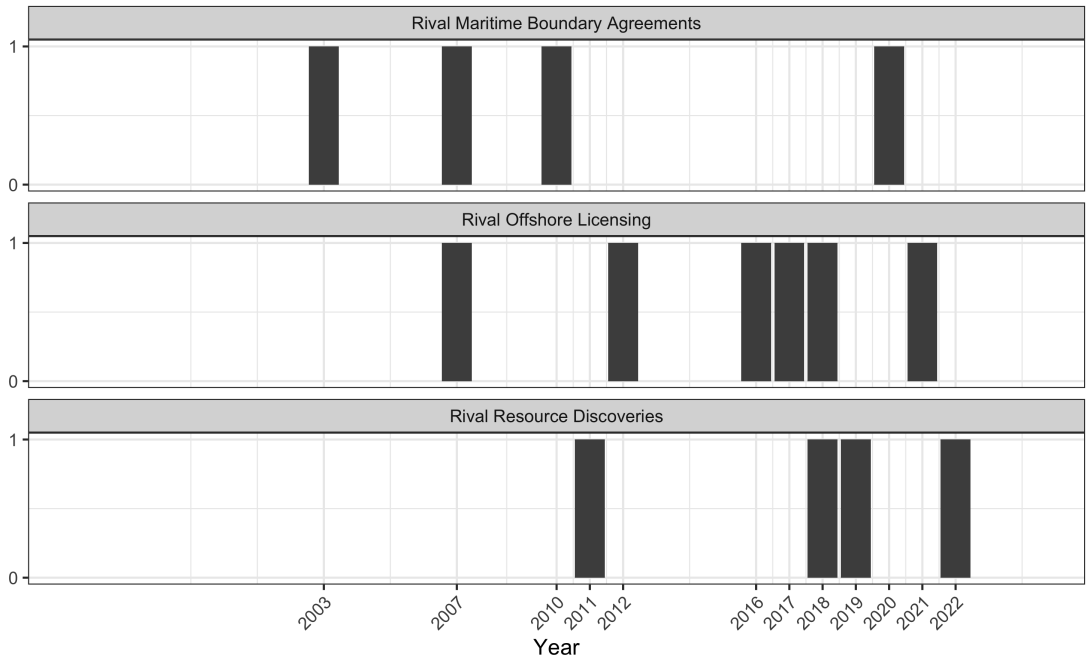

Figure A.3: Time Trend for Adversearies' Offshore Licensing, Maritime Boundary Agreements, Resource Discoveries and MIDs

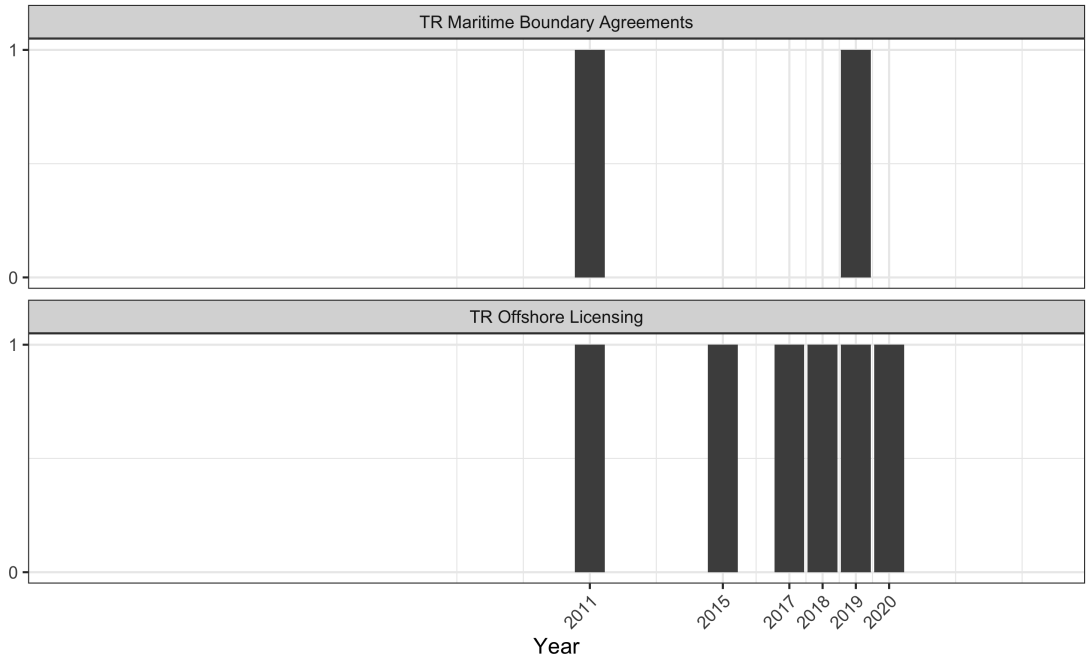

Figure A.4: Time Trend for Turkey's Offshore Licensing, and Maritime Boundary Agreements

A.4 Results for Turkey-initiated Events

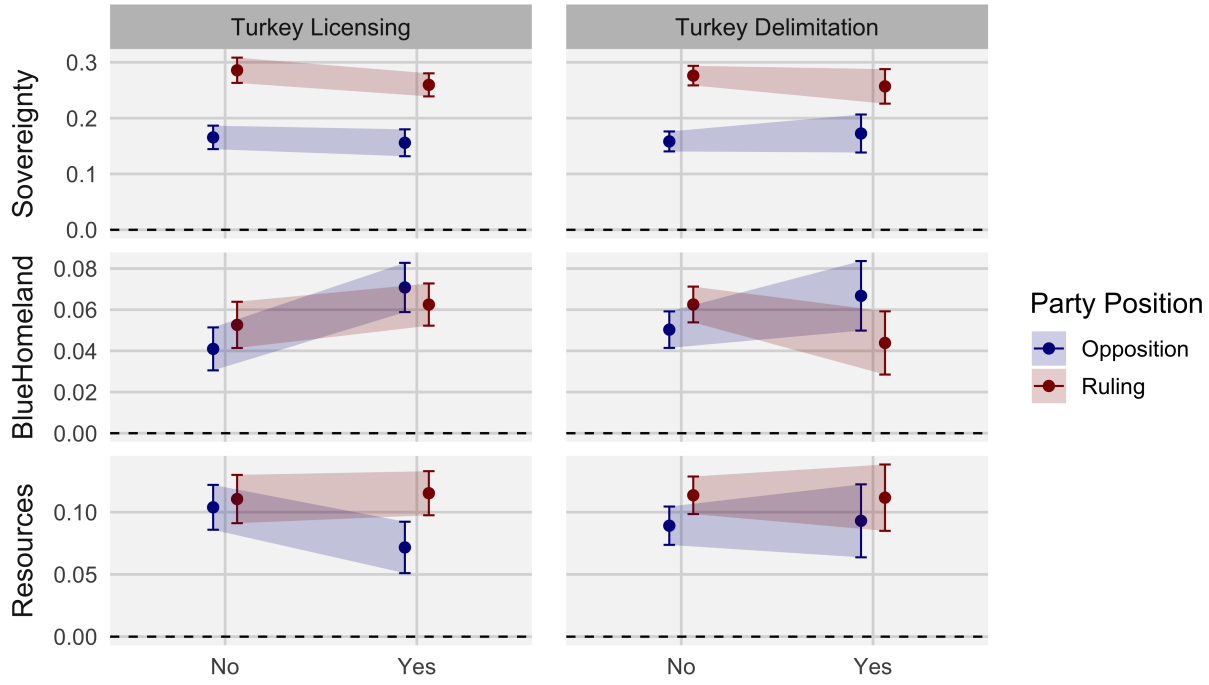

Figure A.5: Effect of Turkey's own licensing and maritime delimitation on parliamentary rhetoric, by party position.

Table A.1: TR-Initiated Events: Main and Interaction Models

	Sovereignty			Blue Homeland			Resources		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
TR Delimitation	−0.011	0.012	−0.015	−0.001	−0.005	0.012	−0.0003	−0.0003	0.008
	(0.026)	(0.029)	(0.026)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.022)	(0.025)	(0.023)
Turkey Licensing	−0.031*	−0.033*	−0.018	0.026***	0.036***	0.025***	−0.023	−0.023	−0.048***
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.021)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.018)
Party Position	0.078***	0.089***	0.089***	0.007	0.015	0.014	−0.014	−0.014	−0.036
	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.024)
Geological Survey	0.092	0.097	0.097	0.098	0.102	0.101	−0.102	−0.102	−0.112
	(0.162)	(0.162)	(0.163)	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.140)	(0.140)	(0.139)
Discovery	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.003	0.004	0.004	0.022	0.022	0.022
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)
Gender	−0.013	−0.014	−0.011	0.001	0.002	0.0002	0.001	0.001	−0.002
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Election Year	0.008	0.003	0.005	−0.017**	−0.019**	−0.020**	0.039***	0.039***	0.046***
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
TR MID (t)	0.017	0.019	0.019	0.006	0.007	0.007	0.008	0.008	0.004
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)
EastMed Gas Forum	−0.011	−0.019	−0.015	0.031**	0.028**	0.026*	0.008	0.008	0.016
	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)
Time Trend	0.006***	0.007***	0.006***	0.00003	0.0002	0.0004	−0.00003	0.00003	−0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
TR Delimitation × Party Position		−0.052*				−0.030**		−0.0001	
		(0.028)				(0.014)		(0.024)	
Turkey Licensing × Party Position			−0.025		−0.019				0.050**
			(0.024)		(0.012)				(0.021)
Intercept	0.111***	0.107***	0.106***	0.021	0.017	0.019	0.127***	0.127***	0.138***
	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Party Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	827	827	827	827	827	827	827	827	827
R^2	0.186	0.190	0.187	0.081	0.084	0.086	0.066	0.066	0.073
Adjusted R^2	0.147	0.150	0.147	0.037	0.038	0.041	0.021	0.020	0.027
Residual Std. Error	0.161 (df = 788)			0.080 (df = 788)			0.139 (df = 788)		
F Statistic	4.750*** (df = 38; 788)			1.824*** (df = 38; 788)			1.476** (df = 38; 788)		

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

A.5 Results using all events for Resources

Table A.2: Resources Topic

	OLS		*Beta Regression*	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Geological Survey	−0.092	−0.075	−0.977	−0.878
	(0.139)	(0.139)	(1.009)	(1.010)
Resource Discovery	0.021*	0.019*	0.179**	0.162**
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.071)	(0.071)
Offshore Licensing	−0.012	−0.012	−0.047	−0.034
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.103)	(0.103)
Maritime Delimitation	−0.008	−0.034*	−0.092	−0.243**
	(0.013)	(0.018)	(0.087)	(0.112)
Gender	−0.0004	−0.004	−0.076	−0.094
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.125)	(0.125)
Party Position	−0.010	−0.025	0.048	−0.099
	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.069)	(0.096)
Election Year	0.032**	0.035**	0.065	0.077
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.103)	(0.103)
Delimitation × Party Position		0.046**		0.299**
		(0.021)		(0.137)
Intercept	0.138***	0.145***	−2.095***	−2.024***
	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.147)	(0.151)
Party Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	No	No
Observations	827	827	827	827
R^2	0.067	0.072	0.019	0.028
Adjusted R^2	0.022	0.026		
Log Likelihood			1,118.351	1,120.729
Residual Std. Error	0.139 (df = 788)	0.138 (df = 787)		
F Statistic	1.485** (df = 38; 788)	1.573** (df = 39; 787)		

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

B Supplementary Written Opposition Inquiry Data on Territorial Disputes

B.1 Word-Emdeddings

I compiled a supplementary corpus of 95 (in total) written inquiries from opposition deputies and their corresponding government replies. Applying the same preprocessing and FastText-based clustering (k = 4) in the main analysis, Figure B.1 shows the most frequent terms colored by cluster. The dominant cluster contains resource-related vocabulary (e.g., "gas," "drilling," "license"), indicating that these topics permeate both questions and answers.

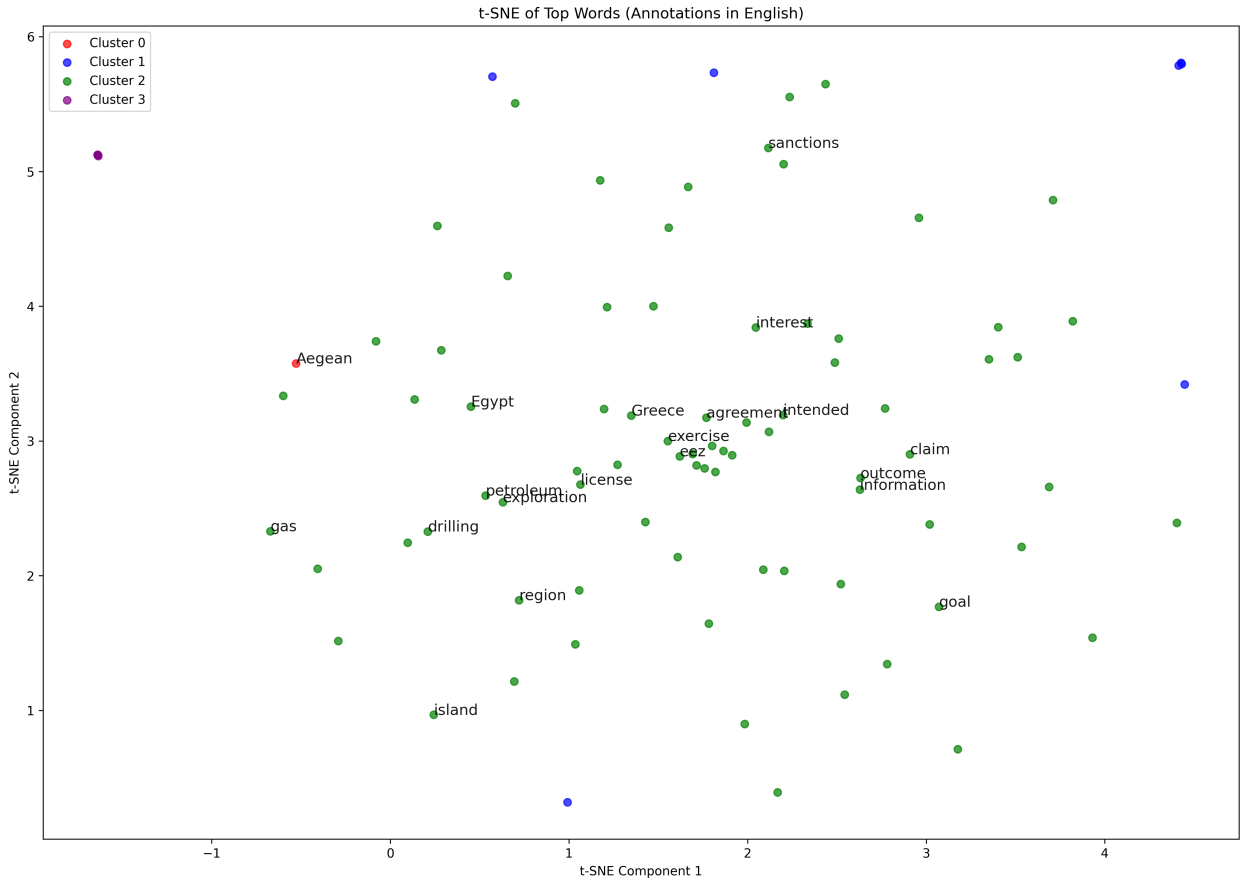

Figure B.1: K-Means Clustering of Top Words in Written Submissions and Answers

Second, Figure B.2 presents document-level embeddings—each obtained by averaging FastText vectors for a single inquiry or response—and projects them into two dimensions via t-SNE. Opposition questions (red) form a tight cluster, reflecting consistent, information-seeking themes, while government answers (blue) are more dispersed, illustrating a broader diversity of framing and rhetorical strategies.

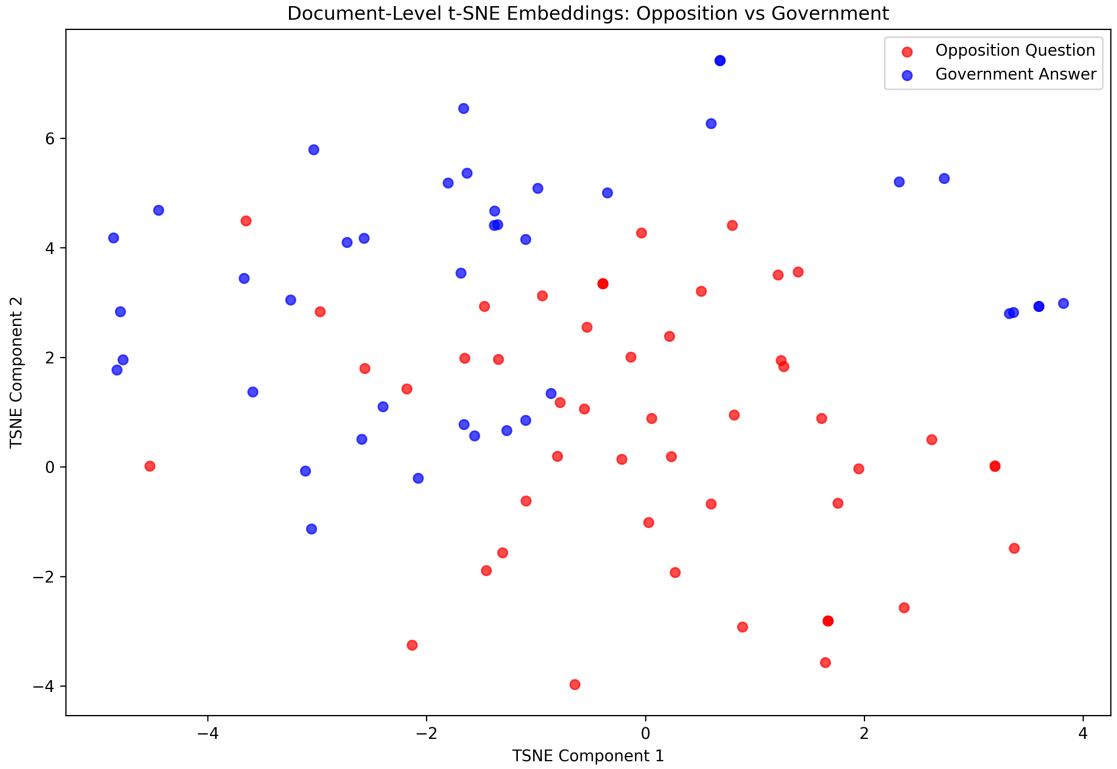

Figure B.2: Document-Level Embeddings of Opposition Inquiries and Government Answers

B.2 LLM Classification into Resource Access and Sovereignty Defense

I used the XLM-RoBERTa large language model for zero-shot classification of the supplementary corpus into 'Resource Access' and 'Sovereignty Defense' categories. XLM-RoBERTa is a multilingual transformer-based model pre-trained on a very large corpus of Common Crawl data (Conneau et al., 2020). While the base model is trained over 100 languages, the fine-tuned version is tailored for fifteen languages, including Turkish. I divided the each input text into overlapping 512-token chunks to fit the model's token limit, and each chunk was classified into one of two categories. The final label for each text was assigned based on the highest predicted probability. Figure B.3 shows the distribution of classified speeches over time by opposition inquiries and government answers, and A.4 displays the yearly counts of offshore licensing, resource discovery, maritime boundary agreement, and militarized interstate disputes.

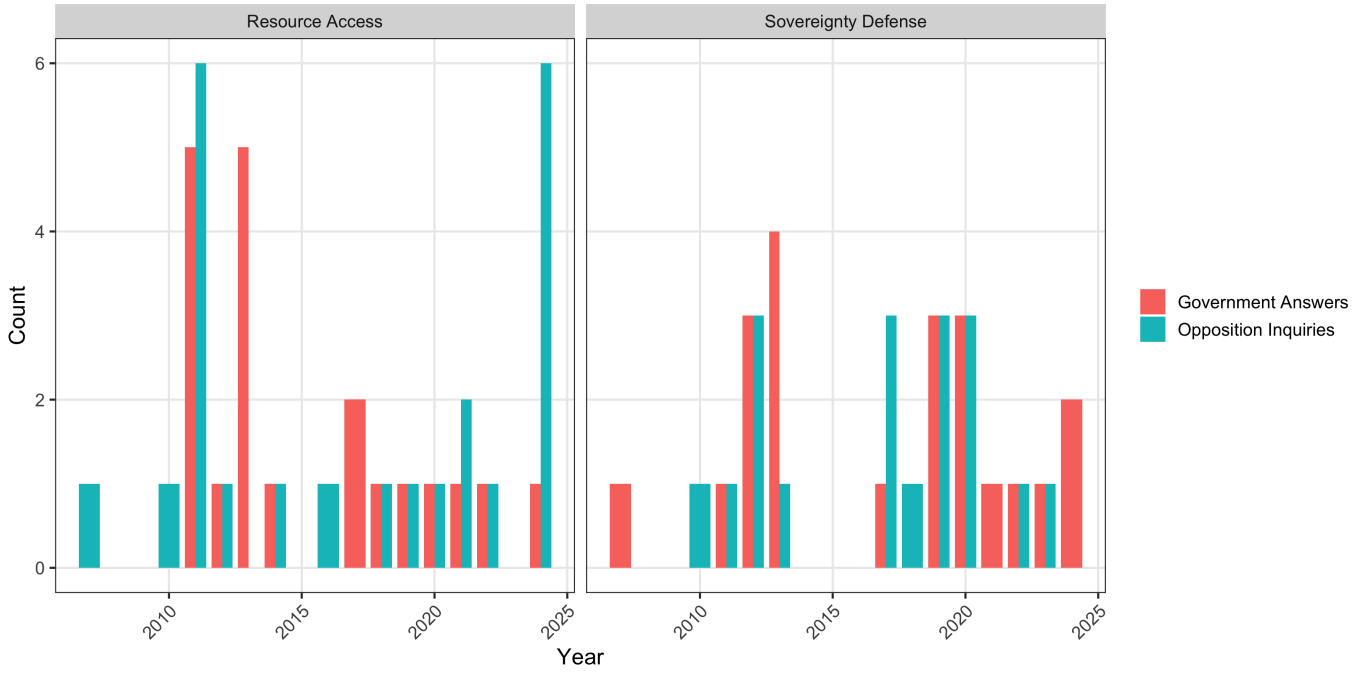

Figure B.3: LLM Classification into Resource Access and Sovereignty Defense

These figures provide further confidence in my main analysis. First, the opposition submitted its first formal inquiry in 2007, following the Cyprus-Lebanon maritime boundary agreement and the subsequent announcement of 11 offshore exploration blocks by Cyprus. In response, the Turkish Navy escorted out the licensed foreign energy exploration firm while conducting exploratory surveys around Turkish-claimed maritime areas.

Second, the first notable surge in Resource Access occurred during the 2010–2013 period, following the United States Geological Survey's (USGS) assessment of Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbon potential in 2010. This period also saw several offshore licensing rounds by both Cyprus and Turkey, initiated after a maritime boundary agreement between Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Multiple countries, including Cyprus and Israel, discovered substantial offshore natural gas reserves during this period. Notably, the Sovereignty Defense theme also experienced its first significant spike in this period, reflecting rising concerns over territorial integrity as energy exploration intensified.

Finally, a second surge in Sovereignty Defense discourse emerged around 2019–2020, coinciding with Turkey's signing of a maritime boundary agreement with Libya's Government of National Accord and its subsequent NAVTEX announcements for exploratory drilling in contested areas claimed by Greece. In response, Greece announced mobilization, threatened to use force, and deployed naval vessels to Turkish exploration sites. Turkish-licensed energy vessels were escorted by the Turkish Navy, and during naval maneuvers, two warships collided. Turkey eventually recalled its exploration vessels, a decision criticized by the opposition. This episode further illustrates that the opposition adopts a hawkish stance over resource-rich areas when they plausibly perceive political benefits.

B.3 Opposition Alliance Common Policy Memorandum on Eastern Mediterranean Policies

In 2023, just before the presidential election, the opposition alliance declared in their common policy memorandum of understanding that they would uphold Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean policies to protect the country's sovereign rights. Table B.1 presents English-translated statements from the Opposition Alliance's Common Policies Memorandum related to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, published before the 2023 presidential elections in Turkey.

	Statements
1	We will protect our rights in the Eastern Mediterranean, complete international agreements on exclusive economic zones, and intensify exploration activities.
2	We will prevent Turkey's isolation in the Eastern Mediterranean, prioritize achieving results through multilateral negotiation processes for delimiting maritime zones and ensuring the fair sharing of hydrocarbon resources.
3	The Aegean Sea should be considered an area of peace, cooperation, and good neighborliness. We will work towards this goal and will not allow any development that could harm our sovereign areas in the Aegean Sea.
4	We will effectively utilize the opportunity for our country to be the sole alternative for transporting Eastern Mediterranean natural gas to Europe.
5	We will establish a trade hub for petroleum and petroleum products in the Mediterranean region, develop port infrastructure for petroleum trade, and increase the number and capacity of pipelines transporting oil from neighboring countries to the region.

Table B.1: (2023) Statements on Eastern Mediterranean from Turkey's Opposition Alliance Common Policies Memorandum

This qualitative evidence further reinforces how resource-rich maritime zones have become a bipartisan issue in Turkey, despite hyperpolarization, with both the government and the opposition recognizing the strategic importance of maintaining Turkey's territorial sovereignty and resource access in the region. Overall, the analysis of supplementary data enhances confidence in the findings presented in the main text and provides additional micro-level evidence on the domestic politics of territorial disputes over resource-rich maritime areas.