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Framing of Pro-Minority Political Parties by Mainstream Media:

A case study of the Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi – HDP) and the Turkish Press

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This thesis is dedicated to all innocent lives that were lost during the Kurdish – Turkish Conflict.

Abstract

The objective of this case study is to analyze how the mainstream Turkish press framed the pro-minority Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi – HDP) and what the differences and similarities were in their framing of the HDP in coverage of the events between the two general elections in 2015, when the peace process between the PKK and Turkish state collapsed. The analysis is focused on 3 newspapers from June 2015 until November 2015: Hürriyet, Sabah and, Sözcü. I practiced upon the propaganda model to explain how the media in Turkey worked as for the Kurds and relied on the framing and agenda-setting theories to make sense of the fact that how and to what end the actors in political communication framed issues.

While the study showed that the HDP were covered majorly within the subjects of Kurdish – Turkish Conflict (1984 -) and 7 June Elections, the dominant frame to cover the HDP was the morality frame, followed by responsibility and terrorism & separation frames. The findings showed that there was a considerable variation between how and on which subject each newspaper covered the HDP based on their political affiliation. While Hürriyet covered the HDP through a mostly legitimate actor frame coupled with responsibility and powerlessness frames, Sabah and Sözcü's framing of HDP were based on a highly illegitimate actor frame for Sözcü and almost solid illegitimate actor frame for Sabah, followed by responsibility and terrorism and separation frames for both newspapers. The findings of this study showed that the mainstream framing activity between the two elections did not affect HDP constituency in a decisive degree but rendered the party as significantly vulnerable in political context of Turkey.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of this master thesis is elite framing in the Turkish press regarding *Turkeyfication*, an important project put forward by Kurdish activists in Turkey in late 1990s and early 2000s. The project was termed "Türkiye-lilesme [Turkey-fication]", implying an inclusive definition of national identity, essentially accepting to be an integral part of Turkey while at the same time belonging to an ethnic group other than Turkish (Sen, 2018). Turkeyfication became a reality with the organization of the components of the Peoples' Democratic Congress (Halkların Demokratik Kongresi – HDK), a platform composed of various groups including left-wing parties, far-left, feminist, LGBTI groups, trade unions, as well as ethnic and religious initiatives representing Alevis, Armenians and Pomaks, among others[1]. The HDK established the pro-minority Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi – HDP) in 2012 to realize their political goals.

To set the scene for this study, it is important to know the Kurds are the largest stateless nation in the world (Gunter, 2018) and the second largest ethnic group in Turkey constituting around 20% of the total population according to the CIA World Factbook[2] and the Kurdish Institute of Paris[3]. The Kurds in Turkey correspond to almost half of the Kurds in the Middle East, while the rest is spread, among others, between Iran, Iraq, and Syria, in addition to millions of Kurds living in the diaspora, especially in Europe. As the conflict in Turkey on the Kurdish issue has not been resolved through any means yet, the armed conflict that has been continuing since 1984 between the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party, Kurdish: Partîya Karkerên Kurdistanê) and the Turkish forces has, directly or indirectly, affected almost every part of life especially in Kurdish region, causing more

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[1] https://halklarindemokratikkongresi.net/hdk/bilesenler/497, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*
[2] https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/turkey/, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*
[3] https://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/the-kurdish-population-1232551004, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

than forty thousand deaths[4], destroyed villages and settlements as well as over millions of displaced people so far. As a result, the conflict has intensified the ethnic polarization and nationalism on both sides (Maisel, 2018), giving rise to certain social conditions that undermine democracy and security, as well as increasing exploitation of elite framing as a means of propaganda since then.

The study here aims to demonstrate the mainstream elite framing of the HDP by following 3 different politically aligned newspapers, namely: Hürriyet, Sabah, and Sözcü. These newspapers were among the 3 most popular daily papers in the mainstream Turkish press, according to the circulation numbers indicated by the Press Advertisement Agency (Basın İlan Kurumu)[5]. This study covers a timeline between June 2015 and November 2015 and presents a content analysis of the front pages of each newspaper through framing.

1.1. Relevance and Importance

Being one of the critical social and political problems in Turkey and the region, the Kurdish issue still raises difficult problems of democracy and human rights, together with multiculturalism and assimilation in everyday life in a wide geographical area. Whereas the framing of the Kurds, the biggest other in Turkey, works as a litmus test and is essential to understand the agenda regarding human rights and democratization in Turkey as well as foreign policy, the framing of the HDP in the mainstream Turkish press indicates the problem definition of those with media power when it

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[4] https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-kurds-idUSKCN0YM1GN, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*
[5]https://t24.com.tr/haber/2015in-ilk-alti-ayinda-hangi-gazete-ne-kadar-resmi-ilan-aldi,305397, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*, side note: Posta was excluded because Hurriyet and Posta belonged to the same conglomerate, Zaman's archive was not accessible after the government takeover in March 2016

comes to a democratic solution to the Kurdish Issue because of the HDP's mediator role between the warring parties.

Even though there is quite an interest among academics on the Kurds, Kurdish issue in Turkey and Turkeyfication from the standpoint of the frames in the press such as (Erdem, 2014); (Atay & İrvan, 2020; Sezgin & Wall, 2005; Somer, 2005; Yeğen, 1999; Yuksel-Pecen, 2018), to the best of my knowledge there is no study which specifically focused on how the current mainstream pro-Kurdish political movement, namely the Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi – HDP), were framed in the mainstream Turkish press with a comparative perspective based on events and political alignment which covered the timeline between the June and November 2015 General Elections. This study aims to fill the indicated gap as such an understanding presents an opportunity to get an insight into the reasons behind the current state of the Kurdish issue in the mainstream Turkish media.

1.2. Research Objectives and Questions

My main objective is to understand how the framing of the HDP evolved in the mainstream Turkish press between the two general elections in 2015 when the peace negotiations between the PKK and Turkish state collapsed. To do so within time limitations of a master's thesis, I decided to look at the key considerations emphasized in the front pages of 3 newspapers through their coverage of events in which the HDP were mentioned. By identifying the frames that focus on specific aspects of issues related to HDP on the front page, I investigate how the mainstream press define HDP in Turkish political context for the indicated timeline, which lights the way for how certain attitudes towards the party are promoted through coverage.

Accordingly, I asked the questions below to find a set of comprehensive findings:

1. How was the HDP framed in the front pages of the Hurriyet, Sabah and Sozcu newspapers from June 2015 to November 2015?
2. What are the differences and similarities between their framing of the HDP based on coverage of events?
3. What is the relationship between the variations in the framing of the HDP and the political alignment of the newspapers?

1.3. Outline of the Thesis

In the following chapter 2, I presented a brief introduction to the Kurdish issue in relation to the modern history of Turkey. This includes a short history of the mainstream pro-Kurdish political movement(s) in Turkey and a summary of how the Kurdish issue was handled during the consecutive terms of the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP).

In chapter 3, I review the current research approaches to the framing theory in mass communication that are relevant to the objectives and questions of this study, the propaganda model to make sense of how the media operates in Turkey, and how the Kurds were framed in the Turkish press. In the final section of the chapter, I explained the definitions of the concepts and how they were operationalized within the scope of this study to answer the research questions.

In the following research methodology chapter 4, I shed light on the research design with a view to operationalization of the concepts, in addition to the methodological approach employed, methods of data collection and analysis, justification and validity of the choices related to the research design.

In chapter 5, I answered the research questions and presented the findings for each newspapers including the variations between them and themes in question, and the aggregate findings for 3

newspapers combined. I compared the findings to spot the differences and similarities that they had with one another to make sense of the relationship between the political alignment and the dominant coverage and framing patterns of each newspaper. Finally in the conclusion chapter, I revisited the research objectives and questions, summarized the findings, reflected on the approaches and methods used in the research, and considered the implications of this elite framing activity in the mainstream press.

2. CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

This chapter consists of the background information necessary to make sense of the topic and answer the research questions. The first section includes the evolution of the ongoing conflict over the Kurdish issue in the modern history of Turkey, the political representation of the pro-Kurdish parties in parliament and municipalities, the evolution of the issue during the AKP governments as well as brief, descriptive information about the press landscape and journalism in Turkey.

2.1. Kurdish Conflict in Turkey

When the Ottomans were defeated after the World War I, the Article 62 of the Treaty of Sevres (1920) made between the Allies and the Ottoman government provided for a Kurdish state through scheduling a referendum in the Ottoman Kurdistan[6]. However, the Treaty of Lausanne[7] (1923) signed after the Turkish War of Independence (1919 – 1923) with the Grand National Assembly in Ankara made no provision or mention for independence or even local autonomy for a Kurdish homeland. Thus, the Kurds were left with an unrecognized minority status in all the new countries that came after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

In line with the monist approach to promote Turkish nation (Turkification) with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the Kurdish issue inherently became an inevitable problem. Already having a history of revolts in Ottoman era, some of the Kurds responded with uprisings including the Koçgiri Rebellion in 1921, Beytussebab Rebellion in 1924, Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925, and the Ararat Rebellion from 1927 and 1930, all of which were suppressed by the

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[6] https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Section_I,_Articles_1_-_260, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*
[7] https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Lausanne, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

Kemalist regime (See chapter 7 & 8 in (McDowall, 2004). As a result of this nation-building process in a nutshell,

> *"There were many Kurdish massacres throughout the republic's history. In 1915 the Armenians, and in 1923 the Greeks were eliminated through forced relocation programs. The Kurds followed them. The Kurdish issue was a social problem at the beginning, but with the policies of rejection, denial, and destruction, it turned into a complex political issue."*(Calislar, 2013, p. 29).

According to (Gunes, 2011b), the Kurds went into relative silence after the brutal suppression of the Dersim revolt/massacres (1937 – 1938) until the end of 1950s. Following the plotters orchestrated the coup d'état in 1960, the junta adopted a systematic and comprehensive denial policy against the Kurds by changing the Kurdish names of settlements/places into Turkish ones, passed a law for the regional boarding schools (Yatılı Bölge Okulları in Turkish) to assimilate especially the Kurds by promoting such ideas that the Kurds are of Turkish origin and there is no Kurdish nation (McDowall, 2004, pp. 406, 407). In the early 1970s, the Kurds presented their demands with popular demonstrations organized by the Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Centers (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları – DDKO) which became the main avenue of politics for the Kurds then. However, following the military coup d'etat in 1971, the Kurdish socialist movement was outlawed and headed into fragmentation (Gunes, 2011a). The coup period through which prominent student leaders were hanged lasted until the 1974 General Amnesty; in the meantime, Turkey was going into the notorious period of political violence in the streets between far-left and far-right after the second half and towards the ends of the 1970s (Zürcher, 2017b). One of the groups that were being organized during this time was the PKK, by a group of students under the Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association in 1974. After numerous conflicts with other

Kurdish and Turkish leftist groups and pro-state tribes in the region, the organization completed its formation in November 1978 as a Marxist-Leninist organization for establishment of an independent Kurdish state, and this particular underground organization gained enough power to launch a guerilla warfare against the state in 1984 (see Chapter 20 in (McDowall, 2004).

Those dark and bloody years of instability of the 1970s ended up with the 1980 coup d'état upon profound social divisions and fragmentations. The junta further intensified Turkish nationalism and banned the Kurdish language, as well as banned all political and civilian activities (Zürcher, 2017c). Hundreds of thousands were taken into prisons, millions of people were blacklisted, some were denied international travel and others were dismissed from their jobs on the grounds of suspicion, hundreds of people were sentenced to death, tens of thousands of people escaped the country and became refugees, and many more[8]. Diyarbakir prison is still a notorious symbol of the most terrible means of oppression used against the Kurds then[9]. As a result, most of the political and civilian activities either came to a halt or went underground. The new parties were to get the approval of the military junta to run in the elections. The election threshold was determined as 10% and one of the reasons behind this was to hinder the formation of ethnically distinctive regional parties such as the Kurdish movement and other marginal groups for example Islamists and Communists (Ananicz, 2006) see also (Sabuncu, 2006).

According to (McDowall, 2021), the government responded to the PKK attacks with arming their local supporters who later became 'village guards' and caused further grievances and atrocities among the Kurds. *"By 1986, 2,842 out of 3,524 villages in Adıyaman, Gaziantep, Urfa, Mardin,*

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[8] https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/sirasayi/donem24/yil01/ss376_Cilt1.pdf, Parliamentary Investigation Commission for the Coups and the Memorandums, 2012, page 19, see also (Çınar & Şirin, 2017) and state news agency https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/turkeys-bloodiest-military-coup-39-years-later/1579848, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*
[9] (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2009)

Siirt and Diyarbakır had been renamed to expunge Kurdish identity" (p. 730) and in 1987, a governor-general was appointed over the eight Kurdish provinces in which martial rule was declared. Nevertheless, the government eased the prohibition of Kurdish music in 1991 and there was a window of opportunity for peace in 1993, but the negotiations had failed soon after the president died of a suspicious heart-attack and a group of PKK militants ambushed 33 soldiers. Despite several unilateral ceasefires declared by the PKK in 1995, 1996 and 1998, the region had never gone to a 'normal' until the beginning of the 21st century. The war between the PKK and the state (from 1984 to 1999) ended up with more than 35.000 dead including prominent intellectuals, writers, and politicians, thousands of settlements partly or completely destroyed, almost 3 million displaced people and many more atrocities (Bozarslan, 2001).

Towards the late 1990s especially after the international effort for kidnapping and arrest of the PKK's leader Abdullah Öcalan and then gradually through the 2000s, according to (Gunes, 2012), the strategy of the mainstream Kurdish movements in Turkey grasped the democratic discourse and evolved into what is now called Turkeyfication (Türkiyelileşme), which meant renunciation of the earlier secessionist agenda replaced by a united, yet democratic, Republic of Turkey that would also grant some sort of autonomy to the Kurds (Kavak, 2018).

2.2. Turkeyfication and the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)

Turkeyfication is an ongoing process put forward by Kurdish activists of Turkey, which they termed as an inclusive definition of national identity accepting being an integral part of Turkey while at the same time belonging to an ethnic group other than Turkish (Sen, 2018). For some, it also means giving up a struggle dedicated to more rights for the Kurds and calling for a

comprehensive democratization in Turkey instead.[10] Another commonly mentioned connotation is 'being a party of Turkey'. Defining themselves with a party program[11] with emphasize on democracy, freedom & equality, as well as pro-peace, pro-labor and pro-self-government stances with pro-gender and green policies, according to Güneş, (Gunes, 2020), the HDP is the current representative of the pro-Kurdish democratic movement, which itself was founded on 7 June 1990 with the establishment of the People's Labour Party (Halkın Emek Partisi, HEP). The HEP was established by the MPs who were expelled from the SHP[12] and the local branches who protested and resigned from the party[13]. The two parties made an election alliance and 22 HEP candidates got elected to the parliament under the electoral list of the SHP in 1991. This was a unique event in the history of the republic because a party whose main program is the recognition of the rights of the Kurds was in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

Their alliance did not last long due to the crisis happened during the oath-taking ceremony. The SHP's leader demanded for their resignation and the HEP was subject to investigations. So, they founded another party titled the Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi – DEP) to keep their legal existence. Following extreme pressure in the political environment and the Parliament lifting the immunity of the MPs, the pro-Kurdish parliamentary representation in Turkey was eliminated in 1994 when the HEP and its replacement DEP were closed on 14 July 1993 and 16 June 1994,

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[10] https://www.boell.de/en/2015/10/27/turkeys-newest-party-understanding-hdp, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

[11] https://www.hdp.org.tr/en/peoples-democratic-party/8760/, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

[12] The Social Democratic Populist Party (Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti – SHP) run in the elections in 1987 and collected 25% of the popular votes gaining 99 out of 450 seats and becoming the main opposition party (information taken from the Turkish Statistical Institute at https://data.tuik.gov.tr/)

[13] the Kurdish MPs joined the event titled 'The Kurds: Human Rights and Cultural Identity', the so-called Kurdish Conference on 14 – 15 October 1989 in Paris. The MPs were expelled over joining the meeting despite the ban by the SHP administration.

respectively, on grounds that they promoted Kurdish separatism and were the political front of the PKK.[14]

After the closures of the two parties, The HADEP was established in May 1994 and its backup Democratic People's Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi – DEHAP) in October 1997. The HADEP run in the 1995 elections as a bloc called 'Labor, Peace and Freedom' and collected more than 4% of the votes but could not be represented in the Parliament due to the 10% election threshold (Bozarslan, 1996). Despite a Constitutional Court case for closure, the HADEP run in the April 1999 General and Local Elections and secured 3,5% of the votes giving the control of 5 out of 81 provincial municipalities in Turkey (Gunes, 2020). Further according to Gunes, the permanent cease-fire declared by the PKK in 1999 upon the arrest of its leader Öcalan somehow created a space for the HADEP and DEHAP to keep an agenda of promoting peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. While the court case was being heard to close the HADEP, the substitute DEHAP started to become prominent in the political arena. As for the 2002 elections, the party contested the elections with the 'Labor, Peace and Democracy Bloc', securing 6,2% of the votes. In the 2004 local elections, the party took part in the election under the Social Democratic People's Party (Sosyal Demokrat Halk Partisi – SHP) and they collected 4,7% of the votes getting the municipality of prominent Kurdish cities such as Diyarbakir, Batman, Şırnak, Hakkari and Dersim (Tunceli)[15]. As a court case against the DEHAP paved the way for another political party, previously imprisoned DEP MPs were released in 2004 and they declared the establishment of the Democratic Society Movement (Demokratik Toplum Hareketi) with a view to represent broader sections of the society. The organization later turned into a political party and the DEHAP mayors joined them when the

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[14] The HEP and later DEP later joined the clandestine cease-fire talks between the PKK and the state upon the request of Özal. The mediation of the DEP MPs between the warring parties later backfired as court files since the establishment described both parties as the 'political wing' of the PKK.
[15] https://data.tuik.gov.tr/, last accessed on 1 July 2021

DEHAP dissolved itself to merge with the Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi – DTP) towards the late 2005. In the meantime, the PKK declared the end of the cease-fire and started attacks, this time using more hit-and-run tactics.

It was 2007 when the pro-Kurdish parliamentary representation returned with 22 pro-Kurdish independent candidates who made up for the DTP group in the Parliament and their return after 13 years brought about a considerable momentum in political activism of the Kurds in Turkey by gaining wider audience and access to media (Gunes, 2020). Following the 2009 local elections, the DTP further consolidated its votes by being the leading party and gaining 96 municipality in the Kurdish region; nevertheless, the DTP was regarded as the political wing of the PKK and the arrest wave came under the so-called KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union) operations. Later, the DTP was banned by the Constitutional Court[16].

Then on, the pro-Kurdish movement increased its presence at the local and national levels and in 2011, they managed to elect 36 independent MPs under the Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi – BDP) (Grigoriadis, 2016). While the Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi – HDP) was established on 15 October 2012 to consolidate the electoral gains of the pro-Kurdish parties, as well as to unite and restore Turkey's fragmented socialist left within a common struggle for democracy and equality under an umbrella (Gunes, 2020). The party's program With the BDP joining the HDP in April 2014, the process of Turkeyfication took the first concrete step and gained a significant momentum as it can be seen in the tables below that show the chronological transition of the mainstream Kurdish political parties in Turkey as well as performance of those parties in parliamentary elections, respectively:

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[16] https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-kurds-idUSTRE5BA3HA20091211, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

Table1: Transition of the Mainstream Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkey (Adapted from (Celep, 2018)

Party Title	Date opened	Date closed	Notes
People's Labour Party (Halkın Emek Partisi – HEP)	7 June 1990	14 July 1993	Banned by the Constitutional Court
Freedom and Equality Party (Özgürlük ve Eşitlik Partisi – ÖZEP)	25 June 1992	4 July 1992	To merge with the HEP
Freedom and Democracy Party (Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi – ÖZDEP)	19 October 1992	23 November 1993	Banned by the Constitutional Court
Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi – DEP)	21 June 1991	16 June 1994	Banned by the Constitutional Court
People's Democracy Party (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi – HADEP)	11 May 1994	13 March 2003	Banned by the Constitutional Court
Democratic People's Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi – DEHAP)	24 October 1997	19 November 2005	Dissolved to join the DTP
Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi – DTP)	9 November 2005	11 December 2009	Banned by the Constitutional Court
Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi – BDP)	2 May 2008	22 April 2014	Dissolved to join DBP and HDP
• **Democratic Regions Party (Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi – DBP)**	2 May 2008	Active	
• **Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi – HDP)**	15 October 2012	Active	

Table 2: Parliamentary Election Results for the Mainstream Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkey (1991 – 2018) Source: Supreme Election Council Election Archive[17]

Year	Vote (%)	Seats	Party title – Election Strategy
1991	-	18	HEP – contested under the Social Democratic Populist Party (Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti – SHP)
1995	4,2	0	HADEP – contested as party
1999	4,8	0	HADEP – contested as party
2002	6,2	0	DEHAP – contested as umbrella party including the Labour Party (Emek Partisi – EMEP) and the Socialist Democracy Party (Sosyalist Demokrasi Partisi – SDP)
2007	3,8	22	DTP – contested via independent candidates
2011	5,7	35	BDP – contested via independent candidates
2015	13,1	80	HDP – contested as party
2015	10,8	59	HDP – contested as party
2018	11,7	67	HDP – contested as party

2.3. The Kurdish Issue during the AKP governments

Regarding the origins of the AKP in a nutshell according to Zürcher (Zürcher, 2017a), Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi – RP) became the mayor of Istanbul in the 1994 local elections and the party won the most votes in 1995 general elections as a grassroot popular movement. After the short-lived coalition governments from 1993, the Islamist RP came

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[17] https://www.ysk.gov.tr/tr/secim-arsivi/2612, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

to government in a coalition with the center-right True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi – DYP). In response, the Kemalist military actively started to intervene in the political and social life, and those tensions ended up with the 1997 military memorandum, also called as the post-modern coup that resulted in resignation of PM Erbakan, dissolution of the government, and later closure of the party by the Constitutional Court and imprisonment of Erdogan. After the successor Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi), was also closed in 2001 on the ground that it is the continuation of the Refah Party, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve kalkınma partisi – AKP) was formed in the same year out of the modernist faction of the movement. In the 2002 general elections that came after the stunning 2001 financial crisis, the AKP won the 2002 General Elections with single majority and came to power.

12 days after coming to power, they lifted the State of Emergency (military rule) in the Kurdish region[18]. The AKP emphasized a positive role to deal with the Kurdish question in Turkey on the basis of cultural rights and democratic demands by advocating democracy and human rights through a series of social and political reforms (Gurses, 2020). As Ragan Updegraff stated, "*The AKP has combined this perception with promises of economic development and continued (even if fitful) EU-inspired reform to attract a sizeable share of the Kurdish vote. For the more religious among the large majority of Kurds who are Sunni Muslims, the AKP's framing of the issues between Turks and Kurds as a matter between "brothers" carries great resonance."*(Updegraff, 2012, p. 123*).

After the PKK ended the cease-fire in 2004, which caused a significant increase in violence, Erdogan raised the hopes for a solution in Kurdish issue in Diyarbakir, August 2005[19]. As a part

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[18]   https://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/01/world/turkey-lifts-restrictions-long-imposed-in-kurds-area.html,   *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

[19] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2005/8/30/turkish-pm-addresses-kurdish-question, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

of the secret talks from 2005 to 2011, the first concrete steps towards a peace environment came with establishment of the state owned TRT 6 TV channel in Kurdish, and the Kurdish Initiative, known formerly as the Kurdish Opening, later referred to variously as the Democratic Opening, the National Unity Project, and the Democratic Initiative, Peace Process among others, which aimed to solve the Kurdish question on democratic basis[20] (Gurses, 2020; Toktamış, 2019). According to (Kadıoğlu, 2019), the PKK sent a group of unarmed guerrillas and refugees from the Kurdish Autonomous Region in Northern Iraq to Turkey the same year. The group passed the Habur Border Gate without being arrested. However, the winds had changed and this initiative, which came to be called as the 'Habur Process,' faded without success, and the unarmed PKK guerrillas and Kurdish refugees were arrested; the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi- DTP) was banned by the Constitutional Court; and its two leaders were expelled from the Parliament[21]. In 2009, a comprehensive police operation was initiated against pro-Kurdish politicians with the accusation of being a member to the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), the urban organization of the PKK in Kurdish cities, about which the BDP stated on 6 October 2011 that 3895 out of 7748 BDP activists and executives were put in prison then[22] (also see (James, 2013).

Then on, between 2009 and 2011 some high-level clandestine talks before 3rd party observers took place between the National Intelligence Organization and the PKK, which later came to be known as the Oslo Process, whereby, for the first time, the Turkish state engaged in direct talks with Öcalan in Imrali Island (where he is imprisoned) and PKK representatives in Europe *(Kadıoğlu, 2019, p. 920)* This process also came to a halt after the leaks from the meetings in the media,

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[20] https://www.haberturk.com/yasam/haber/146173-cezaevinde-kurtce-yasagi-kalkiyor
[21] https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-kurds-idUSTRE5BA3HA20091211
[22] https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/kckda-agir-bilanco-304038

ongoing military operations and the PKK militants killed 13 soldiers in Silvan (Ensaroglu, 2013; Ozkahraman, 2017). But in 2013, the peace process reached a new phase: the Imrali process. That year political delegations from the pro-Kurdish BDP paid visits to Öcalan and the government let the process be carried out before the public for the first time. On 21 March 2013 in Diyarbakır, prominent HDP MPs publicly read out a letter written by Öcalan to hundreds of thousands who had gathered to celebrate Newroz, the beginning of spring and new year in Kurdish culture. The event was live broadcasted by the media and it was a turning point in the history of modern Turkey; however, this relatively promising peace environment for the region did not last long (Toktamış, 2019).

One thing that is for sure, the ongoing Syrian Civil War had a dramatic impact on the course of the peace talks in Turkey. The siege of Kobanî, which is a border town between Syria and Turkey, by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's (ISIL) and the Turkish government's response to the event erupted large-scale deadly protests for days in Kurdish cities in the southeastern part of Turkey on 6–8 October 2014 (Gunes & Lowe, 2015; Resch, 2017). Nevertheless, on February 28, 2015, Turkish government authorities and Kurdish deputies held a meeting in the Prime Minister's office in Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul over a 10-item agreement where the attendees held a joint press conference including the HDP shaking hands with government authorities at the end of the meeting[23].

The 7 June 2015 General Elections ahead of which the HDP rally in Diyarbakır was bombed by the ISIS[24] resulted with a historic victory for the pro-Kurdish and left-wing HDP receiving 13.1 percent of the national vote and gaining 80 MPs in the Parliament. The HDP's breakthrough

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[23] http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/ortak-aciklamanin-tam-metni, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*
[24] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/05/two-explosions-kurdish-peoples-democratic-party-rally-turkey, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

unsettled Turkey's political culture and national politics. After all, no coalition was to be formed. The ruling AKP lost the parliamentary majority for the first time since 2002, pro-Kurdish HDP surpassed the 10% election threshold for the first time in the history of the republic, and the conflicts escalated an unprecedented violence in cities of Turkey[25], especially against the HDP (see (O'Connor & Baser, 2018). The peace process between the Turkish government and the PKK was officially ended in July[26], although the Dolmabahçe meeting seemed like a turning point in the process. In a short period of time, 4 provinces and 15 districts declared autonomy in the Kurdish region[27]. According to the crisis group, more than at least 5.000 have been killed so far because of the conflicts started after June 2015[28], which ended up with partly destruction of Kurdish settlements including Sur, Cizre, Nusaybin and more. After a short-lived interim government, the AKP regained the majority in November 2015 Elections with 49.5% of the votes and 317 seats and the HDP kept itself over the election threshold with 59 seats and 10.7% of the votes.

As it is summarized by Henri J. Barkey: *"Bearers of a long tradition and culture of their own for probably two millennia in the Mesopotamia, the Kurds today maintain their own ethnic identity as a community and seeking its expression in legal terms in the cultural and political realm of Turkish life; thus, in generic terms then, the Kurdish issue represents the striving of an ethnic minority to achieve legal recognition as such, and to establish legal rights deriving therefrom"* (Barkey, 2000, p. 1)

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[25]   https://www.dw.com/tr/t%C3%BCrkiyeyi-sarsan-be%C5%9F-ay-7-haziran-1-kas%C4%B1m-2015/a-50204527, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*
[26] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33689660, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*
[27]   https://www.dw.com/tr/t%C3%BCrkiyeyi-sarsan-be%C5%9F-ay-7-haziran-1-kas%C4%B1m-2015/a-50204527, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*
[28] https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/turkeys-pkk-conflict-visual-explainer, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

2.4. Newspaper Landscape and Journalism in Turkey

Long history aside, today's press in Turkey took its current shape from the framework of the 1980 coup (Akser & Baybars-Hawks, 2012; Farmanfarmaian, Sonay, & Akser, 2018; Kaya & Çakmur, 2010; Tunç, 2018; Yesil, 2016). Not only the repression after the coup, but also the changes that were introduced during and after the coup period had profound effect in political, social, and cultural life in Turkey and brought about the template for the major changes coming after opening of the Turkish economy to liberal trade in goods, services, and financial market transactions from 1980 onwards. While the Junta established the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK in Turkish) in 1983, the process brought further modernization with advanced communication networks and printing technologies that expanded the media outlets and products in Turkey, including private TVs after 1989[29], as well as changing the function and role of the media towards early 1990s with further commercialization (Kaya & Çakmur, 2010).

As a national paper is a big business requiring a serious initial capital to kick off and it is hard to keep up with the competitive market environment due to privatization of television, world-wide mergers, low direct income as well as the promotion wars, the vulnerability was clear for those in business, thus the owners started to engage in other sectors (Tunç, 2018). At the same time, those who accumulated capital from different sectors, such as energy, construction, and banking, started to engage in media sector. Therefore, the publications in the press were dominated by large corporations having interests in larger commercial broadcasting and other big sectors. According to Yesil, small and independent local and regional publications were badly affected during the second half of the 1990s beginning from the late 1980s, giving most of the market share to

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[29] https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/media/detail/outlet/star-tv/, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

sensational national papers and periodicals owned by big corporations, as well as giving rise to further marginalization of the dissent (Yesil, 2014). This transformation led to further instrumentalization of the media for securing subsidies and contracts with the government, in exchange for loyalty and parallelism in their coverage of events, further undermining journalistic autonomy and objectivity.

Aydin Dogan's media empire came to the front with the acquisition of prominent Milliyet and Hurriyet newspapers in in 1979 and 1983, respectively and for a long time, more than 50 percent of all the print, audio-visual and news media in Turkey had become under the Dogan Media's control (Akser & Baybars-Hawks, 2012). In a similar trend towards the first half of the 2000s, the media market came to be dominated by few groups with increasing concentration of media ownership and after the second half of the 2000s, the government reshaped the media market via the Savings Deposits and Insurance Fund, an agency affiliated to the PM's office focusing on taking over the media outlets going through financial trouble, running the papers for a while, and then selling the outlets at an auction (Yeşil, 2018). One perfect example from 2007 was the sales of the SABAH/ATV group to pro-government Çalık Holding, the only bidder, with the help of bank loans provided by two public banks (Tunç, 2018)[30].

Besides the assassination of prominent Armenian journalist Hrant Dink and arbitrary use of the anti-terror Law (Yesil, 2014) against the Kurdish journalists, the Ergenokon investigations and KCK operations/trials sparked the first waves of intensification of pressure on the press in 2008. Further according to Yesil, in 2009, the Ministry of Finance charged Dogan Media with tax irregularities, an astronomical fine almost equal to the total value of Dogan's assets, in response

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[30] https://www.reuters.com/article/us-atvsabah-sale-idUSIST00141020071205, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

to their coverage of a scandal in Germany (aka the Deniz Feneri – Lighthouse) Trials)[31]. As result, he resigned from the CEO position of his company, fired some of its most critical voices from its flagship Hurriyet newspaper as well as chief journalists from liberal daily Radikal newspaper, moreover, sold two other popular mainstream newspapers Milliyet and Vatan, to pro-government Demiroren group, who had investments in mainly energy and construction, to ease the pressure (Yesil, 2016) (Akser & Baybars-Hawks, 2012). According to (Yeşil, 2018), while the pro-government media actors were gaining prominence subsequent to large scale Ergenekon and KCK trials between 2008 and 2011, the increasing oppression on media in general was gaining momentum during the same period, and turned into a new phase especially after the Gezi Park Protests and the corruption scandal revealed by the Gulenist media in 2013. Following Erdogan became the first President of the Republic that came via popular in the history of Turkey in 2014, the pressures on the media continued with even more coercive measures including police raids, arrests, expropriation of the assets of the outlets affiliated to the Gulenists (Yeşil, 2018), and it simply turned into an undisputed authoritarianism in time, especially after the AKP losing the parliamentary majority in the June 2015 elections, the failure of the peace process between the two elections, and later gaining the single majority and a failed coup attempt believed to be plotted by the Gulenists in July 2016. During all these years, the media was 'purged', and later the Dogan Media was sold to Demiroren in 2018[32].

In this chapter, I gave a summary of the Kurdish Issue in Turkey, which still is a highly complicated domestic and international issue, including the roots of the ongoing armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state, as well as the evolution of the legal representation of the Kurds in

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[31] https://www.dw.com/en/turkish-interior-ministry-orders-german-charity-scandal-probe/a-3658865, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

[32] https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/21/world/europe/turkey-media-erdogan-dogan.html, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

Turkey. Finally, I presented a brief piece of information on the media landscape in Turkey including the evolution of the media environment and main conglomerate actors related to the scope of this study. Next chapter, I presented a summary of the literature review on the concepts of framing and frames in political communication, the news-frames with a relation to public opinion as well as framing of the Kurds in the mainstream Turkish press.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents a review of available literature about framing and news-frames, from a perspective including their relationship with formation of public opinion through agenda-setting. This is followed by a review of what we know so far about how the Kurds were framed in the Turkish context, which was followed by a section dedicated to the evolution of the media landscape in Turkey especially for the press until 2015. I chose to keep my focus mainly around the indicated part of the literature because of my aim to present the framing of the HDP in the mainstream Turkish press and interpret the relationship between the framing of the party in the mainstream press and the changes happened in public opinion towards the party as to be measured by consecutive elections in 2015.

The first section presents the framing theory with a focus on the frames in political communication, including presenting different approaches towards the effects of framing. The section is concluded with a definition of framing and its functions in political communication. The second section handles with the news frames and their functions including typologies of generic news frames, the operation and organization of mass media based on systemic relationships, which is briefly explained in line with the Propaganda Model by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (Herman & Chomsky, 2010). After presenting the empirical literature review on framing and/or representation of the Kurds in the Turkish press in the third section, I outlined, in the final section of the chapter, the theoretical framework of this study including the definitions of the key concepts used in formulation of the research questions and how these concepts were demarcated, observed, and utilized to answer the research questions.

3.1. Framing & Frames in Political Communication

As for the current research context regarding the frames in social sciences, most of the scholars indicates Erving Goffman when it comes to the first conceptualization of the idea of frames in mass communication from a sociological perspective. He introduced the concept of frames as the 'schemata of interpretation' that paves the way for individuals or groups *"to locate, perceive, identify, and label"* ([Goffman, 1974, p. 21](#)) events and occurrences, thus letting them render meaning to make sense, organize experiences in memory, and guide actions. Similarly, according to ([Dennis Chong & James N Druckman, 2007, p. 104](#)), "*framing refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue*", for an issue can be approached from multiple perspectives and be perceived as having implications for an individual's or group's values or considerations, depending on the context. The set of dimensions (values, beliefs, and/or considerations) that affect an individual's evaluation on anything make up an individual's 'frame in thought' and one's underlying frame in thought can have an explicit impact on one's overall opinion towards an issue. Just as the issue of drug addiction can be framed as an issue of public health paving the way for targeting harm reduction via social services, or an issue of law and order paving the way for 'war on drugs' aiming for eradication of the supply, the Kurdish issue in Turkey, or the demands of the Kurds in Turkey such as constitutional recognition of Kurdish identity, regional autonomy and the right to education in mother tongue, as well as democratic and peaceful solution to the conflict, can also be framed based on different perspectives. For some in Turkey, the issue can be framed as an issue of national security/separatism and existential threat to the territorial integrity of the country, or at the same time, an issue of equality, democratization, human rights, and plurality, or even, an issue of conceptual (in)existence of the Kurdish people.

In psychology, however, there is a distinction between framing and priming in terms of their conceptual relationship with agenda-setting based on how they influence opinion formation. According to Scheufele and Iyengar, "*Framing defines a dynamic, circumstantially bound process of opinion formation in which the prevailing modes of presentation in elite rhetoric and news media coverage shape mass opinion.*" (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2012, p. 1). For them, the framing effect include only the variations occurred in one's behavior and attitude not because what piece of information is given, rather because how a piece of information is given. This approach emphasizes that framing is an applicability-based cognitive effect dependent on one's preexisting schemas of interpretation, while priming is an extension, outcome of agenda-setting both of which are accessibility-based cognitive effects that can have an influence on audience perception of salience regarding a specific issue, or a particular attribute of an issue. Considering my main research question inquiring the framing of a pro-minority political party in mainstream press during a critical election period, this study excludes such differentiation among the effects of framing, priming and agenda-setting because of their functions in political communication as indicated with a power-centered approach by Entman (Entman, 2007). Thus, I opt for a wider definition of framing from a sociological background which regard framing as fundamentally related with agenda-setting and priming, based on the role of the mass media in agenda-setting that is the ability of "the *transfer of salience from mass media to audience*" (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2012, p. 4).

As indicated in my research objectives and question, I am interested in how frames in the communications of elites (e.g., politicians, media outlets, interest groups) may influence citizens' perceptions and attitudes through a process that is called '*framing effect*' (Dennis Chong & James N Druckman, 2007). According to the authors, this is accomplished by highlighting certain

features of a policy, such as its possible results or its relationship with the 'important', salience of an issue. In so doing, the speaker invokes a "frame in communication", which "*organizes everyday reality*" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 193) by providing "*meaning to an unfolding strip of events*" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1994, p. 143) and promoting "*particular definitions and interpretations of political issues*" (Shah, Watts, Domke, & Fan, 2002, p. 343). While the frames in political communication, or the mass media, or the news industry, may not be decisive in governing one's engagement with an issue, they are nontrivial. They find resonance in minds and affect the attitudes and behaviors of their audiences through such mediators and moderators as the media, interest groups, politicians, and other citizens. As expected, politicians usually utilize certain communication frames used by their colleagues and rivals, the mass media, or even citizens to provide further mobilization towards their policies. Likewise, the frames in media mirror those used by politicians, social activists, other media outlets, or citizens; in a similar way, citizens also adopt the frames which are introduced to them in discussions with others (Dennis Chong & James N Druckman, 2007). Therefore, "*it is through framing that political actors shape the texts that influence or prime the agendas as well as considerations that people think about*" (Entman, 2007, p. 165). While framing in mass communication has function of forming and redirecting interpretations and preferences of target audience based on a set of desired attitudes and behaviors towards an issue, the process is done through priming, which is to introduce or make certain ideas and considerations salient or perceivably important through promoting schemas that would stimulate the target to have an (in)action in a particular way (Entman, 2007).

Because his definition integrates the concepts of framing, priming, and agenda-setting from the standpoint of political power, Entman's conceptualization of framing provides a better ground for the objectives of this research, since I am interested in the functions of the framing effect in opinion

formation from a sociopolitical perspective. He suggests that *"Framing is the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation."* ([Entman, 2007, p. 164](#)). Moreover, a complete frame basically provides four functions: (1) definition of the problem, (2) explanation of the cause of the problem, (3) providing a contextual background for moral judgment to (4) promote treatment for harm reduction. For example, the terror frame for the Kurdish issue[33] (1) defines the Kurdish demands as 'an issue of terrorism' behind which (2) the underlying cause is 'separation' of the PKK, (3) since the HDP is the 'political wing of the organization', (4) 'they must be punished', regardless of the HDP being a legal political party in Turkey which collected more than 6 million votes in the elections since 2015.

3.2. News-frames and Public Opinion

As it is reflected in Bernard Cohen's famous observation about the relationship between the mass media and the public opinion that "*the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about*" (1963, p.13) the theory of agenda-setting had a catalytic role in the emergence of the political communication as a scientific field through the relationship between the most often covered issues in media and what is considered to be important for the audience ([Kenski & Jamieson, 2017](#)), Taking some more steps further by the early 1990s, the Cohen's observation about the press evolved into that *"the media not only tell us what to think about, but also how to think about it, and, consequently, what to think"* ([McCombs & Shaw, 1993, p. 65](#))

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[33] https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/war-on-terror/turkey-has-no-kurdish-issue-erdogan-says, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

Based on their relation to the news in mass media, the (news) frames are defined as *"conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information"* (Neuman, Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, p. 60). Neuman et al. further suggest that there are 5 types of common news frames that can be categorized as the economic frame, conflict frame, powerlessness (being helpless before greater forces) frame, human impact frame and morality frame. In a similar way, Velkenburg and Semetko suggest that there are at least 5 different types of common news frames in their content analysis of newspaper and TV news stories (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) that can be categorized as (a) conflict frames, (b) human interest frames, (c) responsibility frames, (d) economic consequences frames, and (e) morality frames. Accordingly, the conflict frames make the conflict and competition between the individuals, institutions, and parties the central issue of coverage, and human-interest frames present issues or events through individual stories or emotional perspectives with a pinch of dramatization. While the responsibility frames filter an issue or event through attribution of responsibility to an individual or institution, either for causing, or solving issue, economic consequences frame puts the economic consequences of an issue that might affect an individual, institution, or a region in the center of coverage of an issue. And finally, the morality frames present an issue or problem in terms of cultural, religious, or moral prescriptions by means of editorial interpretations, quotations, and inferences.

Considering each four functions of a complete frame as indicated by Entman, framing and certain frames can be used as a technique of subtle persuasion to promote certain policies while covering issues. Nelson and Oxley (1999) differentiate 'framing' from 'persuasion' based on through which channels each cognitive effect occur, that is by referring to framing with a view to make a change in the weight component of an attitude exhibited in response to a communication, and by referring

to persuasion to make a change in how an audience evaluate the weight component in a communication, generally based on the content of issue-related belief, assumptions, bias, considerations, and so on. From this point of view, framing bears an underlying persuasive objective in the contexts of political communication and agenda-setting because of its significant influence on other factors of opinion formation such as belief content and importance of such beliefs (Nelson & Oxley, 1999). In parallel with the relationship between framing and persuasion, the propaganda model of Hermann and Chomsky, which is based on persuasive method of political communication, provides an approach that is relevant to make sense of how the mainstream Turkish media operates when it comes to the Kurds in Turkey by looking at why the agenda and framing of news media mostly stay within the boundaries of corporate and political elites in the US when it comes to foreign policy issues. According to Herman and Chomsky:

> *"The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. To fulfil this role requires systematic propaganda." (*Herman & Chomsky, 2010, p. 1*)*

The basic ingredients of their propaganda model fall under 5 filters. The first filter (1) Size & Ownership is related to concentration of ownership, wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms as for local, national, and international news production through limitation. As the media, producing news is a big and expensive business, the first filter restricts the ownership profile into quite wealthy and profit-oriented people generally having vested investments in other non-media sectors. In most of the countries, the media companies need license to use information infrastructure controlled by national governments. As the parent owners of the media companies

depend on government in terms of general policy support regarding interest policies, labor rights and conditions, as well as (non)implementation of specific laws and regulations, most of them *"are controlled by very wealthy people or by managers who are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other market-profit–oriented forces; and they are closely interlocked, and have important common interests, with other major corporations, banks, and government"* (p.14).

The second filter (2) Advertising is related to the use of advertising funding, through which the attention of the audience is sold, as the main source of income for mainstream media. This economic relationship makes the advertisers, whose demands as well as requirements are to be met, one of the patrons in media.

The 3rd filter is Sourcing, which is related to the reliance/dependence of the media on the information provided by government, business, and 'experts' funded and approved by these primary sources and institutions. Only the corporate sector has the resources to produce and disseminate public information and persuasive messages on a scale and effect that a government body can do, bearing the assumption in mind that a mass popular movement is destined to be doomed without a media support. Therefore, subsidizing the mass media and gaining privileged access for the contribution of the elites to reduce the media's costs of acquiring the raw materials of producing, news, the entities that can provide such subsidies become regular, routine news sources and have privileged media visibility. In effect, those with power take advantage of media routines and dependencies to manage and guide the media not to get sidetracked from a particular agenda and framework.

The fourth filter (4) 'flak' refers to reprimands, negative responses to a mention, statement and/or program in media. It can be in any form of complaint, threat, and punitive (in)action, and can be produced in a hybrid top-down and bottom-up manner including the actions by independent

individuals. If produced on a large scale, or by individuals or groups with substantial resources, political positions must be defended within the organization and before legislatures and likely the courts, depending on the implications of the hypothetical issue in question. As a potential result, advertisers may withdraw patronage, the organization can be subject to boycotts, punitive taxation, closure, embezzlement and forced hand-over. The government is a major producer of flak, who regularly attack and threaten to correct, discipline the media, by discrediting sources and information when necessary, to divert or keep the story convenient without any deviations from the established line as it can clearly be seen in the contextual information related to Section 1.4 on Newspaper Landscape and Journalism in Turkey. Thus, it does not wrong to state that mainstream news management on its own is shaped to produce flak, at least to a certain degree by setting the standards about what and who to blame regarding political issues.

The fifth and last filter is (5) ideology as a control mechanism. While Herman and Chomsky used anti-Communism for American foreign policy issues, it is anti-Kurd for the case of this study. It seems to me as an observer and consumer of the mainstream media in Turkey, as well as what the related literature review suggested in the Framing of the Kurds in Turkish Context subsection (see in the following section), the 'anti-Kurd' ideology serves as a template within which the mainstream journalists operate in Turkey. These filters lead to elite domination and marginalization of others in media, as well as to setting institutional boundaries for journalists and media outlets on how to frame which issues for the public attention. "*Within the limits of the filter constraints, they (journalists) often are objective; the constraints are so powerful, and are built into the system in such a fundamental way that alternative bases of news choices are hardly imaginable.*" (Herman & Chomsky, 2010, p. 2).

As the propaganda model is not related to how the public opinion is shaped, rather how the media operates based on hegemony, it sets wider boundaries for the frames available for the journalists to use in mainstream media (Klaehn, 2018). As for how the public opinion is influenced with the use of 5 filters and framing effect, it is better shown in Entman's simplistic cascading network activation model below (Entman, 2003). The figure explains how the public opinion is not only influenced by the media, but it can also influence the future framing behavior of elites and journalists through the media in a hybrid top-down/bottom-up manner as presented below in the Figure 1 Cascading network activation (Entman, 2003):
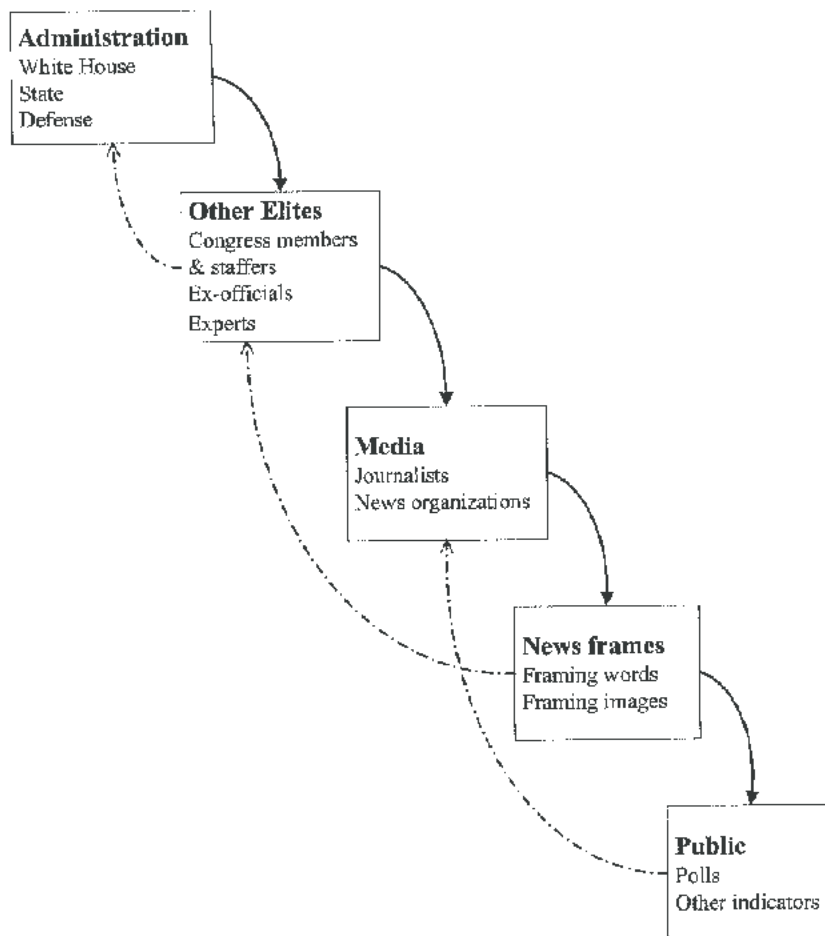

Figure 1 Cascading network activation (Entman, 2003)

When it comes to the effects of framing in public opinion formation, Chong and Druckman argue that *"framing effects depend on a mix of factors including the strength and repetition of the frame, the competitive environment, and individual motivations"*(Dennis Chong & James N. Druckman, 2007, p. 111) as well as such clear limits as values as exemplified by (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). Because people usually are exposed to multiple frames regarding an issue or problem in most of the political debates, the authors further argue that they choose the alternative that is consistent with their values or principles when confronted with different perspectives towards an issue. Their findings showed that "*being exposed to opposing sides of an argument increases consistency among decisions taken on specific policies and underlying principles.* (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004, p. 147). Therefore, ordinary citizens become quite susceptible to framing effects in mass communication networks of the real world because it often occurs not as one-time exposure to a slight variation in how a message is given, rather as a pattern of repeated exposure to resonant words and images (Entman, 2007) which strengthen a narrative and/or political discourse.

Although the frame(s) used by politicians and media do not necessarily satisfy all or even most of the audience sometimes, a frame can have a decisive effect on the swing or undecided, or the ideological moderates, those whose opinions are the most malleable for a political actor to win. A framing effect even on a slight percentage of the audience can determine which policy to have the decisive majority approval on a critical issue, or which candidate to win in elections especially in a country described to having evolved into a competitive authoritarian regime[34].

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[34] (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016)

3.3. Framing of the Kurds in Turkish Context

To begin with maybe the most cited phrase about the Turkish state discourse regarding the issue, Yegen states that "*From the mid 1920's until the end of the 1980's, the Turkish state 'assumed' that there was no Kurdish element on Turkish territory*" (Yeğen, 1999, p. 555). The reason why is that in Turkey, the state had dominant role in regulating the 'reference frame' of the political elite, media and public, especially by means of education and law in addition to the fact that 'indoctrination' has also been central in the Kemalist ideology during the Republican years (Loizides, 2009).

It can be seen in the study of Somer (2005) which covered how the discourse on Kurds changed in the country's then largest daily newspaper Hürriyet from 1984 through 1985, that only 25 articles which were at least partially related to the country's ethnic Kurds were published and only 3 of them used the word 'Kurd' while addressing a person, group, concept, or place. The use of the word Kurd started to increase from 1991, hitting the peak in 1993 with a total number of 490 articles using the word Kurd in 157 of them, and showing occasional hikes in 1996 and 1998. As it is nicely summarized by the author, *"an uninformed observer monitoring the mainstream Turkish social-political discourse could hardly have become aware of an ethnic-linguistic group called Kurds"*(Somer, 2005, p. 591*)*. Further continuing with the findings of the study, in the first 5 months of 2003 alone, which denotes to the time when the winds had changed, the same covered a total of 114 stories about the Kurds in Turkey; and *"47 of those, or roughly 4 in every 10, made a reference to Kurdishness as a group identity at least once by using terms such as 'Kurds', 'ethnic Kurds', or 'Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin'"*(Somer, 2005, p. 592*)*

Another study conducted by Sezgin and Wall (2005) have demonstrated that the daily Hürriyet, which was the biggest newspaper with the highest daily circulation and advertising revenue in

Turkey at the time the study was conducted (from 1997 to 2002), covered the Kurds predominantly in relation to various crimes, illegal immigration, terrorism and separatism supported by adversarial external powers. In a study by Derya Erdem in the Turkish mainstream media between 2008 and 2009 has shown through an example on the representation of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi – DTP) that Kurdish political demands were framed as cases of 'irrationality', 'violence', 'terrorism', 'mindless destruction' and 'internal threat' (Erdem, 2014).

Although the democratization programs initiated by the ruling AKP in 2009, namely first the '*Kurdish Opening*' and '*Democratic Opening*' then into the '*National Unity and Brotherhood Project*', resulted in an escalated discussion of the Kurdish question and a remarkable change in the tone of how Kurds were talked about in the mainstream media, in their content analysis of the representation of the peace process in the Turkish Press Atay and İrvan (2020) used the frames of 'fear of division', 'peace process', 'terrorism', as well as 'quotation and representation patterns' within the scope of peace journalism and concluded that among the eleven selected newspapers, the two nationalist dailies used 'terrorism' and 'fear of division' frames with strikingly high percentages: "'*Terrorism' frame, constituted 37.7% of Sözcü's total frames, and 30.3% of Yeniçağ's total frames. Similarly, 88% of the fear of division frames, which were used only in 25 news stories, were applied by the same newspapers*." and "…*in the aftermath of the 'Solution Process,' the coverage of the 'Kurdish question' in Turkey seems to have been reversed to war journalism following a change in government policy*." Concluding that that *"it would not be wrong to call it 'state-imposed peace journalism"* (Atay & İrvan, 2020, p. 115) regarding the trends in journalism performed in the solution process between 2013 and 2015.

As a result of the relationship between the state and the media in Turkey, the mainstream media usually adopted the state discourse which includes 'violence', 'terrorism' and 'separatism', often supported by 'foreign/external adversaries.' Coban stated during the timeline denoting to the Kurdish Opening that '*The word 'Kurd', for instance, very rarely appears in the news without being followed by the word 'separatist.*" (Coban, 2013, p. 453). Not surprisingly, the majority of Turkish citizens and institutions in past decades considered the Kurdish Question as only an issue of 'terrorism', in which the solution to the problem was to be reached after the elimination of the so-called separatist terrorist organization (see also(Aydinli & Ozcan, 2011). For the mainstream media became 'the voice of the war' in line with the state policies, such a destructive media policy polarizes the society, further escalates the ongoing conflict, (Aydın, 2019) and paves the way for more discrimination and institutional racism against the Kurds in Turkey.

3.4. Theoretical Framework

As understood from my main research question, I am mainly interested in how the HDP was framed as an actor of politics in Turkey for 5 months from June and November General elections in 2015 through which the peace process between the PKK and Turkish government failed. To begin with, the Kurdish issue in Turkey, which is a very complicated political issue in the region with a history at least since the Ottoman Empire, is the setting of this case study and is basically handled as the political process including the demands of the Kurds in Turkey and the government policies in turn. While there were many domestic and external actors of the Kurdish Issue in Turkey for 2015, the HDP were chosen as the focus because of their popular representation in the region and other parts of Turkey, as well as the previous mediating roles that the movement undertook in the past periods render them as one of the most relevant parties in a democratic solution to the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

Despite framing as a cognitive effect has different conceptual operations in various branches of social sciences, for the case of this study, I refer to Entman's definition of framing that is *"the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation. ... that works to shape and alter audience members' interpretations and preferences through priming, meaning that frames introduce or raise the salience or weighted importance of certain ideas, activating schemas that encourage the target to think, feel, and decide in a particular way"* (Entman, 2007, p. 164). Therefore, fully developed frames typically perform four functions: problem/issue definition, causal analysis, moral judgment, and remedy promotion (Entman, 2007) to guide the critical levels of agenda-setting to set the guidelines for implementation of policies in the field. Accordingly, the assumption employed here, also in line with the propaganda model, is that the media help regulate distribution of political power in favor of certain groups, causes, or individuals. Due to those indicated functions of framing, I adopted this particular approach as the theoretical basis of this study regarding framing. Because as suggested by Entman, through integrating framing, agenda setting, and priming with a view to the HDP and 'Turkeyfication' in the mainstream Turkish press, I am to gather empirical indicators about the patterns and trends in the mainstream media's dominant problem definitions, causal analyses, moral judgments, and promoted policies regarding the Kurdish issue as focused on the HDP, the largest civilian pro-Kurdish actor in legal politics of Turkey.

Entman's approach towards a power-centered perceived reality is eventually in line with the propaganda model of Hermann and Chomsky's, which clearly explains the institutional filtration on dissemination of information through the mass media by operationalization of the 5 filters (see in the News-frames and Public Opinion section). While the propaganda model is a very broad

theory regarding how media operates from a standpoint of institutional power, in my opinion, it is the most fitting theoretical basis towards the general patterns in the framing of the Kurds in the mainstream Turkish media and is still relevant to make sense of the frames used for addressing the HDP in the mainstream Turkish press. As none of the theoretical basis measure or handle with how effective the way the media works on public opinion and the public approval of the HDP is just a side objective in this study, it has a limited operation to be discussed on solely by 2 consecutive election results.

Illustrated in the figure below, my first two research questions (1. How was the HDP framed in the front pages of the Hurriyet, Sabah and Sozcu newspapers from June 2015 to November 2015? 2. What are the differences and similarities between the frames used by different newspapers to address/refer to the HDP in their coverage of events?) that inquire the framing words and images used to address the HDP in the front pages of the mainstream press and their variance between one another are operationalized in the 'news frames' box which includes coverage and issue definition. The question 3 (What is the relationship between the difference (or variation) in the framing of the HDP and the political alignment of the newspapers?) explores the relationship between the framing words and images used by the newspapers to address the HDP and their political alignment with the ruling power.

Figure 2 Scheme of Research Questions

Media

Journalists

News Organizations

RQ 3

News Frames

Framing words

Framing Images

RQ 1 & 2

Public

Elections, polls, other

indicators
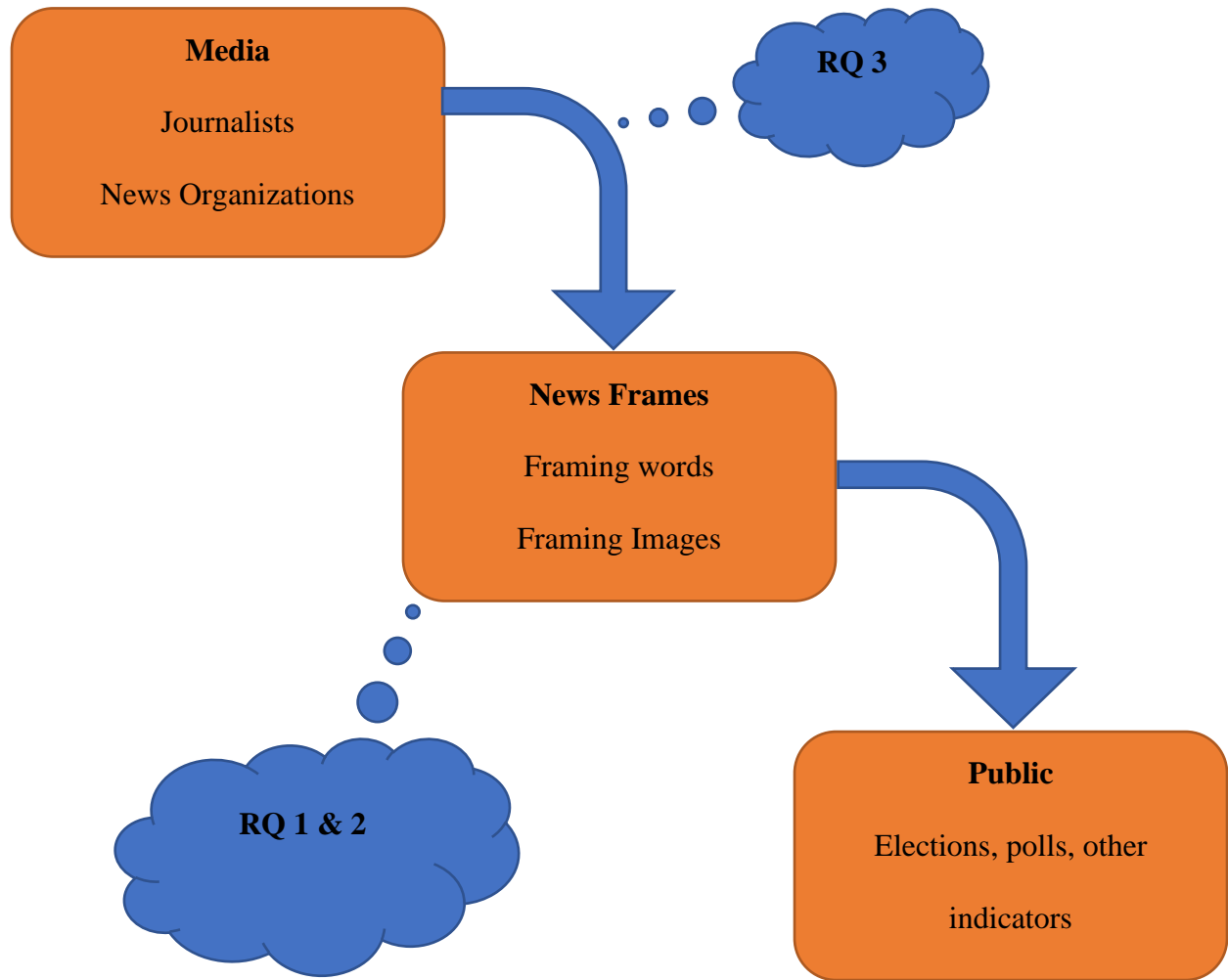
4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes 4 sections dedicated to the reasons why I designed such a case study, the methods used in data collection, how the data is analyzed as well as the limitations of these choices and the steps that I took to address the concerns regarding the quality of the research design, respectively.

4.1. Choice of the Case

Considering the topical scope of the research questions as already presented in the introduction chapter, this case study aims to gain more understanding mainly on how the HDP was framed in the mainstream Turkish press. Therefore, I resorted to Yin (2017) suggesting that case studies are preferred method when (a) "how" or "why" questions are being posed, (b) the investigator has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, as the 3 conditions are perfectly met. So, to make a content analysis from a perspective of framing of the HDP in the mainstream Turkish press, I designed this case study with the main aim of showing the differences and similarities between 3 out of top 5 most selling national daily newspapers which were owned by different groups. I chose the timeline between the 7 June 2015 to 1 November 2015 General Elections to make an inference about how the dominant mainstream framing of the HDP was in the press and thereby how the situation influenced the popularity of the party in a period of political crisis, as can be seen in the contextual information chapter.

Considering the time constraints of this master's thesis, content comparison was carried out over the coverage of events only at front pages where the HDP was addressed. This enabled me to cover a 5-month timeline and better spot the trends and patters in their framing of the HDP because the desired framing effect, or the editorial line, is more visible at the front pages due to the intervention

by editors to prime and set an agenda. To observe how political alignment influenced the desired framing effect, 3 daily national newspapers were chosen based on their circulation numbers, ownership structure, advertising revenue, and dominant sourcing and promotion patterns in their coverage to provide better representation.

According to the 2014 dated Freedom House report on Turkey (Corke, Finkel, Kramer, Robbins, & Schenkkan, 2014), most media outlets have well-known and clear-cut political allegiances, for example Sözcü is a Kemalist newspaper among the country's highest-circulating dailies. There is also a category labeled "mainstream" meaning that they can reach out other groups in society regardless of their political affiliations and considerations. Hurriyet and Sabah belong to this group in the Turkish landscape. As a result, the papers chosen were clearly distinctive from one another in terms of political ideology (pluralist – conservative – militarist in their relations to HDP) and affiliations, as well as comparable enough based upon official circulation numbers during the timeline of the study. Accordingly, the Hürriyet, Sabah and Sözcü newspapers were chosen and here are some brief details about the newspapers to further strengthen the selection:

Hürriyet (Liberty) Newspaper is a mainstream, liberal, pluralist, and secular newspaper with a nationalist and conservative outlook. Founded in 1948, the newspaper was bought in 1994 by the Doğan Media Group belonging to the Doğan Holding which has active operations in energy, industry, fuel, finance, , automotive, tourism and real estate[35]. The founder Aydin Dogan's media empire came to prominence with the acquisition of Milliyet in 1979 later Hürriyet in 1983, and "a*s of 2009, Dogan Media controlled more than 50 percent of all the mass media content in Turkey"* (Akser & Baybars-Hawks, 2012, p. 310). It is the flagship newspaper of the group and long been

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[35] https://www.doganholding.com.tr/en/corporate/about-dogan-group/, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

regarded as a part of the secular establishment in Turkey (the Dogan Media Company was sold to the pro-government Demiroren Holding in March 2018[36]).

Sabah/Daily Sabah (Morning) Newspaper

Founded in 1985, the paper represented for the ruling authority, namely AKP/Erdogan government. Sabah is a mainstream newspaper that was purchased from the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund in 2008 by the Turkuvaz Media Group of Çalık Holding where Erdogan's son-in-law Berat Albayrak was an executive until 2013, who later became the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources (2015 – 2018) and later Treasury and Finance (2018 – 2020). was later sold to another pro-AKP Kalyon Construction Company of Zirve Holding in 2013 (Atay & İrvan, 2020). When bought in 2013, their media outlets including the Sabah Newspaper (also Daily Sabah in English) were the second largest newspaper and television group in the market after the Dogan Media. They still serve as a propaganda mouthpiece that projects and propagates the AKP's view as well as serve their interests (Yesil, 2016). During the timeline of this study, it was and still is one of the newspapers that have the highest official circulation numbers in Turkey.

Sözcü (Spokesman) Newspaper

Owned by Burak Akbay, Sözcü is a sensational opposition newspaper whose political orientation can be categorized as avid Kemalism, a combination of Turkish Nationalism and Secularism (Atay & İrvan, 2020). The origins of the newspaper go back to the Gözcü (Observer in Turkish, published by Doğan Media Group) which began its publication in May 1996 and ceased operations in April 2007 for the sake of pleasing Erdogan (Egin, 2013). Gözcü was taken over by its employees and

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its name was changed to Sözcü in June 2007. Since the day of first publication, they gradually increased circulation numbers and became one of the most selling newspapers in Turkey.

As an addition to the information given above and in the previous parts of this study, the table below presents information that were valid during the timeline of this study to make the comparison easier before any findings.

Table 3 Political alignment and size information about the selected newspapers for 2015

Newspaper	Political Alignment[37]	Political stance	Owner	Circulation numbers[38]	Official ads given (TRY)[39]
Hurriyet	Mainstream, Pluralist,	Anti-AKP	Dogan Media	368 008	7.783.299,88
Sabah	Mainstream, Erdoganist,	Pro-AKP	Turkuvaz Media	311 641	7.649.564,14
Sözcü	Kemalist, Nationalist,	Anti-AKP / Pro-Kemalist	Burak Akbay	340 218	3.773.081,15

4.2. Data Collection

The main units of analysis here were the texts and images that constitute the front pages of the newspapers in question. Therefore, the basic research methodology employed in this study was qualitative, together with certain qualitative data to be qualitatively inferred. To Creswell et al

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[37] ([Corke et al., 2014](#))

[38] According to the BİK (Basın İlan Kurumu, the agency responsible for the distribution of the state advertising budget) numbers for the first 6 months of 2015, achieved from https://t24.com.tr/haber/2015in-ilk-alti-ayinda-hangi-gazete-ne-kadar-resmi-ilan-aldi,305397, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

[39] Ibid.

([Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007](#)), qualitative case study is a process of scientific inquiry which explores issues and tries to understand phenomena by finding answers to descriptive questions in an in-depth manner. The approach enabled me to build a complex and comprehensive picture of the Kurdish Issue enough to make sense of the actors in it. Here the main advantage for me was the ability to have an understanding towards the universe of thought through the texts and images of the concerning newspapers, which give clues about how the Kurdish issue was defined and what the underlying remedies that the mainstream media promoted when it came to a democratic solution to the Kurdish issue via the HDP, as they were the civilian actor between the warring parties considering the venue of the conflict then.

The front pages of the respected newspaper were collected from publicly available online sources and search engines, compiled, categorized on monthly basis, and imported into NVivo for computer aided analysis. That means about 438 pages were read, scanned, and turned into newspaper clippings as raw data. As for the consecutive elections results which were handled as secondary units of analysis, I resorted to the Supreme Election Council of Turkey. Thus, this study employed secondary data analysis that were already publicly available.

Regarding the steps taken for pre-analysis, I applied the 'frame package' suggested by Van Gorp which includes framing devices, reasoning devices and formatting devices, as inspired by Gamson et al.'s notion of 'media package' ([Gamson & Modigliani, 1989](#)). Framing devices includes certain linguistic structures such as metaphors, visual icons, and catchphrases that convey frames as well as any other contributor to the narrative and rhetorical structure of a text such as themes and subthemes, types of actors, actions and settings, lines of reasoning and causal connections, contrasts, lexical choices, sources, quantifications and statistics, charts and graphs, caricatures, appeals (emotional, logical, and ethical). According to Entman, the main function of framing is to

define issues; therefore, the reasoning devices refer to the defining functions of frames to form a route of causal reasoning which may be evoked when an issue is associated with a particular frame. Lastly, the formatting devices include the number of words, pictures, layout and coverage of the text, placement and visual editing that are non-trivial devices to make an inference about the salience of the issue being covered (Van Gorp, 2010).

4.3. Analysis

The HDP is identified as the focus of this study whereby the context is the Kurdish Issue, the spill-over of the Syrian Civil War and democratization in Turkey. To understand how the framing of the HDP were done in the Turkish press for the timeline of this study, only the frames defining clear stance towards the HDP were in focus. That means any other reference to the Kurds without clear indication to the HDP, HDP executives and members by name, photo and/or Turkeyfication as well as other HDP policies, or any other obscure mentioning of the party (for example, 'the opposition as a whole', 'all the MPs in the Parliament') without clear reference were excluded within the scope of the content analysis to avoid bias as much as possible. Therefore, each corresponding story that appeared on a front page were grouped under concerned categories and the background images and lexical choices of these stories were taken into consideration during the categorization.

To identify the initial set of generic frames available for such an issue, I resorted to Semetko and Valkenburg who suggest that there are at least five types of common news frames which can be categorized as a) *conflict frames*, b) *human interest frames*, c) *responsibility frames*, d) *economic consequences* and e) *morality frames* (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), plus *f) powerlessness frame (*Neuman et al., 1992*)* as mentioned in the previous chapter and frameless messages that convey

informative communication. For this case study, the news sections in which a dominant news frame could not be determined were also included in the frameless communication. Considering the topic and the events took place during the timeline of this study, further issue-related frames were inspired from a study conducted by (Atay & İrvan, 2020) who made a content analysis about the representation of the so-called 'solution process'. To make the frame matrix I collected the source material, performed open-coding of the texts, arranged the generic and issue-specific frames as well as categorization of the events through which the HDP were mentioned, referred and/or framed, and finally carried out the selective coding along with the codebook prepared (see in the Appendixes) to determine the frames employed, thereby their dominance. Accordingly, I merged terrorism & separation frames into a single category, and peace & plurality frames into another one, in addition to the 6 generic frame categories indicated before.

For illustration, here I give 3 examples showing how I performed the coding for each coverage addressing HDP in line with the overview of the frames available (see Table 7) and categorization of the events for this study (see Table 8). The front page below was categorized under the category of Spillover of the Syrian Civil War due to mentions of HDP in almost whole page dedicated to the 10 October massacre as well as with the coding references of human-interests' frame because of individual stories and photos of victims affiliated to HDP, powerlessness frame because of victim profiles and being targeted by ISIS, peace & plurality, and legitimate actor frames because of including but not limited to the emphasis on the title of the meeting, victim profiles given and the way CHP and HDP leaders were given in pictures paying visit to the bomb site and quotation pattern used for Demirtaş' remarks. Here is the translation of a part taken from the headline section:

Table 4 Hurriyet, 12 October

I LOST TWO LIVES WHILE CALLING PEACE

….

BOMB EXPLODED WHEN HIS DAUGHTER CAME

Being a teacher in Şanlıurfa, İzzettin Çevik was in the meeting with his wife, an HDP candidate in Ankara, and his sister. When he got together with his daughter Başak Sidar, student of civil engineering, the bomb exploded. His daughter and sister lost their lives. He held on to his wife and tried to soothe her. (Coverage continued)

While the headline below is dedicated to the Turkey's so-called war on terror, and more than half of the section is related to the Kurdish Turkish Conflict, here the section was coded with the references of illegitimacy under morality frame because of the way the party was described and the belittling words to describe Demirtas in addition to the responsibility, and terrorism & separation frames for claiming that the party is responsible for making Kurds turn against each other and supporting PKK by being in their guidance.

Table 5 Sabah, 13 August

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC ERDOGAN SET ANTI-TERROR FRAMEWORK

THERE IS NO MORE STEP STATE CAN TAKE

Fight is continued until separatist organization lay arms and withdraw militants, and the party under its guidance turn to democracy side.

The headline below was coded under the categories of 7 June Elections, Kurdish Turkish Conflict and Spillover of the Syrian Civil War due to the coverage related to results of the elections, peace process and Kobani, as well as, with coding references of illegitimacy, responsibility and terrorsim & separation frames because of definition of the party as being extension of PKK, causing harm through entering the parliament with 80 MPs and Dolmabahce incident.

Table 6 Sözcü, 10 June

This is what people say to AKP who cannot get over HDP exceeding threshold

DO NOT CRY IN VAIN!

PKK and its extension HDP entered the Parliament with 80 MPs… AKP members who did everything they wanted are now complaining… (coverage continued with more anti-Kurdish sentiments)

As a result of consecutive readings with simultaneous coding, I came up with the following set of

frames that were handled as the pre-defined frames for this case study.

Table 7 Overview of the generic and issue-specific frames

Frames	Description	Framing and Reasoning Device Examples	Example
Frameless	Presents the HDP without using any clear framing and reasoning device, generally based on journalistic activity. This category also includes the coverage where a dominant frame was not to be spotted.	-	**VOTING PAPERS APPEARED* Order: CHP 4th, MHP 13th, HDP 17th, AK Party 20th (Hurriyet, 14 September)
Morality	Present the HDP from a perspective of legitimacy	Quotations, sentiments, lexical choices, appeals, coverage percentage on paper, photos, and so on	**CHP-MHP-HDP together for the first time. Yesterday 60% bloc raised hands against AKP for the first time in Parliament. People said "If this was the case all the time, Turkey would fly" (Sözcü, 4 September)

			*"**Curse PKK first before peace meeting**" There are huge reactions from every section of the society against the call for peace meeting in Istanbul by HDP who never condemns PKK. This is a big hypocrisy. (Sabah, 25 July)
Terrorism & Separation	Presents the HDP as the political offshoot of the PKK with an agenda of separation through violence.	Separatist, terror supporter, terror representative, civil war, violence, ethnic cleansing, blood, weapon, the terrorist in the parliament	*PM Davutoğlu fiercely criticized HDP in his meeting with representatives of NGOs from East and Southeast: Such a hypocrisy! Democracy in Ankara, terror and violence in Diyarbakır, Batman, Hakkari. They talk about freedom in Istanbul and oppress those who are not with them in the region. (Sabah, 3 August)
Responsibility	Presents the HDP from a perspective of attribution of	Entrusted votes, to produce a solution, Being a key party,	***THRESHOLD COLLAPSED** HDP surpassing 10% election threshold and MHP's gains in several important regions ended

	responsibility either for causing or solving	The duty of making a government, To pay the price, To hold accountable, To invited to do sth, With the support of, To be assigned to, And so on	the 13-year single party rule of AK Party. (Hürriyet, 8 June)
Peace & Plurality	Presents the HDP as a legitimate representative in Turkey that promotes the peace negotiations and democratizations in peace and plurality	Democracy, solution, pro-peace & anti-war statements and coverage, Party of Turkey	*COOPERATION FOR PEACE In the 35-minute meeting in Parliament, HDP stated "CHP can be the architect of the new peace process". The meeting resulted in agreement on "cooperation for peace" (Hürriyet, 5 August)

Powerlessness	Presents the HDP as powerless, and/or dominated before greater forces, or victimized because of greater forces or negligence	HDP to be presented as victim or to be victimized, HDP presented as powerless before other forces and institutions, HDP under the election threshold,	"… Tayyip and the PM assigned by him attack HDP… MHP is also not failing to catch up with AKP, attacking both HDP and CHP…" (Sözcü, 31 July)
Human Interest	Presents the HDP through individual stories that would stimulate emotions with a human face or situation where the audience can feel an empathy	Photos, quotations, sentiments, appeals, coverage percentage on paper, and so on	*(Presented with the faces of mom and son) … "I supported HDP. When I watched the meeting on TV, I saw the bomb exploded. I was so sorry. I cried for 2 days. In the third day, we got a call. We went from Adiyaman to Diyarbakır, there I learned that the bomber was my son…" (Hürriyet, 4 July)

Economic Consequences	Presents the HDP in terms of the economic consequences of their (in)actions	Corruption, extortion, financing terrorist groups,	*HDP municipalities collect money under the pretext of "zakat to Rojava" via envelopes issued for individual names. Those who do not donate cannot get their business done. (Sabah, 8 July)

Along with the theoretical basis and methodological guidelines so far, the identification of the dominant trends and patterns about how the HDP were framed, comparison of coverage and analysis of variations as well as uniformity between them were done based on the events listed below:

Table 8 Overview of the events through which the HDP were addressed

Themes	Agenda items
Spillover of the Syrian Civil War in Turkey	• Kobani Protests (6 – 8 October 2014) including • 5 June bomb attack to the HDP rally in Diyarbakir, • 20 July Suruc Massacre, • 10 October Ankara Massacre,
7 June General Elections	• Election results • Inauguration of parliament • Election of parliament chairperson • Coalition traffic, • Provisional government,
Kurdish – Turkish Conflict	• Solution process (peace negotiations) and its failure, • 22 July Ceylanpinar Incident (Killing of 2 policemen) • Lifting of parliamentary immunity • Start of military operations against the PKK and Daesh • Declaration of autonomy by certain HDP and DBP municipalities • Arrests of HDP members, executives, and mayors

	• Attacks to HDP buildings • The trenches and urban warfare with the PKK • Closure of HDP
November 2015 Elections	• Early election

Miscellaneous	• Episodic agenda items including
	
	   o Debates on headscarf
	
	   o Angelina Jolie's visit to Mardin
	
	   o Murder of Dilek Dogan
	
	   o Istanbul Pride
	
	   o Others
	
	• 2013 Corruption Scandal
	
	• Events related to the mass media including
	
	   o Government operation against Koza-Ipek group,
	
	   o Attack to the Hurriyet buildings,
	
	   o Bomb threat to Star newspaper building
	
	   o RTUK (Radio and TV Supreme Council)
	
	• Presidential system
	
	• Coverage in which there is no clear dominant theme

4.4. Limitations

One of the biggest limitations of this case study was the fact that the newspaper with the highest circulation numbers was the Zaman with over 700 000 in 2015[40]; however, after the government seizure of the newspaper in March 2016, the archives were not publicly accessible.[41] As another concern in terms of representation, selection of just 3 newspapers were not representative for all the mainstream press in Turkey, but such a selection satisfies representation of main political blocs in Turkey. To categorize the newspaper according to their political alignment with the ruling power and ideology does not work all the time as there might be variations, deviations and diversity in their coverage and editorial lines. I accept the fact it is not that black-and-white but assumed that any variation would not affect the dominant frame of the editorial line as their stances then were clear-cut separable.

The categorization of events may not fit perfectly as most of the events under the spill-over of the Syrian Civil War in Turkey can be considered intertwined with the international implications of the Kurdish issue. Additionally, such issues as parliamentary immunity may be evoked easily in various themes, but it was handled under the category of Kurdish Turkish conflict in this study. Another point to mention is that the numbers related to newspaper sales/circulation in Turkey are not so reliable because of the difference in the number of sales and the number of prints to get a higher share from national press advertisement pie.[42] The same might apply to the election results of the November 2015 election especially for the HDP. The conflict environment considerably affected the HDP's ability to campaign, and the party were subject to increased number of attacks

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[40] https://t24.com.tr/haber/2015in-ilk-alti-ayinda-hangi-gazete-ne-kadar-resmi-ilan-aldi,305397, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

[41] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35739547, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

[42] https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2020/yazarlar/emin-colasan/gazetelerin-duzmece-satis-rakamlari-6050110/, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

against executives, members, and activists well into last two weeks of the campaign.[43] Nevertheless, they were handled as indicators to form a practical reality to study on.

While this content analysis was carried to determine dominant frames in a certain time span, I assumed that variations in interpretation of researcher would not deviate the dominant trends and patterns as there is an unavoidable certain degree of subjectivity in content analysis based on framing (Van Gorp, 2010). Another limitation was that not every part in illustrations and examples was translated because of time constraints. While translations were aimed to be done with utmost focus possible on formal equivalence to emphasize fidelity to the source and its lexical details which might not make a total sense to a non-Turkish reader; however, I tried to opt for a optimal equivalence due to use of idioms and puns.

4.5. Validity

I resorted to the four types of validity formulated by Kleven (Kleven, 2008) to address issues regarding the validity of the research design, which are construct validity, statistical validity, internal validity and external validity. Because this study employs qualitative research methodology together with certain qualitative data to be qualitatively inferred, I did not address the concerns about statistical validity, but construct validity, internal validity, and external validity.

To begin with, as there is an inference from indicators to the construct in any kind of study, *"**Construct validity** should be considered important any time we make inferences from observations to abstract concepts, regardless of the research being quantitative or qualitative"* *(*Kleven, 2008, p. 225*)*. As I am interested in abstract construct of the framing of the HDP in the Turkish press from such observed indicators as the texts and images in the front pages of certain

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[43] https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/219201, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

newspapers, this type of validity is the most relevant one in determining the quality of this research. The concept of "*framing*" employed in the study are mostly handled integrated with the concepts of priming and agenda-setting which is best represented in the front pages when it comes to the newspapers in general. The newspapers in question have/had clear signs showing their political alignment both based on Turkey's media landscape and the 5 filters of media: ownership, source of advertisement, the media elite promoted in their coverage, flak as the negative responses given to the editorial policies of newspapers, and the common enemy (PKK) of the two mainstream ideologies in Turkish political contexts, namely Erdoganism (or Neo-Ottomanism) and Secular Kemalism as well as the moderates and marginals in between these flows.

Regarding the validation of the frames, I made a codebook of the frame matrix including a list of questions (generally yes/no) to identify generic and issue-related frames, simultaneously coded frame package during repetitive readings of data, and used the codebook, coverage, and hitherto political conjuncture regarding the determination of the weight (dominance) of the frames.

Internal validity matters whenever we infer that something has an influence on something through causality. As for the relationship between the political alignment of the newspapers and their framing of the HDP between the two elections in 2015, the political alignment is one of the determinant factors behind the framing of an editorial line as the way the mass media works is deeply related to their relationship with ruling power according to the propaganda model.

In a similar way, a top-down framing activity gains momentum when the stakes are high as it is the case for the timeline and political conjuncture of this study not because of the effects of framing on formation of public opinion in general, but the swing voters whose opinions are easier to change according to Entman, which further strengthened the relationship between framing and political affiliations.

In terms of external validity, the theoretical framework, conceptualization, and operationalization are based on framing theory, propaganda model and cascading network activation taken from available academic literature and empirical research. So, this study employs existing theory in the literature and puts it into practice in a new setting. It can be used for generalization over situations, type of actors and time depending on nearness in comparison with other parts of the world with some adjustments where there is a conflict for independence, autonomy, more rights,and freedoms and/or even any kind of competition for resources, for example the cases of the Insurgency in Balochistan or Baloch National Movement, the Islamic Movement in Israel, or similarly, the Colombian conflict, etc.

5. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

This chapter is consisted of 3 sections presenting the findings and related discussion for each research question. The first section includes data and findings for each newspaper under separate subsections. While the second section includes comparison between the newspapers and contrasts their framing of HDP based on a summary of aggregate findings for 3 newspapers combined, the third section investigates the differences and similarities between the newspapers in relation to their political affiliations based general coverage patterns and how they approached certain events.

5.1. RQ1: How was the HDP framed in the front pages of the Hürriyet, Sabah and Sözcü from June 2015 to November 2015?

To begin with, I presented findings for each paper under one subsection in which I included a short introduction about how each newspaper looked like as well as an example page from each newspaper. Each subsection is consisted of the findings for every separate corresponding theme together with an example including but not limited to the use of a dominant frames for the theme in question.

5.1.1. Hürriyet

Hürriyet traditionally has the flag and Mustafa Kemal figure coupled with the paper's slogan "Turkey belongs to Turks" next to its logo. There are generally tabloid journalism and promotions at the top and sometimes at other margins of the front page. The rest is usually allocated to politics and social issues depending on their agenda. A typical Hurriyet page looked like as presented in the Figure 5.

Figure 3 Hürriyet, 15 August

Among the 148 days which constituted the timeline, Hürriyet gave place to the HDP in 104 days. The total number under each category does not match with the number of coding references for each theme, as the findings under each theme are generated through the days, instead of each coding reference or news section in which HDP were framed. an overview of the frames identified in Hürriyet's coverage related to HDP is presented in the following Table 7 to make the comparison easier across the themes.

Table 9 – Overview of findings for Hürriyet

Frame / Theme	Kurdish Turkish Conflict	June Elections	Spillover of the Syrian Civil War	November Elections	Miscellaneous including Press & Media	Aggregate Number of Coding References
Morality – Legitimacy	52	46	22	18	14	92
Morality – Illegitimacy	27	25	7	7	3	39
Responsibility	37	37	15	5	2	53
Terrorism & Separation	18	10	6	4	1	20
Powerlessness	24	15	28	8	5	51
Human Interest	4	3	12	-	1	13
Peace & Plurality	4	3	6	1	1	10
Economic Consequences	-	-	-	-	-	-
Frameless	2	18	5	5	2	23
Coding References	114	82	58	25	11	301

I presented an example for each theme in the order of thematic dominance beginning from the themes of Kurdish – Turkish Conflict, 7 June Elections, Spillover of the Syrian Civil War in Turkey, November Elections, and Miscellaneous items including Press & Media. Each example is consisted of at least one dominant frame under the related category.

Table 10 Hürriyet, 1 August

	We did not approve PKK violence and kept a distance
	Making an interview with the German ZDF channel, HDP co-Chair Selahattin Demirtaş stated that they are a party struggling for democracy.
	AK PARTY KNEW THE QANDIL MEETINGS
	"We did not approve the violent actions of the PKK. We kept a clear distance from those violent actions. We did the meetings with Qandil in Turkey within AK Party's knowledge. That they blame us because of this is a very wrong attitude."

Table 11 Hürriyet, 13 July

	WE ARE TO TAKE responsibility
	HDP co-Chair Figen Yüksekdağ does not have much hope about the visit Davutoglu will pay.
	*However, Figen Yuksekdag keeps the door open for a surprise offer by saying that "We are ready to take responsibility". Co-Chair states "We do not want early election, because the society of Turkey do not want one."

Table 12 Hürriyet, 18 October

Gül: Başsağlığını bile garipseyen bir ortam var	**Gül: There is an atmosphere in which even a condolence is found strange:** 11th President of the Republic Abdullah Gul responded to the AKP MP who criticized him for expressing condolences to HDP co-Chair Selahattin Demirtaş and asked: "How will you live together in such an atmosphere?"

Table 13 Hürriyet, 28 September

'Baraj altı formülünü arıyorlar'	**'They are looking for a formula below threshold'** HDP co-Chair Demirtaş: "They made an ugly propaganda with lies and slanders in the previous elections. Nevertheless, we won. Now they are looking for a formula to keep HDP under the threshold in the upcoming elections on 1 November"

Table 14 Hürriyet, 27 October

İktidara güvenip SUÇ İŞLEMEYİN	(Demirtaş with workers in strike in Pendik) DO NOT COMMIT CRIME by relying on ruling power HDP co-Chair Demirtaş talked about the killing of Dilek Doğan in her house by a police bullet: "no one, no police, governor, district governor should commit a crime by relying on this ruling power. All the crimes will be called to account"

The findings showed that Hürriyet covered the HDP within a variety of topics but mainly on Kurdish – Turkish conflict and 7 June Elections. Their framing of the HDP were based on a mostly legitimate actor frame consolidated with responsibility and powerlessness frames, both almost on the same weight. The paper often followed a similar pattern in different themes and did not use economic consequences frame in their coverage. It was the Spillover of the Syrian Civil War in which the prominence of legitimacy was highest, and the powerlessness frame came prior to responsibility frame.

5.1.2. Sabah

Sabah has also a similar format that includes soft issues and promotions at top and sometimes margins, and the rest of paper often included political and social issues depending on their agenda. The newspaper has a slogan "The best newspaper of Turkey" located atop its logo, whose background is map of Turkey on which the flag is visible. A typical Sabah page looked like as presented in figure 8.

Figure 4 Sabah, 15 August

Among the 148 days which constituted the timeline, Sabah gave place to the HDP in 98 days. As can be seen in the following Table 13, an overview of the frames identified in Sabah's HDP-related reporting is presented. Because the findings under each theme are generated through the days, instead of each coding reference or news section in which HDP were framed, the total number under each category does not match with the number of coding references for each theme.

Table 15 Overview of findings for Sabah

Frame / Theme	Kurdish Turkish Conflict	June Elections	Spillover of the Syrian Civil War	November Elections	Miscellaneous including Press & Media	Aggregate Number of Coding References
Morality – Legitimacy	1	10	1	-	1	11
Morality – Illegitimacy	88	54	38	39	6	130
Responsibility	65	30	28	27	3	88
Terrorism & Separation	61	23	20	26	6	76
Powerlessness	5	6	7	1	-	10
Human Interest	3	1	5	3	-	8
Peace & Plurality	-	1	2	1	-	3
Economic Consequences	3	1	2	-	-	5
Frameless	5	14	1	2	-	16
Coding References	126	63	47	29	**5**	347

Below I presented an example from Sabah for each theme in the order of thematic dominance beginning from the themes of Kurdish – Turkish Conflict, 7 June Elections, Spillover of the Syrian Civil War in Turkey, November Elections, and Miscellaneous items including Press & Media. Each example is consisted of at least one dominant frame under the related category.

Table 16 Sabah, 20 August

EITHER STATE, OR ORGANIZATION

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC ERDOGAN:

…

Those who call for the state, rather than organization, to lay arms are in explicit betrayal. State and government do not owe anything to the separatist organization, the party in its guidance and so-called horde of intellectuals.

Table 17 Sabah, 18 June

MINISTER EKER: EXPLOSIONS IN DIYARBAKIR INFLUENCED VOTES

BOMBS SCORED FOR HDP

People were clearly threatened. Tens of thousands of bullets were fired at nights. It was said 'this happens if we cannot surpass threshold'

Table 18 Sabah, 26 June

	DO NOT DO SUBCONTRACTS
TAŞERONLUK YAPMAYIN BÖLÜCÜ örgüte müzahir çevrelerin, iftira ve karalama kampanyası yürüttüğünü görüyoruz. Türkiye partisi olmanın yolu, Türkiye'nin hasmı uluslararası lobiler ve Esed rejiminin taşeronluğundan geçmez.	We see that sponsors of the separatist organization do campaigns of lies and defamation. The way of being a party of Turkey is not doing subcontracts for international lobbies and Esed regime that are Turkey's adversaries.

Table 19 Sabah, 17 September

	LET US BURY TERROR ON 1 NOVEMBER
1 KASIM'DA TERÖRÜ TOPRAĞA GÖMELİM	Where are those who give TERRORISTS this much weapon and support? Outside. Money and media supports are also given inside. Is a party's duty to veil terror and kill their Kurdish brothers that share the same ethnicity?

Table 20 Sabah, 2 August

	Dogan media in a rush of being red-handed
Doğan medyasında suçüstü telaşı	Perception operation that DOĞAN media carries out in favor of terrorist PKK and HDP was revealed upon their statements. AK Party MP Külünk: This statement is a declaration of being red-handed.

The findings regarding Sabah showed that their coverage of HDP were mainly on Kurdish Turkish conflict followed by 7 June Elections, and their framing of the HDP were based on an almost solid illegitimate actor frame strengthened with responsibility and terrorism & separation frames, both almost on the same weight. The paper followed a similar pattern in different themes and used all the frames listed in the analysis section at least for once. It was the category of 7 June elections where the economic consequences frame was not used and where the paper followed a highly dominant illegitimate actor frame instead of a solid illegitimate actor frame when referring to HDP.

5.1.3. Sözcü

Being different than the previous two newspapers in terms of front-page design, **Sözcü** has a plain logo written on a red background in which Mustafa Kemal's look, letters symbolizing Republic of Turkey and its flag are visible. The paper's slogan is "If Sözcü stays silent, then Turkey stays silent". In general, Sözcü presented sections from columns in the upper and bottom parts of the front page, a big section in the middle and other small sections in the sides are dedicated politics and social issues. A typical Sözcü page looked like as in the following Figure 7:

Figure 5 Sözcü, 15 August

For the 148 days of the timeline, Sözcü gave place to the HDP in 82 days. As can be seen in the following Table 19, an overview of the frames identified in Sözcü's coverage of HDP is presented. Because the findings under each theme are generated through the days, instead of each coding reference or news section in which HDP were framed, the total number under each category does not match with the number of coding references for each theme.

Table 21 Overview of findings for Sözcü

Frame / Theme	Kurdish Turkish Conflict	June Elections	Spillover of the Syrian Civil War	November Elections	Miscellaneous including Press & Media	Aggregate Number of Coding References
Morality – Legitimacy	15	6	3		3	21
Morality – Illegitimacy	45	33	4	20	4	67
Responsibility	27	28	5	6	5	44
Terrorism & Separation	23	28	4	8	2	40
Powerlessness	12	8	6	8	1	23
Human Interest	-	-	2	-	-	2
Peace & Plurality	1	-	-	-	-	1
Economic Consequences	1	1	-	-	-	1
Frameless	12	3	-	6	3	20
Coding References	69	70	14	23	**7**	219

Table 22 Sözcü, 8 August

The votes will be haram (forbidden)!

…

HDP have 80 MPs. They don't do politics, act like militants instead. Co-Chair Selahattin Demirtaş, hurried to Brussels to get permission from PKK's leaders in Europe. …

Table 23 Sözcü, 6 September

Now listen to them about how AKP exacerbated PKK

GRUESOME CONFESSIONS OF THE STATE'S GOVERNOR AND DISTRICT GOVERNOR

"HDP municipalities send members to mountains. PKK collects 20 lira with receipts from each house . 10% of tenders go to organization"... And there is more (heading ended)

Table 24 Sözcü, 13 August

Türkiye'yi padişah gibi yönetmek için her yolu deniyor **Tayyip'in erken seçim kumarı!** AKP'nin tek başına iktidarını sürdürmesi için tehlikeli bir kumar oynuyor Siyaseti dizayn edip MHP ve HDP'ye giden oyları almak istiyor. İşte planı	He is trying everything to rule Turkey like a sultan **Tayyip's early election gamble!** He is taking a dangerous gamble to continue AKP's single party rule. By designing the politics, he wants to get the votes that went to MHP and HDP. Here is his plan.

Table 25 Sözcü, 14 October

Devlet mafya değildir! TOKMAK Rahmi TURAN	**State is not a mafia!** … Demirtaş talks tripe and incites people against state by claiming that the state deliberately committed the massacre! We think that there is a grave neglect in the incident, but it cannot be intention! State do not deliberately kill or make others kill its own citizens, the one doing this
is called mafia! It is so sad while **Demirtaş** indicates state as **"Murderer"**, he doesn't let anyone speak ill of **"Murderer PKK".** To him, PKK is an angel! What a mentality…	

Table 26 Sözcü, 26 October

AKP–MHP EL ELE RTÜK'te yapılan oylamada, 4 AKP'li üye ile 1 MHP'li üye-nin oyuyla bu haka-retler "ifade özgürlü-ğü" sayıldı. HDP'li üye bile CHP'li-lerle Atatürk'ü savundu... Ali Ekber ERTÜRK skandalı yazdı. S.13	**AKP – MHP together** In the voting took place in RTUK, those insults were regarded as **'freedom of expression'** by the votes of 4 AKP and 1 MHP members. Even the HDP member defended Atatürk with CHP. Ali Ekber ERTÜRK wrote the scandal.

The findings for Sözcü demonstrated that the paper covered HDP mainly on 7 June elections, Kurdish Turkish conflict, November elections, and Spillover of the Syrian Civil War, respectively. Their framing of the HDP were based on an almost dominant illegitimate actor frame strengthened with responsibility and terrorism & separation frames. While Sözcü's mostly illegitimate actor frame was coupled with terrorism and responsibility for 7 June Elections, it was terrorism & separation and powerlessness frames for 1 November elections.

5.2. RQ2: What are the differences and similarities between the frames used by different newspapers to address/refer to the HDP in their coverage of events?

Regarding dominant frames, Hürriyet's framing of the HDP were based on a mostly legitimate actor frame consolidated with responsibility and powerlessness frames. Sabah also covered through a variety of frames, but mainly through a solid illegitimate actor frame coupled with responsibility and terrorism & separation frames. Sözcü's framing of HDP was based on an almost

dominant illegitimate actor frame strengthened with responsibility and terrorism & separation frames. Among 3 papers, Hürriyet did not use any economic consequences frame, the other two newspapers used each frame at least for once. Sabah was the one who used the terrorism & separation frame the most, and powerlessness frame the least, while Hürriyet provided the least coverage through terrorism & separation frame. Sözcü provided the least coverage within human interest and peace & plurality frames. In general, Sabah and Sözcü used somewhat a similar framing strategy towards HDP based on a highly dominant illegitimacy frame strengthened with responsibility and terrorism & separation frames, however, Sözcü gave place to more coverage of HDP via powerlessness frame.

For Kurdish Turkish conflict, Hurriyet's patterns included mostly legitimate actor frame with responsibility and powerlessness frames, and Sabah and Sözcü's patterns were somewhat similar, that is solid for Sabah and highly dominant illegitimate actor frame for Sözcü with responsibility and terrorism & separation frames. While Sabah and Sözcü did not use any peace & plurality frame in this category, Sözcü did not give any place to human interest frame at least for once and Hürriyet was the one who used the most powerlessness frame. There was a slight difference between Sözcü and Sabah in terms of their percentage indicating use of powerlessness frame.

For 7 June elections, Hürriyet's coverage included mostly legitimate actor with responsibility frames among others, whereas Sabah and Sözcü used a dominant illegitimate actor frame with responsibility and terrorism & separation frames. There was a slight increase in prevalence of terrorism frame for Hürriyet and powerlessness frame for Sözcü. No human-interest frame was coded for Sözcü.

As for Spillover of the Syrian Civil War in Turkey, Hürriyet's dominant frames were mostly legitimate actor and powerlessness, Sabah followed a solid illegitimate actor frame coupled with

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responsibility and terrorism, on the other hand, Sözcü handled HDP through a variety of frames based on mostly illegitimate actor coupled with responsibility, powerlessness, and terrorism & separation frames. Sabah was the only one using economic consequences frame and Sözcü did not use any frameless communication for this category.

When it comes to the November elections, Hürriyet's dominant frame was a mostly legitimate actor frame that was consolidated with powerlessness, responsibility, and frameless communication. For Sabah, the dominant frame was a solid illegitimate actor frame strengthened with responsibility and terrorism frames. Sözcü employed a dominant illegitimate actor frame consolidated with terrorism & separation, powerlessness, frameless communication, responsibility frames. Sözcü did not use and peace & plurality frame while no human-interest frame was employed by Hürriyet and Sözcü.

Finally, regarding media and miscellaneous items categories, Hürriyet used a mostly legitimate actor frame followed by powerlessness. While Sabah used a solid illegitimate frame followed by terrorism & separation and responsibility, Sözcü used an almost balanced morality frame followed by responsibility. Moreover, both Sabah and Sözcü did not use any peace & plurality frame and frameless messages, and Sözcü did not use economic consequences frame as well.

Considering all the findings so far, the themes in which HDP were most covered across the newspapers can be seen better in the Table 27 in which the dominance of theme-based coverage contrasted below:

Table 27 Comparison of newspapers based on themes

Newspaper / Theme	Kurdish – Turkish Conflict	June elections	Spillover of Syrian Civil War	November Elections	Misc.	Total number of coding references
Hürriyet	39,3 %	28,3 %	20 %	8,6 %	3,8 %	290
Sabah	46,67 %	23,33 %	17,41 %	10,74 %	1,85 %	270
Sözcü	37,70 %	38,25 %	7,65 %	12,57 %	3,83 %	183
All	41,59 %	28,94 %	16,02 %	10,06 %	3,10 %	743

The comparison of frames can be seen better in the following Table 26 which contrasts the 3 newspapers based on dominant frames used by the newspapers to address HDP for the timeline.

Table 28 Comparison of frames

Frame / Newspaper	Hürriyet	Sabah	Sözcü
Morality – Legitimacy	30,56 %	3,17 %	9,59 %
Morality – Illegitimacy	12,96 %	37,46 %	30,59 %
Responsibility	17,61 %	25,36 %	20,09 %
Terrorism & Separation	6,64 %	21,90 %	18,26 %
Powerlessness	16,94 %	2,88 %	10,50 %
Human interest	4,32 %	2,31 %	0,91 %
Peace & Plurality	3,32 %	0,86 %	0,46 %
Economic Consequences	-	1,44 %	0,46 %
Frameless	7,64 %	4,61 %	9,13 %

5.3. RQ3: What is the relationship between the variations in the framing of the HDP and the political alignment of the newspapers?

In terms of amount of content related to HDP, Hürriyet provided the most coverage of the HDP with 104, Sabah with 98 and Sözcü with 82 days. While the coverage of the HDP were concentrated on the Kurdish – Turkish conflict for Hürriyet and Sabah, the most mentioned issue in which HDP were covered was 7 June elections for Sözcü as it can be seen better in the Table 25 above. The second most covered issue in which HDP were mentioned was 7 June elections for Hürriyet and Sabah, and Kurdish Turkish Conflict for Sözcü. The variation in coverage of HDP shows the relative proximity of the newspapers to HDP, but to a certain degree that does not make an analytical sense. Therefore, to better understand the relationship between variations in framing and political alignment, I made a comparison based on important events for HDP in which the details were more visible. I chose the incidents of 7 June Elections which also included the 5 June Bomb Attack to HDP rally in Diyarbakır to a certain degree, 20 July Suruc Bombing, provisional government between the elections, 10 October Ankara Bombings and finally 1 November Elections. Even though it was not a part of the main focus of this study, I also contrasted how the newspapers covered the Death of Alan Kurdi (2 September) to see their coverage pattern in terms of the Kurdishness of the victim on a symbolic event which sparked international debates on the European migrant crisis.

On 7 June that was the day of election, while Sözcü did not make any mention of HDP, Hurriyet covered the 5 June bomb attack via frameless communication, Sabah indicated PKK as perpetrator, targeted Demirtas and victimized Turkey's democracy. Next day, Hurriyet celebrated election

threshold being nonfunctional and putting responsibility on gains of HDP and MHP for AKP's loss. For Sabah, it was people who lost in the elections and blamed 'entrusted votes' from Istanbul for HDP's threshold victory. Sözcü covered HDP via responsibility frame in AKP's loss and frameless in election results.

On 21 July after the Suruc bombing, all papers covered the incident full page. Hürriyet presented dead bodies and explosion including a banner on which 'togetherness' was written was targeted by the explosion and presented individual stories of the victims as well as quoted Demirtaş blaming government. In a similar way, Sözcü's photos included dead bodies lying in the ground. While Sözcü did not present any individual story at the front page, gave a small space to Demirtas blaming government and defined victims as a group who wanted to provide humanitarian aid in Kobani attacked by religious ISIS. Sabah's photos were more focused on the explosion, and they mentioned HDP, BDP and SGDF and Kobani. For Sabah, the target was again Turkey's democracy and criticized Demirtas in a small box.

Regarding provisional government before the November Elections, HDP was offered 3 ministry positions; however, one of the nominates did not accept the offer. The incident was given through frameless communication by Sabah, illegitimacy frame by Sözcu, while Hürriyet directly quoted his remarks criticizing Davutoglu. When the curfew introduced on 4 September in Cizre was lifted on 12 September, next day Hürriyet put the blame of destruction on the conflict, quoted Demirtaş speech in Cizre and quoted HDP minister on number of casualties. Sabah covered the destruction in Cizre by blaming PKK together with 2 small boxes, one claiming huge reaction from people to HDP and PKK, the other one covering the funeral of soldiers killed by PKK. Sözcü did not give any place to the incident at the front page, instead covered the 28 February dated Dolmabahce meeting covering HDP through terrorism frame in the headline, and fiercely criticized HDP in 3

different news sections. When 2 HDP ministers resigned on 22 September, next day Hürriyet covered the event right next to the coverage related to the decision not to set up ballot boxes in certain neighborhoods of Kurdish city of Cizre due to security reasons. Sabah covered the event by claiming that the two ministers were offended over PM's question about who dug the trenches upon the ministers mentioned at the incidents in Kurdish cities, while Sözcü did not cover the event then and used a racist/discriminative narrative against non-Turk AKP MPs (6 out of 10 were given as of Kurdish origin, one as 'Zaza', making no reference to Kurdishness of Zazas who generally consider themselves as Kurds) and on 25 September, the incident were covered at the front page in a small box further delegitimizing the party, while the newspaper were attempting to defend themselves of not being racist by blaming Erdogan of being racist.

On 11 October after the brutal double suicide bomb attack in Ankara which claimed more than 100 lives, all 3 papers covered the event full-page. Hürriyet gave photos of the dead bodies covered with HDP flags, made no special reference to HDP but named the NGOs that were in alliance with. Sabah also covered the event with photos of victims, mentioned HDP through individual victim statements, and excluded HDP in PM Davutoglu's list of leaders to talk. The paper indicated PKK, ISIS and 2 other radical left organizations in Turkey as perpetrator. Sözcü did not make any mention of HDP in writing and blamed government. Next day, Hürriyet covered a lot more content related to HDP through individual stories and presented the HDP and CHP leaders visiting bomb site. While Sabah targeted Demirtaş for causing harm by making election speech in funeral, Sözcü did not make any mention of HDP in writing, gave place to several victims affiliated with CHP and the police attack against the victims.

As for the 1 November, none of the newspapers made any mention of the HDP, while Hürriyet raised the technical details related to elections, Sabah promoted Erdogan's remark related to the

elections, and Sözcü put a big image of 'brain' in the middle of the page telling the audience to take it with themselves while going to cast their votes, in addition to promoting Mustafa Kemal. Another point to mention is the coverage of the death of Alan Kurdi. Alan was from Kobani in Hurriyet's coverage, from Syria for Sabah where the coverage was small and at the corner in the first day and got bigger with Erdogan's remarks next day. For Sözcü, he was from Syria as well, and followed a somewhat similar pattern to Sabah's first day coverage, but for any mention in the next day.

To make sense of this variation between the newspapers related to their coverage of HDP, Hürriyet tried to keep a liberal and pluralist editorial line, while having anti-Erdoganist/anti-AKP stance and providing relatively balanced coverage related to HDP within Turkish mainstream context. For example, Hürriyet was the only one covering the incident of Lokman Birlik, whose dead body was tortured by being dragged through the streets of Sirnak city.[44] Though there was a sensible change in tone of Hürriyet after the eruption of conflicts; they were the one giving the most coverage concerning HDP. There also had been several attacks against Hürriyet building and columnists[45], which cannot be disregarded in this analysis while making sense of the relatively low percentage of Hürriyet's HDP coverage related to November Elections. Still, Hürriyet was the who covered HDP the most through the frames of legitimate actor, peace & plurality, and powerlessness frames, as well as being the one who provided the least coverage through illegitimate actor and terrorism & separation frames.

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[44] https://observers.france24.com/en/20151008-turkey-police-dragged-streets-kurdish-video, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*
[45] https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/news-timeline-attacks-on-hurriyet-and-the-aftermath-88662, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

In line with Erdogan's anti-HDP stance after the June Elections, Sabah carried out an aggressive campaign against HDP through coverage, sourcing, and quotation patterns. The paper did not show a significant variation in their framing of HDP across themes especially after the elections of parliamentary chairperson. As can be seen in the Table 26, Sabah was the one providing the least coverage through legitimate actor, powerlessness frames and frameless messages, as well as the most coverage through terrorism & separation and responsibility frames. The newspaper used almost all the frames and events available to delegitimize the party, including criticizing HDP of not being in concord with the imprisoned PKK leader Öcalan, in addition to being the one who tried to reach out the Kurdish people the most at the front pages.

As can be seen in the Table 26, Sözcü was the one who used the frames of peace & plurality and human-interest frames the least, frameless communication the most. Even though the newspaper's patterns resembled to those of Sabah with some variations in prevalence of powerlessness frame, they followed an apparent Kemalist pattern by repetitively showing the signs of hyper-nationalistic anti-Kurd, anti-AKP sentiments, with a pro-military stance while being an avid advocate of the 'state' excluded from government. Having a sensitivity to political correctness, one could argue that Sözcü incited audiences to racism while criticizing the AKP and solution/peace process, and it was the only newspaper that resorted to such a comprehensive semantic extremism as can be seen on their coverage dated 25 June, 23 September, and 21 October. Sözcü even used the pattern of 'turkification' on 8 July when referring 60% opposition as the Turks while comparing it to the Greek bailout referendum. Though Sözcü and Sabah followed somewhat similar framing patterns, there was a significant variation in how the two newspapers processed the Kurds ontologically, as Sabah tried to reach out the Kurdish constituency and Sözcü were more distanced to Kurds. Nevertheless, Sözcü showed certain patterns of moderation related to HDP as well when it came

to criticizing Erdogan and AKP policies. Therefore, the findings showed that political affiliation played a significant role in determination of how HDP was framed in mainstream press beyond what really was, happened and how.

5. CONCLUSION

My objective was to understand how the framing of the HDP evolved in the mainstream Turkish press between the two general elections in 2015 when the peace negotiations between the PKK and Turkish state collapsed. I elucidated how the mainstream press defined the HDP based on their political alignment in the context of Turkey during the timeline. Hürriyet's framing of HDP was based on the narrative that HDP were a mostly legitimate actor of politics in Turkey that were responsible for causing events or providing solutions, as well as powerless before greater forces. Sabah's framing of HDP was based on a narrative that claimed HDP were an almost solid illegitimate actor of politics that caused harm in politics of Turkey by having supported terrorism for separation from Turkey. As for Sözcü, the newspaper showed a similar prevalent framing pattern to Sabah's with some variations in the degree of HDP's illegitimacy and powerlessness before greater forces.

While the newspapers' framing of HDP showed variations from time to time depending on the issue handled and the political conjuncture then, none of them showed a considerable variation in their dominant framing patterns related to HDP during the timeline. As for the relationship between framing and political alignment, the political alignment was, among others, the most decisive factor on framing patterns of the newspapers which was presented in detail over the dominant framing and coverage patterns related to same themes as well as by contrasting contemporary coverage related to the same incidents, as well as.

This study made contribution in the literature in terms of framing of pro-minority parties and reflected a timeline that included the beginning of a critical period for Kurdish – Turkish Conflict and a crack in AKP's 13-year single party rule then in the eyes of the mainstream media actors focused on HDP. It provided an in-depth analysis of frontpages and clarified how the mainstream press wanted people to have an attitude about the Kurdish political movement in Turkey from June to November 2015. To compare the findings with a similar research done by Atay and İrvan (Atay & İrvan, 2020) who studied the timeline of 2013 from a perspective of the frames used in the coverage of the peace process, the findings of this study showed that there were not a serious variation in how Sözcü and Hürriyet handled the Kurdish issue since then, while Sabah made an almost complete U-turn almost in every aspect related to a democratic solution to the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

As for the theoretical and methodological approaches employed in this study, I propose that Entman's formulation of framing is a relevant approach in terms of explaining the role of framing in mass communication and public opinion formation, though his definition of framing integrated with agenda-setting and priming might be too encompassing in certain disciplines especially from the perspective of the effects of framing. This study also confirmed Entman's suggestion that the effects of framing even on small factions in society, 2-3% of the swing vote incident that happens because of framing at the top level could have decisive consequences for political power, as it was the case between the June and November 2015 elections in Turkey in such a short period of time upon crises. His approach with some context-bound adjustments was effective in designing this case study to find answers to my research questions. Regarding the propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky's, I got the opportunity to observe each filter of media from size to common enemy including how they function. I confirm that it is still relevant, effective, and clearly explaining the

dynamics of the organization of the mass media in Turkey. As the most striking example, the flak machine was constantly in operation against Hurriyet which showed a deviation from the mainstream line; as a result, Hürriyet building and one of their columnists were attacked by ultranationalist mobs claimed to be organized by AKP affiliates[46],[47].

While the political conjuncture in Turkey had almost always been disadvantageous for Kurdish political movements especially after the failure of peace process, it also showed that the mainstream framing activity between the two elections did not affect HDP constituency in a decisive/radical degree but rendered the party as significantly vulnerable in political context of Turkey by manufacturing consent of majority to make the party nonfunctional with political pressure. Since 2015, but especially after the pretext of the state of emergency conditions following the 15 July 2016 Coup Attempt, numerous HDP and DBP mayors were removed from office on terrorism-related charges and replaced with the trustees appointed by the government. Former HDP co-leaders Figen Yuksekdag and Selahattin Demirtas have also been in jail since November 2016 pending multiple trials. Moreover, Hasip Kaplan, a prominent Kurdish lawyer, politician, and author from Şırnak stated to the Guardian that "*about 16,000 party members have been arrested or detained, many under the state-of-emergency conditions declared after the failed 2016 coup attempt*"[48].

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[46] https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/news-timeline-attacks-on-hurriyet-and-the-aftermath-88662, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

[47] https://www.duvarenglish.com/turkish-mafia-leader-says-he-organized-attack-on-daily-hurriyet-in-2015-upon-akp-mps-request-news-57549, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

[48] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/27/as-erdogan-tightens-grip-on-power-last-opposition-politicians-resist-brutal-purge, *last accessed on 1 July 2021*

APPENDIX

Table 29 Codebook for identification of generic and issue-specific frames

Frames	Description	Validation Questions	Method
Frameless	Presents the HDP without using any clear framing and reasoning device, generally based on journalism activity	Was the coverage in line with the factual evidence?	Cross-checking with other sources
Morality	Present the HDP from a perspective of legitimacy	Was the presentation of the HDP given with an interpretation regarding its conformity with law, logic, and/or justification?	Yes/No
Terrorism & Separation	Presents the HDP as the political offshoot of the PKK with an agenda of separation through violence.	Was the HDP presented as accomplice, representative, supportive, embracive to the PKK?	Yes/No
Responsibility	Presents the HDP from a perspective of attribution of responsibility either for causing or solving	• Was the HDP presented in a way that they cause an event, incident, or harm?	• Yes/No • Yes/No

		• Was the HDP presented as the actor to provide solution, address the problem?	
Peace & Plurality	Presents the HDP as an integral part of Turkey in peace and plurality	Was the HDP presented in line with the idea of Turkeyfication?	Yes/No
Powerlessness Frame	Presents the HDP as powerless, dominated before greater forces, or victimized because of greater forces or negligence	Was the HDP presented in a way that is weak, powerless, and victimized? (Not necessarily with an interpretation of morality)	Yes/No
Human Interest Frame	Presents the HDP through individual, emotional stories with dramatization that would invoke empathy among the readers	Was the HDP presented in a way in which the audience can relate in terms of experiences and emotions over individuals through interviews, statements, and photos?	Yes/No
Economic Consequences Frame	Presents the HDP regarding the economic consequences of its (in)actions	Was the HDP presented in a way that includes economic aspects?	Yes/No

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