The Kurdish Problem, Print Media and Democratic Consolidation in Turkey.

I. An Introductory Context

This study assesses the linkage between the press and democratic consolidation in Turkey. Accordingly, it will base itself on a combination of theories that link press and democratic consolidation and utilize a case study for the assessment of this linkage. Hence, the key aim here is to understand press' role as an actor of democratic consolidation in Turkey by utilizing a salient case study.

A considerable amount of work on democratic consolidation has a special focus on the actions, structures, and culture of political elites as the main crafting agents of democratic consolidation. For example the works of Burton et al. (1992), O'Donnell et al. (1986) and Przeworski (1992) preferred to define democratic consolidation as the end product of a consensus among ruling elites on the rules of the democratic system. Without a doubt, political elites can be counted among the key actors within the consolidation period. In most cases, their impact goes well beyond the above-mentioned consensus, and elites act as the main agents of the democratic regime. They direct and decide on regime type (for example, whether it is parliamentary or presidential), on the concentration of power, and on the settings of institutions of accountability (for instance, the constitutional court). Moreover, the elites' legacy is influential on how party and interest group leaders exercise their power. These include their ability to bargain with each other, form coalitions, mobilize public support, and respond to public demands (Diamond 1999).

Elites may be preeminent but they do not constitute the whole framework. Although many different formal definitions and dimensions of democratic consolidation exist,

commonly it is argued that democratic consolidation requires that mass publics that have diverse and multifaceted information on political practices(Huntington 1991; Morlino 1998; Pridham 1995; Schedler 1998). Hence, the actors that take part in the process of democratic consolidation are not only the individuals either at the elite or mass level. A number of other agents, in our case the press, are also influential in this process. Democratic regimes must be responsive and responsible to the interests of the public, and to that end, democratic political systems should function in a setting of a rule of law that protects its citizens' rights to organize, speak, and publish. The importance of the press for democratic consolidation rests on a similar assumption. According to Siebert et al. (1956), there is a strong relationship between the media content political developments in a given setting. In their work the authors position centralized, authoritarian societies on one side and free democratic ones on the other side of the political spectrum. Countries closer to the latter would exhibit greater press pluralism -in the sense of diversity of their news, approaches, responses and ideological positions- than those nearer the former. Hence in the countries, where the press display a plural structure as described above, we may expect it to be more contributive to the democratic consolidation process. Consequently, the term pluralism is defined as the extent to which diverse and competing views appear in the content of the press on a given news topic. This assumption was tested extensively in the democratizing nations of the world (Bresnahan 2003; Mickiewicz 2000; Millard 1998; Mollison 1998; Randall 1998; Sukosd 2000) especially in Central and Eastern Europe during 1990s.

In all these cases, diversity of viewpoints in the press was described as a characteristic of the democratic consolidation process. These studies also demonstrated that the relationship between democracy and press pluralism is both positive and reciprocal. In other words, while the laws and principles of democracy are thought to be essential for free and diverse voices to

emerge in the press, these same voices also safeguard and improve the conditions for democracy and democratic consolidation. A press that facilitates the flow of information diversely about public events to citizens, exposes politicians and governments to public scrutiny, elucidates choices during elections and urges people to participate in the political process (McQuail 2000).

Although the relationship between media and politics has been analysed extensively in the Turkish context (Guida 2008; Kaya and Cakmur 2010; Keyman 2010; Somer 2010; Wuthrich 2010), to my knowledge its role on democratic consolidation has only been subject to a single academic analysis (Heper and Demirel 1996). Differentiating itself from the mentioned study, this research will employ media framing for the analysis of the problematic. Hence this study will try to locate the above-mentioned discussion in the Turkish context by focusing on the taxing case of Kurdish question in Turkey. By framing the news on the selected case and by utilizing statistical analysis it will be possible to track the patterns of plurality, in the sense of diversity of the news, approaches, responses and ideological positions, during different time periods and among different newspapers.

The Kurdish question has always been a central issue for Turkish politics. Starting with the 2000s the significance of the issue elevated again especially with its reference to democratization (Özbudun 2000). Although numerous studies tried to elaborate on the complex Kurdish question with its alternative dimensions, this study employs the Kurdish question as a case study for locating this salient issue in the democratic consolidation process in Turkey. Although news media research is becoming more and more visible in political research, few studies focused on the Middle Eastern media news and its representations. By utilizing news media research for the analysis of Kurdish question in Turkey, this study does

not only aim to fill this gap but also locate the problematic in the context of democratic consolidation. Thus, this article is an attempt to create a map that portrays the presentation of Kurdish question in the Turkish print media and utilize this map for an analysis of democratic consolidation process in Turkey.

II.   An Overview of Print Media in Turkey

If not qualitatively, in quantitative terms Turkey's media scene has greatly expanded starting from early the 1980s (Sezgin and Wall 2005, p. 789). Since then, Turkish press has become more and more important as an agent for the perception of realities in Turkey. Surely press does not only have the potential to shape the attitudes of a considerable amount of the population, but also change the public opinion effectively.

The media market of Turkey has changed from family-owned media enterprises to large media empires that have additional stakes in construction, banking, and other industries. Holdings such as Doğan Group, Merkez Group, Çukurova Group, İhlas Group, Doğuş Group, and Feza Group are among the main players. The distribution of the print media, also, is monopolized by Doğan Group's Yay-Sat and Merkez Group's MDP. This applies not only to the press but also to radio and television. Hence the majority of national dailies are owned by a couple of media conglomerates. The largest is Doğan Group, which owns influential dailies *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Radikal*, *Posta*, and numerous other publications, several publishing houses, three TV channels (*CNN Türk*, *Kanal D*, *Star TV*), and radio stations, followed by the Merkez Group and smaller media holdings.

The total number of newspapers currently circulating in Turkey is estimated to be 2124. Forty of these are national, 23 regional and 2061 local. The main publishing centres are Istanbul and Ankara. Among the national dailies, (with their average daily sales) *Posta* (644413), *Hürriyet* (522880), *Zaman* (509667), *Sabah* (445679) and *Milliyet* (263538) are the

major ones The dailies *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet*, most circulated boulevard daily Posta, the quality paper *Radikal* (40665) which also has a Sunday supplement *Radikal* 2 with in-depth political and cultural analysis are owned by the largest and the most prominent of the media giants Doğan Group. Merkez Group owns Sabah which competes with *Hürriyet*. Remarkably Liberal Islamic dailies *Zaman* (owned by Feza Group) and *Yeni Şafak* employ liberal and left-wing columnists thus offer relatively broader perspectives especially about controversial issues (Nötzold 2008). In the print media market there are also three English dailies: *Turkish Daily News* owned by Doğan Group, The New Anatolian founded by the initial owner of the *Turkish Daily News*, and *Todays Zaman* which seems to follow the line of *Zaman*.

III.   A Succinct Overview of Turkey's Kurdish problem

The Kurdish question of Turkey is a multi-dimensional and multi layered problematic. It is multi-dimensional in the sense that it touches the areas of economic, social and political spheres. It is multi layered in the sense that it has experienced different solutions during different historical periods which has been cumulated through the years (Yeğen 2006)

To start with, according to Bruinessen (1992) the Turkish state ideologically hindered the recognition of Kurds as an ethnic group since the Kemalist state perceives the Turkish nation as a homogeneous entity. Agreeing with van Bruinessen, İçduygu et al. (1999) mentioned that the founders of the republic perceive any kind of alternative identity (including ingredients like language and culture) as a threat to the new republic and these alternatives were outlawed and punished. Going one step further Poulton (1997) tried to explain the Kurdish problem in Turkey only around oppressive state policies. Scholars like Kirişci and Winrow (1997) argued that these preferences of the Turkish state shaped the actions of Turkish governments as well. They argue that Turkish governments habitually denied the Kurdish existence for years and Kurds have been forced to blend into the dominant

culture. Similarly Barker and Fuller (1998) argued that the ultimate aim during the Republic is to transform Kurds into Turks. This policy choice of the Turkish republic eventually ended up with a series of Kurdish rebellions (White 2000). During the 1970s, an increasingly significant portion of Turkey's population of ethnic Kurds had actively demanded cultural, linguistic, and political rights as Kurds (Gunter 2004). As a result of the official choice on not recognizing and/or ignoring these demands the Kurdish movement was marginalized. The end result was creation of the *Parriva Karkaren Kurdistan* (PKK), or Kurdistan Workers Party, headed by Abdullah Öcalan on November 27, 1978. In August 1984, the PKK officially launched its revolt. The clash of the Turkish state with the PKK, cost more than thirty-seven thousand deaths, the partial or complete destruction of as many as three thousand villages and the internal displacement of some three million people (Gunter 2004).

As an alternative stance Heper (2007) rejects the "assimilation" paradigm that is mostly referred by the above mentioned scholars. According to Heper, this paradigm assumes that the Turkish state tried to assimilate Kurds by using force. The author, in particular, rejects this idea, since the author formulated assimilation as "forcing one ethnic community to adopt the ethnic primary identity of another ethnic community". In fact, Heper argued that the Kemalist state was convinced that the Kurds were going through a process of acculturation, a voluntary or unconscious assimilation. Hence, the state did not recognize the Kurdish ethnic group as such, so as not to impede this natural process of acculturation. The argument of the writer then rests on the distinction between 'denial' – defined as a refusal of empirical reality – and 'non-recognition', an acceptance of empirical reality while not admitting it openly.

IV.   The Adapted Research Methodology

A.   *The Research Approach*

In order to track the patterns of plurality this study will use media framing. By tracing the frames produced in the newspapers during the years, it is aimed to analyse the patterns of plurality among the news.

The literature on frames and framing effects provided innovative tools for political scientists since the 1970s. The works of Goffman (1974), Tuchman (1978), Graber (1988), Fiske and Taylor (1991), Iyengar (1991), Edelman (1993), Iyengar and Simon (1993), Price et al. (1997) constituted the basis of the framing theory. These studies mainly focused on demonstration of the salient issues in the news and their perceptions throughout the public. The theory and practice of the farming evolved during the years and focused on "how" questions instead of "what" questions (Pan and Kosicki 1993, p.70). Although there are alternative conceptualizations on news framing, commonly news framing defined as the "conceptual tool which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information" (Neuman et al. 1992, p.60). A number of important studies have underlined the salience of certain frames in the news by focusing on their consequences for the public's interpretation of events and issues (Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Graber 1988; Iyengar 1987; Norris 1995; Patterson 1993).

It is possible to construct a reliable set of indicators for the content analysis of the news based on the literature described above. With the help of this analysis it will be possible to identify the developments in the news over time and spot similarities, differences and plurality in the ways in which topics are framed. Two alternative strategies seem possible. First one may be to analyse the news with an open view, as an attempt to spot the possible frames, beginning with very loosely defined preconceptions of these frames (see, for example, (Gamson 1992)). Alternatively the news can be traced under pre-defined categories of frames which occur within the news. Although the former strategy can discover alternative ways for framing, it is labour intensive, often based on small samples, and can be difficult to

replicate. The latter, however, is applicable to large samples and can be replicated easily and detect diversity in framing between and within the media. This study will follow the latter strategy which has a great deal of examples within the current literature. The influential study by (Neuman et al. 1992) is a seminal one since it has identified a number of frames that cover a range of issues, including conflict, economic consequences, human impact, and morality frames. An additional review of literature about the nature of news in media (Brants and Neijens 1998; Nossiter et al. 1994; Semetko et al. 1991; Semetko and Schoenbach 1994; Semetko and Valkenburg 2000; Van Dijk 1988) confirmed that the above mentioned frames mostly cover the issues that have been found in the news. Hence, it becomes promising to use the latter approach to map the frames in the news. Accordingly this study utilized the following frames.

Responsibility frame. This frame questions individuals', groups' or organizations' responsibility in an event. Iyengar (1991) argued that by covering an issue or problem in terms of an event, instance, or individual encourages people to offer individual level explanations for social problems.

Human frame. This frame brings a "human face" and/or a dramatic perspective to the display of the event, issue, or problem. Bennett (1995) mentioned that journalists more and more use this frame and by humanizing and sensationalizing the news, they aim to capture and preserve audience interest.

Conflict frame. This particular frame analyses the clashes between individuals, groups, or organizations. In their study Neuman et al. (1992, p 61-62) found that this frame is the most prevalent among the frames that they diagnosed. An important problem of the conflict frame is its potential of relegating complicated political debates to a daily and shallow

conflict. Because of the emphasis on conflict, the news media have been criticized for inducing public cynicism and mistrust of political leaders(Cappella and Jamieson 1997).

Morality frame. This frame puts the event, problem, or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions. Additionally it delivers messages through indirect means. Generally, such stories contain moral messages or offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, p. 96).

Economic frame. This frame reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country (Neuman et al. 1992).

B. *The Research Techniques*

This study performed a quantitative content analysis of the frames described above related to the Kurdish question in Turkey. Accordingly the research team scanned the Turkish national print media for 24 years between the dates of 1 January 1984 and 31 December 2008. The research team was consisted of 25 coders and worked for 9 months. This research period starts with 1984 because the PKK organized its first armed attack against the Turkish Armed Forces in 1984. The research covered 16 national newspapers: *Milli Gazete, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Ortadoğu, Yenişafak, Posta, Evrensel, Vatan, Türkiye, Birgün, Zaman, Hürriyet, Milliyet, Vakit, Yeniyüzyıl* and *Turkish Daily News*. Since the research covered an extended period of time there were some discontinuity problems related to newspapers.

The team coded the stories related to the Kurdish problem on the first pages of newspapers. Coders selected the news according to a broadly defined list of keywords, like Kurds, PKK, terrorist attack, economic development, armed forces, conflict, and the names of the villages of the Eastern and South eastern parts of Turkey etc. In total, the team analysed

11865 news stories and Table 1 provides the frequencies and percentages of the news according to newspapers.

Table 1. Names, frequencies and percentages of newspapers analysed 1984-2008

Newspaper	N	%	Newspaper	N	%
Milli Gazete	745	6.3	Türkiye	1400	11.8
Cumhuriyet	1115	9.4	Vatan	390	3.3
Radikal	362	3.1	Birgün	507	4.3
TDN	429	3.6	Zaman	1260	10.6
Ortadoğu	1431	12.1	Hürriyet	1292	10.9
Yeni Şafak	185	1.6	Milliyet	1526	12.9
Posta	249	2.1	Vakit	559	4.7
Evrensel	331	2.8	Yeniyüzyıl	84	.7
Total	**11865**				

There were 20 questions to which the coder had to answer *yes* (1) or *no* (0) in the codebook. The reason for using such kind of a binary coding strategy is to enhance the inter-coder reliability. Each question was meant to measure one of five news frames: human, conflict, morality, attribution of responsibility, and economic consequences. These were questions such as "Does the article reflect disagreement between parties/individuals/groups?" (conflict), "Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?" (human), "Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/ problem?" (responsibility), "Does the story contain any moral message?" (morality), and "Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?" (economic).

The factor analysis on the questions provided five factors as expected which were grouped under the relevant frame names. Only two items did not meet the threshold of 0.5 level—one item measuring the responsibility frame ("Does the story suggest that an individual or group of people in society is responsible for the issue-problem") and one

measuring the conflict frame ("Does the story refer to winners and losers?"). These questions are excluded from the analysis. The overall reliability of the model was acceptable ($\alpha = 0.7$).

The Research Findings

A. The Research Results

This article's first intention was, to map the presentation of the Kurdish question in the Turkish print media, for tracing the diversity and plurality in Turkish press. In accordance to fulfil this aim, two different figures are provided. Figure 1 summarizes the visibility of the researched frames according to years and Figure 2 summarizes the visibility of the researched frames according to newspapers.

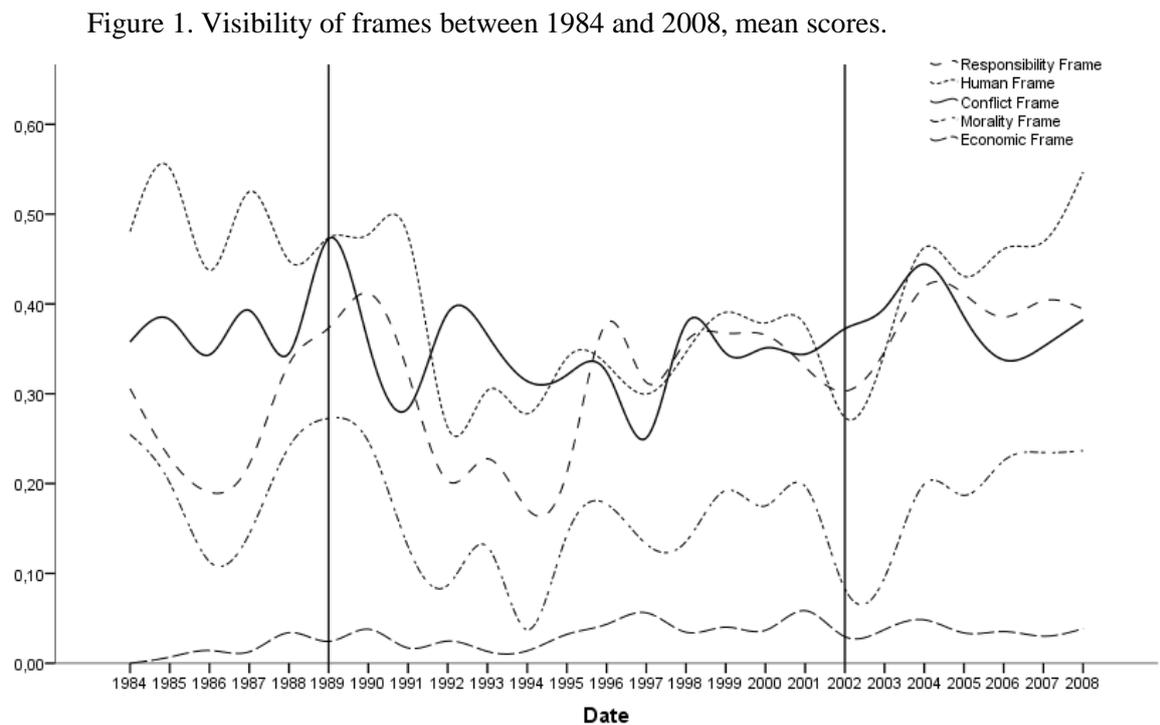Figure 1. Visibility of frames between 1984 and 2008, mean scores.

Figure 1 depicts the following results:

1. The number of the news and accordingly the visibility of frames displayed considerable variations during the years. The figure underlines the existence of three important episodes: First period (1984 to 1989), second period (1990 to 2002) and third period (2003 to 2008).

2. The total amount of news related to Kurdish question systematically increased per year: For the first period there are 1005 news (8.5 percent of the total, 167 news per year), for the second period there are 5551 news (46.8 percent of the total, 427 news pear year) and for the third period there are 4365 news (44.7 percent of the total, 728 news pear year). This raise is most visible within the third period.

3. At all times Economic Frame was the least observed frame among the news.

4. At all times Morality Frame was the second least observed frame among the news.

5. The first period was dominated by the Human Frame. This frame is followed by Conflict and Responsibility Frames.

6. During the second period starting from 1990 up to 1995 the news were dominated by Conflict Frame. After 1995 up to 2003 Responsibility Frame became the most visible frame.

7. Responsibility frame is the dominant frame of the third period. It is followed by Human and Conflict frames.

8. The Responsibility Frame with, 0.81 mean score became the most visible frame of all times. It is followed by Human and Conflict Frames with a narrow difference of 0.77 and 0.73 mean scores respectively. These frames are followed by the Morality and Economic Frame with 0.36 and 0.06 mean scores. All mean scores vary between 0 and 1.

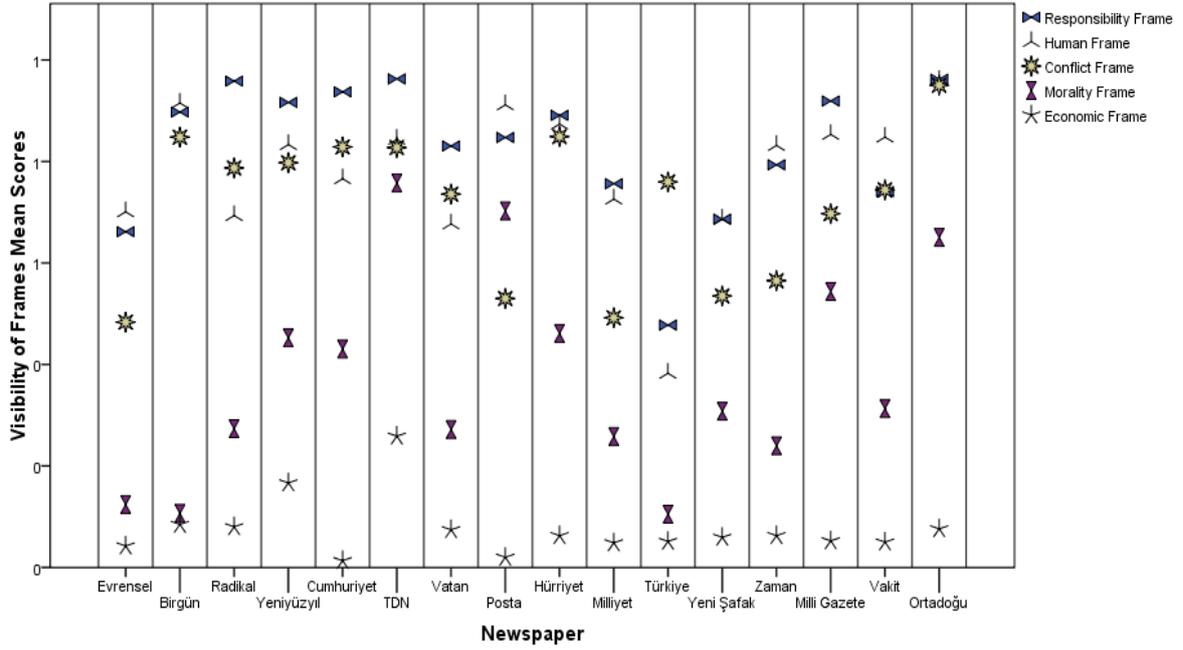Figure 2. Visibility of frames in newspapers between 1984 and 2008.

Figure 2 displays the following results:

1. Although the dominant frame changes among the newspapers, 7 of the 16 used the Responsibility Frame as the most common frame while transmitting the Kurdish question. This was followed by the Human Frame which is the dominant frame in 5 newspapers.

2. The Conflict Frame appeared either as the first or the second dominant frame in 9 newspapers.

3. Economic frame is the least visible frame in all of the newspapers.

4. The newspapers on Figure 2 are listed according to their ideological orientations from left to right. Although this listing is open to debate, still it is useful to portray the ideological positions of the newspapers in Turkey. When ideologies are concerned, it is possible to observe ideological plurality among the newspapers from Figure 2.

5. A sub-group of "Islamic newspapers" can be produced among the newspapers analysed. The members of this group, namely *Zaman, Yeni Şafak Milli Gazete* and *Vakit*, are known to deliver the daily news with frequent and strong Islamic references.

Apart from *Milli Gazete* all the others used the Human Frame as the dominant one. Without exception responsibility frame was the second dominant frame in those newspapers.

This article's other interest was to investigate whether there was diversity in the framing of news within different time periods and newspapers. Accordingly, the null hypothesis of "no variance among the time periods" and "no variance among newspapers" was tested by analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedure. First of all the Levene statistic rejects the null hypothesis that the group variances are equal since for all values the significance was below 0.002 both for periods and newspapers. The ANOVA test also certified this outcome. The significance values of the F test in the ANOVA table for all frames are 0.001[1]. Thus, there is enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis that the visibilities of frames are alike, stable, equal and similar across the time periods and newspapers. This result also underlines the fact that the newspapers display statistically significant diversity in their news, approaches, and responses while framing the news related to the Kurdish question.

B. Analysis of Research Outcomes

As it is proven by findings, news related to the Kurdish question displayed a great deal of variety. The following paragraphs will comment on this variety and explain the possible reasons and sources of the plurality observed within newspapers among different time periods.

---

[1] **Periods** as the grouping factor; Responsibility Frame $F=266.524$, $df=2/11862$, $p<0.001$; Human Frame $F=293.824$, $df=2/11862$, $p<0.001$; Conflict Frame $F=24.000$, $df=2/11862$, $p<0.001$; Moarlity Frame $F=126.626$, $df=2/11862$, $p<0.001$; Economic Frame $F=8.254$, $df=2/11862$, $p<0.001$. **Newspapers** as grouping factor; Responsibility Frame $F=112.077$, $df=15/11849$, $p<0.001$; Human Frame $F=135.310$, $df=15/11849$, $p<0.001$; Conflict Frame $F=123.343$, $df=15/11849$, $p<0.001$; Moarlity Frame $F=153.361$, $df=15/11849$, $p<0.001$; Economic Frame $F=19.419$, $df=15/11849$, $p<0.001$

On Periods

Research findings suggest that the Turkish press responded in a diverse manner to the Kurdish question throughout the years. To start with, the first period is marked by three different incidents which help us to understand the usage of the three alternative frames. The first incident is the mass movement of Iraqi Kurds to the Turkish borders following the massacre in the Iraqi town Halepçe in March 16 and 17, 1988. The military operation in northern Iraq by the Saddam Hussein administration which ended with thousands of deaths forced thousands of Kurds had to move towards Turkish and Iranian borders. After a short public debate Turkey opened its borders to the Kurdish immigrants. This decision re-connected the Kurdish populations of two different countries with each other in a humanitarian context. This situation was commonly reproduced by Turkish newspapers and that explains the high visibility the *human frame* for this period (see Figure 1). Although there is a thin difference with conflict and responsibility frames, it seems that the newspapers preferred to handle the issue through a humanistic perspective.

The second incident is the attendance of Kurdish deputies of Social Democratic Populist Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti* – SHP) to the Kurdish Conference which was organized by the Paris Kurdish Institute and Foundation of Freedoms in October 1989. The deputies, whom insisted on attending the Kurdish conference despite the objection of party administration, were expelled from the party in November 1989. With the support of the ten deputies whom also resigned from SHP, the expelled deputies founded People's Labour Party (*Halkın Emek Partisi* – HEP) in 1990. Paradoxically, SHP accepted to form an alliance with HEP in 1991 general elections and nineteen HEP members were elected to the parliament. The chaotic oath-taking ceremony in the Parliament where Kurdish deputies tried to take their oaths in Kurdish attracted serious amount of place in print news. With the help of these

political events the Kurdish problem was also presented by using the responsibility frame. This frame was more visible after 1995 which will be discussed within the second period.

The third incident is the initiation of PKK's attacks. From the data it seems that the PKK terror affected and reshaped the perception of the Kurdish problem, which was more visible during the second period. The PKK attacks and the never ending "low intensity war" between the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and the PKK, caused the conflict frame to be visible.

The variety in responses to the events related to Kurdish question continues during the second period of 1990-2002. Conflict frame is more visible than the other frames during the early stages of the second period. This is due to the incidents that happened both at international and local levels. At the international level the rise in the frequency of conflict frame is basically connected to the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1991. The first Gulf war remodelled Turkey's perception of the Kurdish issue and relocated the "local" Kurdish question to the international level. The new order in Iraq opened up the discussions on a Kurdish state. This situation surely formed a base of conflict for Turkey. As Gunter (1997) puts, a possible Kurdish state has the potential to serve the purposes of PKK to re-organize itself and to set an example for the Turkish Kurds. Moreover, the existence of organizations like the Combined Task Force and its Military Coordination Centre located in the Northern-Iraqi city Zaho for monitoring conditions of local Kurds raised a disturbance in Turkish politics and public opinion than any other consequences of the Gulf War. Newspaper articles and reports of that period reflect Turkey's fears and reactions based on those fears, which in a way reflected Turkey's perception of the Kurdish issue and Kurds (Bayındır 2007). At the local level, the incidents that took place at the parliament mainly shaped the perception of press. As mentioned above, nineteen of the HEP members were elected to the parliament, thanks to their alliance with SHP in the 1991 elections. However in March 1994, the assembly

annulled immunities of six deputies and on December 8, 1994, five of the deputies were sentenced to 15-year prison terms(Gunter 1997). The press when covering these incidents induced polarization and news on HEP deputies were in form of displaying evidences of "their betrayal" (Bayındır 2007).

The findings on the second period suggest a shift between conflict and responsibility frames. This may be explained by referring to a) the attempts of governments to neutralize the sources of conflict and b) the capture of Abdullah Öcalan. The best example for attempts to neutralize the sources of conflict can be observed in governments' actions related to the Nevruz celebrations. The commemoration of Nevruz, which is a festival celebrates the beginning of spring every March 21, was a major source of conflict during the first half of the 1990s. Nevruz is commonly interpreted in association with the activities, propaganda and provocations of the PKK, and it is perceived as a symbol related to the Kurds and their stance as a community (Bayındır 2007, p. 118). Especially in 1992 Nevruz was marked by high levels of strife where 31 people were killed and more than thousand were arrested. However starting from the mid-1990s, Nevruz began to be celebrated officially by the state. With news reports of detailed information on 'official' Nevruz celebrations, state's claim of Nevruz as a Turkish festival was naturalized and supported(Bayındır 2007, p. 116). The capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 consolidated the power of responsibility frame in the news. The capture of Öcalan, was perceived as the end of PKK and Kurdish question started to be discussed on the other areas rather than conflict. During the last phase of the second period, between 1999 and 2003, the importance of the Kurdish issue was relegated due to a number of other developments in the country. The decrease in the visibility of the news on the Kurdish question can be explained by referring to the *Marmara* earthquake in August 1999 and the economic crisis in 2001.

The third period, like the previous ones, was also marked by the plurality in responses to the events. This period starts with the news which heavily refers to the decision of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) on March 3, 2003. TGNA voted against USA's request on U.S. troops using Turkey's bases and airspace during the second Gulf War. Commonly the newspaper reports and columns of the time comment on the hidden plans of the USA which supports the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish state in northern Iraq.

Additionally the impact of the European Union (EU) is visible during the third period. Thanks to the harmonization processes restrictions on freedom of expression have been eased. Although, it started on a limited basis, education in the Kurdish language was permitted. Radio and television broadcasting in Kurdish and other minority languages is now permitted. While the development of regular Kurdish programming was initially a slow process, it has lately accelerated. Recently the state owned broadcasting organization Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) allocated a separate channel for broadcasting only in Kurdish. Random investigative activities, common in the Kurdish southeast, have been abolished; it is now illegal to search any individual or his residence without a court order. The government has also introduced an official policy of zero tolerance toward torture. The deputies who were imprisoned in 1991 because they had used Kurdish while speaking in parliament were released from prison in 2004. It is further argued that the EU could bring about a solution to the Kurdish question if it compelled Turkey to liberalize further, particularly in the area of drafting effective regulations to implement its legislative achievements (Uslu, 2009, p. 190). These developments explain frequent visibility of the responsibility frame in the news during the third period.

On Frames

Beyond the diversity among periods described above, there is also plurality among the frames researched.

The human frame was the third among the frames when the total sum is concerned. That being the case, however, this frame is the most visible frame in five of the newspapers analysed. Interestingly, there is no common denominator among these newspapers when their ideological positions are concerned: *Birgün* is a socialist newspaper, *Milliyet* is has a "middle-of-the-road" character, and the other three, *Zaman, Yeni Şafak* and *Vakit*, have strong Islamic tendencies. It is interesting to see these different newspapers preferred to deliver the news using the human frame. Although the Kurdish question in Turkey is a multidimensional one, because the never-ending armed conflicts between the parties, beyond the responsibility and conflict dimensions, it has a strong human dimension as well. Accordingly, it is possible to say that the humanity dimension of the problem, at least for these five newspapers, surpassed the other dimensions.

The high frequency of the responsibility frame among the news suggests the importance and potential influence of political culture on the framing of problems and topics in the news (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, p. 106). The coding for this frame was done in such a way that a high score meant the responsibility was attributed to the government. The analysis on the responsibility frame revealed the fact that responsibility was often attributed to the government in the Turkish case. This is in line with Sametko and Valkenburg's argument because in countries like Turkey where there is an omnipotent state (Toros 2007), the governments are supposed to offer solutions to social problems.

Although the conflict frame was the second most common frame in total, half of the newspapers used this frame as the dominant frame. For this study, the conflict frame questioned the conflict beyond political parties and it included groups and individuals who are involved in the Kurdish problem. By doing so it became possible to insert other actors which are politically and culturally relevant. The findings suggest that the conflict frame became dominant between 1990 and 1995. This is in line with the political climate of the country since this period was labelled by intense armed conflict between the PKK and TAF. The amount of the conflict frame in total started to decline after 1995. This may be a result of political arrangements which were introduced after 1995 to ease the problem. For example as Kramer (2000, p. 38) argues starting in 1995 the discussions on the Kurdish question were no longer perceived as cases for public offense. That being the case however the importance of the conflict frame lingered during the periods of armed conflicts, although for short time periods, it became the dominant frame again.

The morality frame is the second least visible among other frames. It is remarkable to notice that, only one out of four of the "Islamic newspapers", *Milli Gazete*, used the morality frame as the most frequent one. Hence, once again we may approve the idea that the production of the news is highly connected to the political culture and social context rather than ideologies.

Lastly it is startling to see that the economic frame is the least common frame at all times and for all newspapers. This situation may be explained with the predominantly episodic characteristics of Turkish print media. This character ignores the thematic or analytic analysis which the news about economy mainly requires. Given that, the visibility of economic frame increased during the years.

V.   The Concluding Observations

During the last two decades press as an actor for democratic consolidation has attracted considerable interest. As a consequence of this interest, this study investigated the link between press and democratic consolidation in Turkey. More particularly, the research question guiding this study was: What is the condition of the Turkish press as an agent for democratic consolidation in Turkey?

In order to answer this question, this study searched the patterns of diversity and plurality among the news in order to locate the problematic in the democratic consolidation discussion. It was assumed that plural structures in the sense of diversity of the news, approaches, responses and ideological positions would be contributive to democratic consolidation. One important outcome of this study is that where democratic consolidation functions are concerned, the press in Turkey carry similar functions to those of consolidated democracies. Findings proved that the Turkish press responded to the selected case -Kurdish question- in a plural manner. This plurality is not only visible among the newspapers but also among the different time periods. Moreover by responding events in a plural way the Turkish press successfully carries divergent information and opinion to the readers which safeguards the conditions for democracy and democratic consolidation. Hence press as an actor of democratic consolidation in Turkey seems to fulfil its part.

A substantial number of countries which try to consolidate their democratic systems end up in zones between democracy and authoritarianism. In such conditions, the actors like press that incorporate in democratic consolidation can make the difference. Although press does not constitute an adequate base for democracy in and of itself, it is still an important

component for fortifying democracy. This study showed that for the Turkish case, when press is concerned, there is ground for being optimistic.

REFERENCES

Barker H, Fuller G (1998) Turkey's Kurdish question. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham
Bayındır Ö (2007) Representation of the Kurdish Question in Hurriyet and Cumhuriyet (1990-2006).
        Middle East Techical University, Ankara
Bennett WL (1995) News: The politics of illusion. Longman, New York
Brants K, Neijens P (1998) The infotainment of politics. Political Communication 15:149–164
Bresnahan R (2003) The media and the neoliberal transition in Chile: Democratic promise unfulfilled.
        Latin American Perspectives 30 (6):39–68
Bruinessen Mv (1992) Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism and Refugee Problems. In: Kreyenbroek
        P, Speri S (eds) The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview. Routledge, London, pp 26-53
Burton M, Gunther R, Higley, John (1992) Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and
        Southern Europe. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
Cappella J, Jamieson K (1997) Spiral of cynicism. Oxford University Press, New York
Diamond L (1999) Developing Democracy Towards Consolidation. Johns Hopkins University Press,
        London
Edelman M (1993) Contestable categories and public opinion. Political Communication 10:231– 242
Fiske J, Taylor S (1991) Social cognition. New York:. McGraw-Hill, New York
Gamson W (1992) Talking politics. Cambridge University Pres, New York
Goffman E (1974) Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience. Harper & Row, New
        York
Graber D (1988) Processing the news: How people tame the information tide. Longman, New York
Guida M (2008) The Sèvres Syndrome and "Komplo" Theories in the Islamist and Secular Press.
        Turkish Studies 9 (1):37-52. doi:10.1080/14683840701813994
Gunter M (1997) The Kurds and the Future of Turkey. Palgrave Macmillan, New York
Gunter MM (2004) The Kurdish Question in Perspective. World Affairs:199-200
Heper M (2007) The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation Palgrave Macmillan
        Houndmills
Heper M, Demirel T (1996) The press and the consolidation of democracy in Turkey. Middle Eastern
        Studies 32 (2):109
Huntington S (1991) Democracies: Third Wave. Journal of Democracy 2 (1):12-34
İçduygu A, Sirkeci İ, Romano D (1999) The Ethnic Question in an Environment of Insecurity: The Kurds
        in Turkey. Ethnic and Racial Studies 22:991-1010
Iyengar S (1987) Television news and citizens' explanations of national affairs. American Political
        Science Review 81:815–831
Iyengar S (1991) Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues. University of Chicago
        Press, Chicago
Iyengar S, Simon A (1993) News coverage of the Gulf crisis and public opinion: A study of agenda-
        setting, priming, and framing. Communication Research 20:365–383
Kaya R, Cakmur B (2010) Politics and the Mass Media in Turkey. Turkish Studies 11:521-537.
        doi:10.1080/14683849.2010.540112
Keyman EF (2010) Turkey, Transformation and the Left Media. Turkish Studies 11 (4):539-553.
        doi:10.1080/14683849.2010.540113
Kirişci K, Winrow GM (1997) The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-state Ethnic
        Conflict. Frank Cass, London
Kramer H (2000) A Changing Turkey: The Challange to Europe and United States. Brookings
        Institution Press, Washington D.C.
McQuail D (2000) Mass communication theory. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA
Mickiewicz EP (2000) Structure and exposure: Dilemmas of democracy in Russia's television market. .
        Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington, Seattle
Millard F (1998) Democratization and the media in Poland. In: Randall V (ed) Democratization and
        the media. Frank Cass., Portland, OR,

Mollison TA (1998) Television broadcasting leads Romania's march toward an open, democratic society. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media 42 (1):128–141

Morlino L (1998) Democracy Between Consolidation and Crises. Oxford University Press, New York

Neuman WR, Just MR, Crigler AN (1992) Common knowledge. University of Chicago Press, Chicago

Norris P (1995) The restless searchlight: Network news framing of the post-cold war world. Political Communication 12:357–370

Nossiter TJ, Scammell M, Semetko HA (1994) Old values versus news values. In: Crewe I, Gosschalk B (eds) Political communications: The British 1992 general election campaign. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge., pp 85-104

West Asia: Media Systems (2008) Blackwell Publishing. http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode?id=g97.

O'Donnell G, Schmitter P, Whitehead L (1986) Transitions from Authoritarian Rule Southern Europe. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London

Özbudun E (2000) Contemporary Turkish Poltics. Lynne Rienner Publishers London

Pan Z, Kosicki GM (1993) Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse. Political Communication 10:59-79

Patterson T (1993) Out of order. Knopf, New York

Poulton H (1997) Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic. Hurst, London

Price V, Tewksbury D, Powers E (1997) Switching trains of thought: The impact of news frames on readers' cognitive responses. Communication Research 24:481–506

Pridham G (1995) The International Context of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective. In: Gunter R, Diamandaurus PN, Puhle H (eds) The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, p 169

Przeworski A (1992) The Democracy and Market. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Randall V (1998) Introduction. In: Randall V (ed) Democratization and the media Frank Cass, London,

Schedler A (1998) What is Democratic Consolidation. Journal of Democracy 9:91-107

Semetko HA, Blumler JG, Gurevitch M, Weaver DH (1991) The formation of campaign agendas: A comparative analysis of party and media roles in recent American and British elections. Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ

Semetko HA, Schoenbach K (1994) Germany's "unity election": Voters and the media. Hampton Press., Cresskill, NJ

Semetko HA, Valkenburg PM (2000) Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News. Journal of Communication 50:93-109

Sezgin D, Wall M (2005) Constructing the Kurds in the Turkish press: a case study of Hurriyet newspaper. Media Culture and Society 27 (5):787-798

Siebert FS, Peterson T, Schramm W (1956) Four theories of the press: The authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet communist concepts of what the press should be and do. University of Illinois Press, Urbana

Somer M (2010) Media Values and Democratization: What Unites and What Divides Religious-Conservative and Pro-Secular Elites? Turkish Studies 11 (4):555-577. doi:10.1080/14683849.2010.540114

Sukosd M (2000) Democratic transformation and the mass media in Hungary: From Stalinism to democratic consolidation. In: Moughan RGA (ed) Democracy and the media: A comparative perspective. Cambridge University Press., Cambridge, MA,

Toros E (2007) Understanding the Role of Civil Society as an Agent for Democratic Consolidation: The Turkish Case. Turkish Studies 8 (3):395-415

Tuchman G (1978) Making news. Free Press, New York

Van Dijk TA (1988) News as discourse. Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ

White PJ (2000) Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers: The Kurdish Movement in Turkey. Zed Press, London

Wuthrich FM (2010) Commercial Media, the Military, and Society in Turkey during Failed and Successful Interventions. Turkish Studies 11 (2):217-234. doi:10.1080/14683849.2010.483860

Yeğen M (2006) Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu. İletişim yayınları, İstanbul