PREDICTING THE IMAGE OF TURKEY AND THE PRIME MINISTER ERDOĞAN THROUGH CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF DAVOS INCIDENT

Elif Engin[*] – Gül Şener[**]

ABSTRACT

Using content analysis of four national newspapers in Turkey and applying framing analysis, this study examines how the selected newspapers framed the image of Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan and national image of Turkey after the Davos incident in World Economic Forum 2009. The analysis showed that the newspapers differ in their portrayal of the incident and in their construction of the image of Prime Minister Erdoğan and Turkey. Newspapers in the republican-laic side of the political spectrum in Turkey assessed the incident in negative terms and reflected a more negative image for both Prime Minister Erdoğan and Turkey, whereas newspapers with a conservative-democrat line portrayed more positive images.

Keywords: Framing analysis, Davos incident, news media coverage, content analysis.

DAVOS OLAYI ÇERÇEVESİNDE TÜRKİYE'NİN VE BAŞBAKAN RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN'IN İMAJININ DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİNE YÖNELİK BİR İÇERİK ANALİZİ

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki 4 ulusal gazetenin 2009 Dünya Ekonomik Forum'unda yaşanan Davos olayına dair haberlerinin içerik analizi üzerinden Türkiye'nin ve Başbakan Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın imajının araştırılmasını amaçlamaktadır. Yapılan analiz sonucunda, gazetelerin Davos olayını, Türkiye ve Başbakan Erdoğan'ın imajını çerçeveleme şekillerinde farklılaşma görülmüştür. Türkiye'nin politik yelpazesinde cumhuriyetçi-laik taraf olarak nitelendirilen gazetelerin Davos olayı çerçevesinde Türkiye ve Başbakan Erdoğan'ı negatif imgeler üzerinden yansıttığı, diğer taraftan muhafazakar-demokrat taraf olarak nitelendirilen gazetelerin ise daha pozitif imgeler kullandığı tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Çerçeve analizi, Davos olayı, gazete haberleri, içerik analizi.

1. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

At a special panel discussion on Gaza at the World Economic Forum on 29 January 2009, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had an angry exchange with the Israeli president, Shimon Peres and left the discussion by declaring that he will never attend Davos again. After the incident, news media served as one of the major sources of information by establishing the frames and influencing public opinion on Prime Minister Erdoğan's personal image at one hand and Turkey's national image at the other.

As it becomes more and more apparent, in today's world people experience events and issues more via indirect encounters, mainly through the information given by the media. McCombs (1994: 3) asserts that media "structure and organize our world for us". In that sense, media do not only tell us what to think about but how to think about any given topic (Kuypers 2002: 6). One of the ways media govern our conception of any subject matter is "framing". It works by way of media providing the necessary contextual cues for the interpretation.

Entman (1993: 52) identifies "frame" as "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicative text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described". Gamson (1989: 157)

---

[*] Instructor, Bahçeşehir University Communication Faculty
[**] Research Assistant, Bahçeşehir University Communication Faculty

also puts emphasis on "frame" as a construct and defines it as "a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue". Although framing has diverse definitions, a consensus seems to exist among scholars working on the subject on certain characteristics: it's "a process of selection and exclusion and involves bias" (Bantimaroudis et al. 2001: 176). In other words, by using framing communicators construct a particular point of view through rendering the facts more noticeable or ignored.

Gamson (2001: ix) classifies 3 research domains regarding framing: 1) the origins and use of frames in the construction of messages 2) the examination of specific frames in messages and 3) the interaction between audiences and these messages. This paper falls under the second category of research according to Gamson's classification. Within the confines of this paper, specific frames concerning the image of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and national image of Turkey are examined in selected national newspapers.

Ghanem (1996: 40) describes different framing mechanisms (photographs, graphics, quotes, headlines, subheads, etc.). She (1996: 32) asserts that the more a topic is mentioned in a media content more powerful it becomes as a framing mechanism. In the light of this approach, this paper's frames are established by selecting the most mentioned image attributes for Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and national image of Turkey.

Kunczik (1997: 47) explains that national image is "the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people". However, a national image may not always be constructed through an individual's cognitive capacity. Li and Chitty (2009: 1) proposes that national images involve two different aspects: perceived images and projected images. While perceived images are described as a function of stereotypes that provide a consistent and ordered view of the world for individuals and personal experiences (Lippmann 2004: 52), projected images are shaped by media representations of a given country. This study focuses not on perceived

national image of Turkey but its projected image examining public frames displayed by selected Turkish newspapers.

In sum, this paper aims to examine national news media coverage of Davos incident in Turkey through which Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan's image and Turkey's national image is studied.

2. METHODOLOGY

As mentioned earlier, this study proceeded from a quantitative content analysis of the frames used in the Turkish national newspapers regarding the national image of Turkey and personal image of Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan in the aftermath of the Davos incident.

The study was conducted based on the following research questions:

1. How was the incident that has happened in Davos Economic Forum framed by Turkish newspapers?

2. Do newspapers vary in their portrayals of the incident?

3. What characteristics about Turkey and Prime Minister Erdoğan are used by Turkish newspapers in their framing of Davos incident?

2.1 *Sampling*

All the news articles containing the word "Davos" in Turkish newspapers constituted the study population. It was given special attention to two important points for sampling procedure. The first one was selecting the newspapers; the second one was select the time period.

Four national newspapers; *Hürriyet, Zaman, Cumhuriyet* and *Yeni Şafak* were selected by judgmental sampling method. The main concern for this selection was to be able to identify different viewpoints regarding the national image of Turkey in general and the image of Prime Minister Erdoğan in particular in the aftermath of the Davos incident. *Hürriyet* and *Cumhuriyet* are chosen for its republican-laic stand within the political spectrum of the newspapers. For that part, *Zaman* and *Yeni*

Şafak are chosen for their conservative-democrat line.

Time period of this study covers from 30 January 2009 - the day after the Davos incident happened - to 14 February 2009. The reason behind this two-week selection is the assumption that the hard news takes place within the first week of the incident. After the first week the hard news gave way to opinion oriented news, hence column news. Therefore, to select the second week after the incident provided us the content for these opinion related news articles.

From this perspective, two week period should produce appropriate variety of articles on the frames regarding Turkey and Prime Minister Erdoğan.

2.2. Data Collection Procedure

For gathering news articles, Prnet newspaper database was used. The sample was obtained by using the specified dates and keyword "Davos" appearing anywhere in the text. From the census of the news articles returned, irrelevant articles on Davos Economic Forum and press ads were eliminated, leaving 325 news articles to be examined. Examples of news articles eliminated included news on global economic crisis and Davos, press ads congratulating Prime Minister Erdoğan to leave the session in Davos.

The definitions used in content analyses are operational definitions, which use operations and indicator to define concepts (Berger 2000). So, one of most important point of this research is to determine the unit of analysis and make the other operational definitions. The unit of analysis of this study was "news article". The newspaper name, publication date, section of the newspaper, type of the news coverage, style of the news coverage, frame of the news coverage, the clusters of the news articles about Turkey and the clusters of the news articles about Prime Minister Erdoğan were coded.

- Section of the newspaper: This categorization was coded as headline, agenda, foreign news, economy and other.

- Types of news coverage: This categorization was coded as general news, column and other. General news stands for every news article other than column and featured or special interviews.

- Style of the news coverage: This categorization was coded as fact/declaration, opinion/comment, unidentified.

- Frames of news coverage: This categorization was coded as positive, neutral and negative. News articles favorable toward the incident Davos and its reflection on the image of Turkey and Prime Minister Erdoğan were classified as positive, and those unfavorable toward the Davos incident as negative. Those that were neither favorable nor unfavorable were classified as neutral.

- To identify the images of Turkey and characteristics of Prime Minister Erdoğan framed by the selected newspapers this present study classified selected news articles into 7 clusters for Turkey and 10 clusters for Prime Minister Erdoğan.

- The clusters about news articles about Turkey: This categorization was coded as;
  - Friend of Muslim countries
  - Mediator in the Middle East peace process
  - Lost its role and objectivity as a mediator in the Middle East
  - Moving away from the West
  - A country with its own political will
  - Key player in the region working for the peace/human rights
  - A global actor

- The clusters about news articles about Prime Minister Erdoğan: This categorization was coded as;
  - Hero/Brave/Sincere
  - Not diplomatic
  - Fake Hero
  - A world leader
  - Spokesperson of Hamas

– Peacemaker

– Protector of Turkey's reputation

– Populist (Acted for the sake of upcoming elections)

– Acted in humanitarian terms not political terms

– Anti-semitist

2.3. Intercoder Reliability

In order to attribute the news articles to the defined categories two coders were used in the data collection. To increase inter-coder objectivity, the coders were informed on the nature and the meaning of the classification criteria and the categories that are used. Coding form was pre-tested after the training of the coders. The necessary refinements were made according to the results of the pilot study. After that, the coders received coding sheet for every news article in the sample and each coder attributed news articles to the defined categories. The items that show no agreement between coders where resolved by referee.

All the categories of the coding sheet were consisted of nominal scale questions so Cohen's Kappa coefficient was computed for reliability tests among the coders. Calculated inter-coder reliability for nominal questions (Cohen's Kappa) is 77%. Most published content analysis report a minimum reliability coefficient of about 75% or above when using *pi* or *kappa* (Wimmer et al. 2006: 169). According to the inter-coder agreements, the study is reliable.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Within the confines of the research period (30 January 2009-14 February 2009) 647 news articles mentioning the word "Davos" appeared in four selected newspapers, *Hürriyet, Cumhuriyet, Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak*. Out of 647 news articles 325 were found relevant and coded. Table 1 indicates that in terms of the frequency of news articles per newspaper, there were no sharp distinctions between *Yeni Şafak, Zaman* and *Hürriyet*. All three newspapers gave the same amount of attention to the Davos

incident. *Cumhuriyet* reported on the incident less than the other three.

Table 1. Distribution of the articles

Newspaper	Frequency	Percent
Hürriyet	81	%24,9
Cumhuriyet	63	%19,4
Zaman	93	%28,6
Yeni Şafak	88	%27,1
Total	**325**	**%100**

Table 2 indicates that the majority of news articles on Davos incident appeared in the agenda section of the newspapers with %40.3 which was followed by other (%24.6) and foreign news section (%19.4). It shows that the incident was reported mostly as part of the agenda of Turkey. Although headline section seems to have a relatively lower rate (%11.1) than other sections, the reason behind this is that for the most part the news articles that appear in headline section continue in agenda section or foreign news sections.

Table 2. Section of Newspaper where the article on Davos incident appeared

	Frequency	Percent
Headline	36	%11,1
Agenda	131	%40,3
Foreign News	63	%19,4
Economy	15	%4,6
Other	80	%24,6
Total	**325**	**%100**

As Table 3 indicates that for the most part *Hürriyet* reported the news on Davos incident in its agenda section (%67.9); headline, foreign news, economy and other sections had significantly lower rates in terms of allocating the news articles on Davos. What can be said from there is that *Hürriyet* framed Davos incident heavily part of Turkey's own agenda. Similarly, *Cumhuriyet* used mostly its agenda section (%49.2) to report the Davos news but also foreign news (%20.6) and other (%23.8) sections had considerable rates. What is significant for *Cumhuriyet* is that headline (%4.8) and economy (%1.6) sections were almost not used to report the news. What is worth mentioning is that *Cumhuriyet* framed Davos incident not as

an important issue (or hard news) to report it in its headline section. Different than *Hürriyet* and *Cumhuriyet*, *Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* used every section with considerable rates for the news articles on Davos. This suggests that *Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* reported different aspects of Davos incident by giving the news articles in every section of the newspaper.

Table 3. Section split in newspapers where news articles on Davos incident appeared

		Newspaper Name			
		Hürriyet	**Cumhuriyet**	**Zaman**	**Yeni Şafak**
Headline	Count	8	3	14	11
	% within Newspaper Name	9,9%	4,8%	15,1%	12,5%
Agenda	Count	55	31	21	24
	% within Newspaper Name	67,9%	49,2%	22,6%	27,3%
Foreign News	Count	8	13	33	9
	% within Newspaper Name	9,9%	20,6%	35,5%	10,2%
Economy	Count	6	1	1	7
	% within Newspaper Name	7,4%	1,6%	1,1%	8%
Other	Count	4	15	24	37
	% within Newspaper Name	4,9%	23,8%	25,8%	42%
Total	**Count**	**81**	**63**	**93**	**88**
	% within Newspaper Name	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Table 4 shows that *Hürriyet, Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* used general news more than column news whereas this trend is vice versa in *Cumhuriyet* with significantly more column usage (%57.1) than general news usage (%36.5). Here it is important to give the operational definition of general news that implies news articles by reporters and by news services. Given the split of news coverage types within the selected newspapers, it suggests that *Hürriyet, Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* represented its official opinion on Davos incident by its reporters and by news services. On the contrary, *Cumhuriyet* represents its official opinion by its columnists. Moreover, the other category involving commentaries by experts from outside and special/featured interviews demands a special attention for examination. *Cumhuriyet, Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* used such commentaries and interviews to report on Davos incident. In contrast, *Hürriyet* did not report through such news coverage at all.

Table 4. Type of news coverage

		Newspaper Name			
		Hürriyet	**Cumhuriyet**	**Zaman**	**Yeni Şafak**
General news	Count	48	23	58	54
	% within Newspaper Name	59,3%	36,5%	62,4%	61,4%
Column	Count	33	36	24	29
	% within Newspaper Name	40,7%	57,1%	25,8%	33,0%
Other	Count	0	4	11	5
	% within Newspaper Name	0%	6,3%	11,8%	5,7%
Total	**Count**	**81**	**63**	**93**	**88**
	% within Newspaper Name	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Table 5 supports the findings of the Table 4. It shows that *Hürriyet, Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* rely notably on fact/declaration news style whereas *Cumhuriyet* used opinion/comment to report on Davos incident. It is clear that different than the other newspapers, *Cumhuriyet* reported the news more through subjective approaches. When we look at the Table 4 we see that *Cumhuriyet* used column as the main news coverage type. At the same time, when we investigate Table 5 *Cumhuriyet* used opinion/comment as the main vehicle to convey the news.

Table 5. Style of news coverage

		Newspaper Name			
		Hürriyet	**Cumhuriyet**	**Zaman**	**Yeni Şafak**
Fact/ Declaration	Count	53	24	56	53
	%within Newspaper Name	65,4%	38,1%	60,2%	60,2%
Opinion/ Comment	Count	28	39	35	33
	%within Newspaper Name	34,6%	61,9%	37,6%	37,5%
Unidentified	Count	0	0	2	2
	%within Newspaper Name	0%	0%	2,2%	2,3%
Total	Count	81	63	93	88
	%within Newspaper Name	100%	100%	100%	100%

To evaluate the tone of the news articles, we utilized a three fold categorization: positive, neutral and negative. Table 6 shows that *Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* framed Davos incident positively whereas *Cumhuriyet* reported on the incident with significantly negative tone (%74.6). *Hürriyet*, on the other hand framed the incident evenly as neutral and negative. Therefore, there is a clear distinction between newspapers in terms of their framing of the incident with *Hürriyet* and *Cumhuriyet* at one end and *Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* at the other.

Table 6. Frames of news coverage

		Newspaper Name			
		Hürriyet	**Cumhuriyet**	**Zaman**	**Yeni Şafak**
Positive	Count	14	2	66	65
	%within Newspaper Name	17,3%	3,2%	71,0%	73,9%
Neutral	Count	35	14	19	13
	%within Newspaper Name	43,2%	22,2%	20,4%	14,8%
Negative	Count	32	47	8	10
	%within Newspaper Name	39,5%	74,6%	8,6%	11,4%
Total	**Count**	**81**	**63**	**93**	**88**
	%within Newspaper Name	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

To identify the images of Turkey framed by *Hürriyet, Cumhuriyet, Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* we classified selected news articles into 7 clusters: Friend of Muslim countries, mediator in the Middle East process, lost its role and objectivity as a mediator in the Middle East, moving away from the West, a country with its own political will, key player in the region working for the peace/human right, global actor. As shown in Table 7, *Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* portrayed Turkey's image on positive terms. They framed the image of Turkey through characteristics such as Friend of Muslim countries, mediator in the Middle East peace process, a country with its own will, key player in the region working for the peace/human right and global actor. In Table 6 we can see that these two newspapers framed their news coverage of Davos incident with a positive tone. On the contrary, *Cumhuriyet* identify Turkey's image through characteristics such as lost its role and objectivity as a mediator in the Middle East, moving away from the West. It is clear that the findings in Table 6 where *Cumhuriyet* is shown to have a negative news coverage tone support the findings of the Table 7. *Hürriyet* does not manifest a clear framing of Turkey's image. No specific characteristic stands out to describe Turkey's image which overlaps with its neutral of negative news coverage tone in Table 6.

Table 7. Clusters about Turkey

		Newspaper Name			
		Hürriyet	**Cumhuriyet**	**Zaman**	**Yeni Şafak**
Friend of Muslim countries	Count	0	0	3	6
	% within Clusters	0%	0%	33,3%	66,7%
Mediator in the Middle East peace process	Count	1	0	15	13
	% within Clusters	3,4%	0%	51,7%	44,8%
Lost its role and objectivity as a mediator in the Middle East	Count	2	14	7	2
	% within Clusters	8%	56%	28%	8%
Moving away from the West	Count	1	5	2	0
	% within Clusters	12,5%	62,5%	25%	0%
A country with its own political will	Count	5	0	9	13
	% within Clusters	18,5%	0%	33,3%	48,1%
Key player in the region working for the peace/ human rights	Count	1	0	18	16
	% within Clusters	2,9%	0%	51,4%	45,7%
A global actor	Count	0	0	3	2
	% within Clusters	0%	0%	60%	40%
Total	**Count**	**10**	**19**	**62**	**52**

To identify the image of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan framed by *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet, Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* we classified selected news articles into 10 clusters: Hero/brave/sincere, not diplomatic, fake hero, a world leader, spokesperson of Hamas, peacemaker, protector of Turkey's reputation, populist (acted for the sake of upcoming elections),

acted in humanitarian terms not political terms, anti-semitist. As shown in Table 8, *Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* portrayed Prime Minister Erdoğan's image on positive terms. They framed the image of Erdoğan through characteristics such as hero/brave/sincere, a world leader, peacemaker, protector of Turkey's reputation, acted in humanitarian terms not political terms, anti-semitist.

Table 8. Clusters about Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (RTE)

		Newspaper Name			
		Hürriyet	**Cumhuriyet**	**Zaman**	**Yeni Şafak**
Hero/Brave/Sincere	Count	2	1	19	23
	% within RTE	4,4%	2,2%	42,2%	51,1%
Not diplomatic	Count	10	20	14	6
	% within RTE	20%	40%	28%	12%
Fake Hero	Count	5	1	1	0
	% within RTE	71,4%	14,3%	14,3%	0%
A world leader	Count	2	0	5	5
	% within RTE	16,7%	0%	41,7%	41,7%
Spokesperson of Hamas	Count	8	11	6	1
	% within RTE	30,8%	42,3%	23,1%	3,8%
Peacemaker	Count	1	0	4	4
	% within RTE	11,1%	0%	44,4%	44,4%
Protector of Turkey's reputation	Count	0	1	9	12
	% within RTE	0%	4,5%	40,9%	54,5%
Populist (Acted for the sake of upcoming elections)	Count	8	21	7	1
	% within RTE	21,6%	56,8%	18,9%	2,7%
Acted in humanitarian terms not political terms	Count	1	0	17	15
	% within RTE	3%	0%	51,5%	45,5%
Anti-semitist	Count	0	0	6	1
	% within RTE	0%	0%	85,7%	14,3%
Total	**Count**	**37**	**55**	**88**	**72**

These findings show that *Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* used complementary frames for both Turkey's and Erdoğan's image. It is clear that they affirm the Davos incident and represent Turkey and Erdoğan in a positive way. On the contrary, *Cumhuriyet* attributes negative characteristics to Erdoğan such as not diplomatic, fake hero, spokesperson of Hamas and populist. Therefore, *Cumhuriyet* used negative framing toward Erdoğan as in the case of its framing for Turkey's image. It portrays Davos incident as a negative happening. *Hürriyet* framed Erdoğan's image through negative characteristics such as not diplomatic, fake hero, spokesperson of Hamas and populist. In that sense, *Hürriyet* that framed Turkey's image with neutral tones (as can be seen in Table 7) manifests a clear negative stand in its framing of Erdoğan's image like in "fake hero" cluster with %71,4.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the content and frame analysis we conducted, we saw that *Zaman* and *Yeni Şafak* that happen to have a conservative political stand framed Davos incident, Turkey's and Prime Minister Erdoğan's image in positive tones. On the other hand, Hürriyet and Cumhuriyet framed them in neutral or negative tones. *Hürriyet* that framed Turkey's image with neutral tones shows a clear negative stand on its framing of Erdoğan's image. *Cumhuriyet* used negative framing toward Davos incident as well as Erdoğan's and Turkey's image. Therefore, newspapers vary in their portrayals of the incident and the image of Turkey and Prime Minister Erdoğan.

This explanation and others are speculative and need to be examined by further replicated studies in this subject for the scientific purposes.

REFERENCES

Bantimaroudis P & Ban H (2001) Covering the crisis in Somalia: Framing choices by the New York Times and The Manchester Guadian, in S. D. Reese, O. H. Gandy, A. E. Grant (Eds.), Framing Public Life, Lawrence Erlbaum, NJ.

Entman R (1993) Framing: Toward a clarification of a fractured paradigm, Journal of Communication, 43, 51-58.

Gamson W A (1989) News as framing: Comments on Graber, American Behavioral Scientist, 33 (2), 157-161.

Gamson W A (2001) Foreword, in S. D. Reese, O. H. Gandy, A. E. Grant (Eds.), Framing Public Life, Lawrence Erlbaum, NJ.

Ghanem S (1996) Media coverage of crime and public opinion: An exploration of the second level of agenda setting. Ph. D. thesis, University of Texas at Austin.

Kunczik M (1997) Images of nations and international public relations, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahweh, N.J.

Kuypers J A (2002) Press bias and politics: How the media frames controversial issues, Praeger, London.

Li X, Chitty N (2009) Conflict and Communication Online, 8 (2), pp. 1-11.

Lippman W (2004) Public opinion, Dover Publications, NY.

McCombs M E (1994) News influence on our pictures of the world, in J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.), Media effects: Advances in theory and research, Lawrence Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ, pp. 1-16.

Wimmer R D, Dominick J R (2006) Mass Media Research, Thomson Higher Education. Belmont, CA.