

## ARTICLE

---

# Visual Framing of Political Candidates: Case Study of the 2014 Turkish Presidential Election Campaign

ALİ ÇAĞLAR KARABIYIK<sup>1</sup>

Department of Communication Sciences, Faculty of Communication, Erciyes University, Turkey

### Abstract

In the context of political communication, political campaigns are the periods when political bias in the news media comes to light. This is reflected in news photos and other visual contents as well as newspaper texts. Visual framing, a newer area in framing theory and research, helps us understand how media frames visual images of political candidates. This paper analyzes the photographs of the presidential candidates in the 2014 Turkish presidential election campaign by using the visual framing analysis method. The data for this study comprises photographs from ten daily national newspapers belonging to different media groups representative of the Turkish press. The results reveal the intensity of visual framing bias related to political bias and polarization in the Turkish press.

### Keywords

Political communication, news framing, visual framing, news photographs, polarization, 2014 Turkish presidential election, Turkish press

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.24132/cejop\\_2021\\_3](https://doi.org/10.24132/cejop_2021_3)

**How to cite:** Karabiyik, A.Ç. 2021. "Visual Framing of Political Candidates: Case Study of the 2014 Turkish Presidential Election Campaign." *Central European Journal of Politics* 7 (1): 1-29. DOI: 10.24132/cejop\_2021\_3

---

<sup>1</sup> Address: Ali Çağlar Karabiyik, PhD candidate, Department of Communication Sciences, Faculty of Communication, Erciyes University, 38039 Melikgazi/Kayseri, Turkey. E-mail: [alicaglarkarabiyik@gmail.com](mailto:alicaglarkarabiyik@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

This study focuses on how political candidates' news photographs were framed in the Turkish press in the 10 August 2014 Turkish presidential election. The main purpose of the study is to reveal whether there is a visual framing bias in the news photographs of the political leaders. Even though the visual materials have an essential place in the analysis of news content and discourse besides written text, the insufficiency in the number of studies in this field is remarkable. As a newer approach in news studies, visual framing has opened a door in news analysis in the concept of framing theory and methodology.

D'Angelo and Kuypers note "much research on news framing is situated within the subfields of political communication and mass communication." (D'Angelo and Kuypers 2010: 1) So, in the political communication context, "framing analysis as an approach to analyzing news discourse, mainly deals with how public discourse about public policy issues is constructed and negotiated" (Pan and Kosicki 1993: 70). News framing also concentrated on how political leaders or political candidates are represented in mass media, in electoral periods. Some studies have shown that audiences and recipients judge politicians on the visual image that is presented in the media (Scheufele 2004: 421). Visual framing, as a contemporary field in news framing research, helps to analyze news discourse and media bias. It is believed that the news media is biased and reflects the fragmented and re-constructed reality. Fahmy (2004: 95) states that a news photograph is only "a slice of reality and not the entire whole"; it is only a portion of what is really out there.

According to Carragee and Roefs, "framing research has the potential to link news texts to broader social and ideological contexts, including production and reception processes. These contexts and processes, however, are shaped by the distribution of political and social power." (Carragee and Roefs 2004: 228) Election periods are the ideal times to observe the ideological stance, political tendency, and journalistic routines in the mass media. In this respect, the main objective of the study is to reveal the political and ideological intimacy of the Turkish press through the news photographs in the context of visual news framing in the 2014 Turkish presidential election.

In this study, first, the relationship between the media and politics in Turkey was discussed, and the importance of the 2014 presidential election for Turkish politics was mentioned. Afterward, terms and concepts related to news framing, visual framing, and visual framing methodology were broadly explained. A quantitative analysis of visual news frames was presented, focusing on the news photographs. The results displayed that news photos of presidential candidates were generally and significantly different, and these differences were also due to the visual framing bias of the selected newspapers. The bias has given information about the political closeness and ideological tendencies of the

press. Therefore, the findings also indicate and reveal the 'press-party parallelism' and/or 'political polarization' in the Turkish press.

## 2. Political environment and the media in Turkey

Politics in Turkey is highly polarized, and this poses a threat to democracy. According to Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2020 (EIU 2021), Turkey is categorized as a 'hybrid regime' which is defined by Zinecker (2009) as the gray area between authoritarianism and democracy. Many scholars point out that the authoritarian tendency has increased with the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AK Parti; the acronym is also used as AKP) era since 2002. According to Bulut and Yörük (2017: 4098), AKP initially followed a relatively liberal path between 2002 and 2007 but shifted toward an authoritarian model. Somer (2019) conveys that Turkey is viewed as having undergone a democratic breakdown and degenerating into an autocracy. Polarization contributed to democratic erosion and the collapse of democratic institutions in recent years. Some scholars associate authoritarianism with personalization in Turkish politics, and the one-man regime, and call it *Erdoganism* (Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018) or *Erdoğanization* (Selçuk et al. 2019).<sup>2</sup>

Results of the *Dimensions of Polarization in Turkey* survey conducted by The TurkuazLab (2020) Project show that political polarization in Turkey is quite at serious level.<sup>3</sup> The research team defines polarization as 'emotional' emphasizing that different political party supporters dislike and distant each other. Thus, the social distance between the political party supporters, the moral superiority felt by the political party supporters, and the political intolerance directed towards the supporters of other political parties serve as the three pillars of 'emotional political polarization'. In another survey named *Turkey Trends* conducted by Aydın et al. (2021), more than half of the Turkish people were reported to believe that the country is polarized. To the 2019 report of that study, 43.5 percent of the society thinks that the polarization is on the axis of secularism vs. religion.

Polarization can take the form of political and/or societal. While political polarization refers in general to large ideological and/or policy-based differences, societal polarization, relates to the existence of a few, large groups in society with opposing preferences (Aydın-Düzgıt and Balta 2019: 156). According to Iyengar et al. (2012: 406), the policy-based division is one way of defining partisan polarization to which partisans view each other as a disliked out-group. Aydın-Düzgıt and Balta (2019: 154) note that

---

<sup>2</sup> Referring to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

<sup>3</sup> Strategies and Tools for Mitigating Polarization in Turkey Project. The research was conducted with the partnership of The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) and İstanbul Bilgi University Center for Migration Research (BİLGİMİgration) and through the financial support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Following the first round carried in 2015 and the second round in 2017, the third round of the Dimensions of Polarization in Turkey Survey was completed in 2020.

“Turkish society is deeply and consistently polarized on the grounds of both ideology and social distance.” In the Turkish context, the political environment has been polarized not only as secular/Islamist, but also as Turk/Kurd.

Especially since the mid-2000s, both Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the ruling AK Parti have been associated with populist and polarizing rhetoric in Turkish politics (see Aydın-Düzgit and Balta 2019; Keyman 2014; McCoy et al. 2018). McCoy et al. (2018: 31) argue that the AK Party used polarizing rhetoric and identity formation by building on preexisting and at least partially cross-cutting cleavages such as ‘religious-secular’, ‘center-periphery’, ‘globalist-nationalist’ and ‘rich-poor’. According to Aydın-Düzgit and Balta (2019: 157), a key element of the polarizing populist rhetoric has been its use of an “us” vs. “them” divide, referring on the one hand to “the people” said to constitute the public will and represented at the political level by Erdoğan through his leadership of the AKP, and on the other hand the “Republican elite” who represent the “establishment” embodied in the main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP).

As Siebert et al. (1956: 1) point out, “the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates.” Therefore, the media in Turkey is also characterized by polarization, especially in terms of press-party parallelism. By ‘parallelism’ it is meant that “media tend to be structured and aligned according to competing parties and ideologies in the country concerned” (McQuail 2010: 241). According to Panayircı et al. (2016: 552), Turkey’s media system matches the characteristics of the ‘polarized pluralist model’ including high media integration into party politics (or political parallelism) and state intervention. Yesil (2016: 13), who defines Turkey’s political system as an ‘authoritarian neoliberal order’, notes that “Turkey’s media system is marked by the combination of state power with the power of capital, and authoritarian state control with neoliberal elements.” Likewise, Akser and Baybars-Hawks (2012) define the Turkish media system as ‘neoliberal media autocracy’.

Since the Ottoman Empire, the relationship between the press and politics has always been intertwined in Turkey. The press has principally served the interests of current governments. This relationship has gained a new dimension, especially since the 1980s. The neoliberal policies implemented paved the way for the formation of new ownership structures in the media sector. Thus, traditional media ownership has passed from family-owned companies, whose main profession was journalism or publishing, to major media conglomerates operating in non-media sectors, such as banking, etc. In the 1990s, both private broadcasting began, and the concentrations in mass media increased considerably. An oligopolistic structure has emerged in which three or four large companies dominate the media sector. The 2000s were the beginning of a period in which the relationship between the media and politics gained new dimensions with the AKP governments. One of the most important factors in the formation of the post-2000 media environment is the ownership structure that has changed by the power of the

government, because a significant portion of the mainstream media was acquired by pro-government groups. Özçetin and Baybars-Hawks (2018: 39) argue that the ruling AKP has created its own media. In this period, while the Islamist, conservative, and pro-government media grew stronger, the opposition press, mostly leftist and secular, also gradually weakened. As a result of the transformations in the media sector, the media has been polarized as pro-government vs. anti-government, and a majority of them have become the spokespersons of a specific political party.

### **3. The Turkish Presidential Elections of 10 August 2014**

The 2014 Turkish presidential election, held on 10 August 2014, can be regarded as a milestone in Turkish political history in many respects. In Turkey, the president was being elected by a qualified majority and for a seven-year tenure by the Turkish Grand National Assembly, but the 2007 Turkish constitutional amendment stipulated that the president was to be elected by popular vote for a five-year (Özbudun 2014; Kalaycıoğlu 2015). Hence, this election has historical and political importance, as the president was elected for the first time by direct popular vote. Three candidates – Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Selahattin Demirtaş, representing four major parliamentary parties – the AK Parti, the CHP, the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP), and the Peoples' Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, HDP), participated in the elections. The Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, representing the ruling AKP, received 51.79 percent of the eligible vote and won the election, in the first round.

The election campaign took place in a polarized political environment (Grigoriadis 2015: 106) where many significant issues were on the agenda, such as local elections (held on 30 March 2014), corruption scandal,<sup>4</sup> Gezi Park protests, AKP – Gülen conflict, Soma mining disaster, etc. Bakiner and Baser (2014: 3) note that the election was considered a test for both Prime Minister Erdoğan's popularity and the AKP's legitimacy as it took place shortly after several political crises. While Erdoğan and the government saw the election results as the victory of democracy, they also considered it a substantial step towards realizing the 'New Turkey Vision' that includes 2023, 2053, and 2071 targets. On the contrary, the opposition claimed that Erdoğan would become a partisan president and increasingly demand more expanded power, which could eventually turn into authoritarianism. As stated by Kalaycıoğlu (2015: 172), Erdoğan had already declared during the campaign that he would not be neutral in his presidential role. According to Bakiner and Baser (2014: 4), for all the encouraging narratives of further democratization and development on Erdoğan's part, policy experts and representatives

---

<sup>4</sup> Also known as the 17-25 December 2013 Corruption Scandal.

of international organizations declared their concerns regarding the one-man rule, censorship, and the disappearance of the rule of law in Turkey.

In the nomination process, the main opposition CHP met with many political parties to reach a consensus on a candidate that could rival Erdoğan. They focused on a candidate that would be preferred by the majority of the society, and who could get votes from AKP voters in particular. In the end, the CHP and the MHP announced Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu as the joint candidate. As an academic and diplomat, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu was the former Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). According to Bakiner and Baser (2014: 14), the CHP's leadership opted for a strategy presenting İhsanoğlu as an enlightened Muslim and cool-headed gentleman who could overcome the polarization. Selçuk and Hekimci (2020: 1501) argue that İhsanoğlu's candidacy showed CHP's willingness to reach out to conservative voters and eschew a polarizing debate on the role of Islam in Turkish politics. Besides, it has been hoped that İhsanoğlu would get votes from nationalist MHP voters as well as some AKP voters who no longer supported Erdoğan (Bakiner and Baser 2014: 14). İhsanoğlu spent considerable energy to demonstrate himself as an appropriate candidate for nationalists, conservatives, and secular voters.

The second announced candidate was the former mayor of Diyarbakır and co-chair of the HDP Selahattin Demirtaş, supported by the Kurdish political movement and nominated by the HDP. Conducting a positive campaign strategy, Demirtaş aroused sympathy in the majority of the society, apart from his own electorate. Bakiner and Baser (2014: 15) emphasize that he was presented by the international media as a popular candidate for the Kurds as well as democratic, liberal, environmentalist, and left-leaning Turkish voters. According to Grigoriadis (2015: 109), Demirtaş aimed to represent the concerns of a wider electorate than the Kurdish minority, which included leftists, social democrats, and liberals.

The last announced candidate was the AK Party Chairman and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan nominated by the ruling AKP. During the campaign, in his political discourses, Erdoğan regularly pointed to 'foreign forces' and/or the opposition as the reasons for the failures or negativities while appropriating the successes to himself and his party's policies. On the one hand, Erdoğan tried to stay away from the current issue of corruption as much as possible (Kalaycıoğlu 2015: 164), on the other hand, he also highlighted the achievements of his 11-year rule as prime minister, as well as his vision of a 'strong' and 'new' Turkey (Grigoriadis 2015: 106). Grigoriadis (2015: 107) underlines that one of the most important issues that Erdoğan raised during his campaign was the introduction of a presidential system through a profound constitutional amendment. So, he often advocated a powerful presidential system with broad powers.

The 2014 Turkish Presidential Election also has a special significance in terms of political communication. Thus, the present election can be evaluated concerning two key elements: First, Americanization of Turkish politics, and second, personalization of

mediated political communication. Americanization is a hypothesis that identifies the changing political campaign practices (see Swanson 1992; Mancini and Swanson 1996; Negrine and Papathanassopoulos 1996). As stated by Mancini and Swanson: “The hypothesis holds that campaigning in democracies around the world is becoming more and more Americanized as candidates, political parties, and news media take cues from their counterparts in the United States” (Mancini and Swanson 1996: 4). According to Negrine and Papathanassopoulos (1996: 52), there are two possible interpretations of Americanization. The first is much more focused on the extent to which U.S. electoral communication practices are becoming the role model for political communicators in other liberal democracies. The second interpretation touches on the extent to which the process of Americanization is a shorthand term for describing a series of changes in the social, political, and economic makeup of the West (and other countries) that prepares the ground for the adoption of American practices.

As revealed before by many studies on previous elections, the election is also an example of the Americanization of political campaigns in Turkey. During the campaign, the candidates collaborated with advertising companies, public relations specialists, and political consultants. In particular, the use of logos by candidates and fundraising for the campaigns were match up with the Americanized model.<sup>5</sup> Thanks to his long years of political experience and professional team, both in terms of political advertising and social media management, Erdoğan was in a more advantageous position compared to his rivals.

The Americanization concept is interconnected with the personalization of communication, and professionalization of campaign management, as well. Van Aelst et al. (2012) note that personalization has become a central concept in discussions on how political news, and election coverage, in particular, has changed over time. The general belief is that focus of news coverage has shifted from parties and organizations to candidates and leaders. The personalization notion also refers to the shift from ‘party-centered’ to ‘candidate-centered’ politics. Being elected directly by popular vote for the first time in the present election forced candidates to display more of their leadership characteristics. As well as the campaign promises, establishing a leader image in voters’ minds has become crucial and almost surpassed promises.

#### **4. Framing Theory and News Framing**

Framing is based on the notion that how an issue is characterized in news reports and how it is understood by audiences. The main point of news framing research is how news narratives are represented and portrayed in mass media. After arising from psychological and sociological studies, framing theory is reflected in mass communication research and

---

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix.

became one of the most attractive fields. A range of studies has investigated how events are framed in the news and how these frames affected the audiences, because “one influential way that the media may shape public opinion is by framing events and issues in particular ways” (de Vreese 2005: 51).

As a narrative text, news is composed of story and discourse. News (or media) discourse is interpretive media packages that give meaning to an issue. Gamson and Modigliani (1989: 3) suggest that a media package is a central organizing idea, or *frame*, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue. A media frame refers to the words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a speaker (e.g. a politician, a media outlet) uses when relaying information about an issue or event to the audience (Chong and Druckman 2007: 100).

Frame and framing in media and communication studies are identified and clarified by many scholars, conceptually. However, there are still academic discussions, so, Pan and Kosicki (2001: 38) note that frame and framing remain an ‘ill-defined’ concept. Nelson et al. (1997: 567) state that “framing is a process by which a communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy.” Entman (2007: 164) defines framing as “the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation.” Framing theory in mass communication is based on *social constructivism* and *symbolic interactionism* approaches, according to Berger and Luckmann (1966), the reality is socially constructed. The news is a constructed reality, as well, and “the news frame organizes the everyday reality” (Tuchman 1978: 193). Fowler (1991: 1) notes that the content of newspapers is not facts about the world, but in a very general sense of ideas, beliefs, values, theories, propositions, and ideology. The factors like social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, journalistic routines, and ideological or political orientations of journalists may potentially influence how journalists frame a given issue (Scheufele 1999; Shoemaker and Reese 1996). Gitlin (1980: 7) asserts frames “enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely [and to] package the information for efficient relay to their audiences.” Brüggemann (2014: 64) defines journalists’ production of media texts that include certain frames and neglect others as ‘journalistic framing practices’. Therefore, according to Hartley (2005: 117), “meaning in news-discourse is not only determined by what is there, but also by what is absent, not selected, discursively repressed.”

McQuail (2010: 340) argues that there is no coherent theory and no consensus to analyze media content. Thus, framing theory has become preferable in analyzing the news discourse. However, most of the research has focused on written/verbal elements of the news content, and the visuals (images, icons, pictures, films, photographs, etc.) are generally not included in the analysis of news discourse. In this respect, visual framing research has opened a new door in news analysis.

## 5. Visual Framing

News framing is a process (see D'Angelo 2002; de Vreese 2005; Entman 1993, 2007; Scheufele 1999) including a period from frame building to audience interpretations. Visual (news) framing is also a process with decisions about which images to publish, what size to make them, and where to position them on the page (Schwalbe 2006: 269). The process of verbal framing "takes place through words" (Messaris and Abraham 2001: 224), whereas visual framing occurs via images, being "more easily taken-for-granted than verbal framing" (Messaris and Abraham 2001: 216).

Actually, some researchers have previously mentioned the visuality in the framing concept. McCombs and Ghanem (2001: 70) argue that "the origins of the term *framing* in the context of communication are in photography and cinematography, where framing refers to such variables as camera angle and perspective in the styling of a visual message." Selection, salience, emphasis, elaboration, and/or exclusion are the core elements of the framing (see Entman 1993; Gitlin 1980; Tankard 2001). According to Entman (1993: 52), "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation." Coleman (2010: 237) also emphasizes similar in visual studies, "framing refers to the selection of one view, scene, or angle when making the image, cropping, editing or selecting it. When a journalist chooses which photograph or piece of video to use, it is an act of framing." One important aspect of visual framing is structural features such as camera angles, distance, color, typography, juxtaposition, placement, size, etc. (Coleman 2010: 248). Wischmann (1987: 70-71) says, "photographs are capable of not only obscuring issues but [also] of overwhelming facts." Being attention-grabbing, memorable, emotional, credible, believable, and/or understandable (Entman 1993; Fahmy et al. 2009; Knobloch et al. 2003; Pfau et al. 2006; Waddill and McDaniel 1992), make visuals as favorable instruments for framing.

Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011: 52-59) propound four levels of visual framing: (1) *Visuals as denotative systems*: At this first level, visual materials are basically described. So, frames are identified by enumerating the objects and discrete elements shown in the visual. Denotative frames are established by the titles, captions, inscriptions, or other textual descriptions that accompany the visual. (2) *Visuals as stylistic-semiotic systems*: This level is about stylistic conventions and technical transformations involved in photographic representation. For example, the social meanings of photographic conventions and styles such as point of view, scale of shots, color, social distance, imaginary contact, etc. (3) *Visuals as connotative systems*: This concerns the sign system. The visuals are examined as symbols that can combine, compress, and communicate social meaning. Thus, frames are identified by analyzing the presence of symbols in the

pictorial field. As a well-known news photograph, the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Iraq can symbolize the end of Saddam's authority. (4) *Visuals as ideological representations*: Analyzing frames helps to specify principles that reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion. This level tackles how news images are employed as instruments of power (e.g. government) in the shaping of public consciousness. Messaris and Abraham (2001: 220) state three distinctive special qualities of visuals—their iconicity, their indexicality, and especially their syntactic implicitness—makes them very effective tools for framing and articulating ideological messages.

Scholars have already referred to the visuals while defining the frames. For example, Gitlin (1980: 7) explains the media frames are “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize the discourse, whether verbal or visual.” Entman (1991: 7) notes that “frames can be detected by probing for particular words and visual images that consistently appear in a narrative.” Although the importance of the visuals, Greenberg (2002: 182) underlines that “scholarly attention has centered mostly on the examination of written or verbal discourse, visual news discourse has remained relatively unexamined.” Many researchers (see Fahmy 2007: 148; Fahmy et al. 2007: 547; Fahmy 2010: 697; Grabe and Bucy 2009: 100-101; Rodriguez and Dimitrova 2011: 50; Silcock 2008: 157) emphasize that very few studies examined visual framing compared to textual/verbal framing.

The elements that compose the frames are identified in many ways by scholars. Entman (1991: 7) states that “news frames are constructed from and embodied in the keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and the visual images emphasized in a news narrative.” Gamson and Modigliani (1989: 3) mention five framing devices, which are metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images. Tankard (2001: 100) offers a more comprehensive list of eleven framing mechanisms or focal points for identifying framing: headlines, subheads, photographs, photo captions, leads, selection of sources or affiliations, selection of quotes, pull quotes, logos, statistics, charts, and graphs, and concluding statements or paragraphs of articles.

Most of the researchers contemplate how to identify and measure the visual images in the news media. Coleman (2010: 246) highlights qualitative and quantitative textual, and content analysis still are the most predominant methods used to study visual framing. When doing visual news framing analysis, scholars have generated some identification styles and coding techniques. For example, Parry (2010), who analyzed the press photographs of Israel–Lebanon conflict, has used photographic images as the primary unit for content analysis. There were these items in Parry's (2010: 72-74) coding schema: (1) name of the newspaper, (2) date, (3) page (where the photograph located in), (4) relevant headline, (5) caption, (6) graphic nature (the visual impact of the photograph), (7) distance, (8) photo subject/theme: main heading (e.g., political people,

military people) and sub-category (e.g., soldiers). Besides, two framing questions were asked of the coders. The first one is related to *photographic framing*: Which frames can be applied to the image? The second one is related to *linguistic framing*: Does the caption or headline reinforce or undermine the (above) framing?

As well as most parts of the literature on visual framing research are dedicated to the visual framing of war, terrorism, and/or conflict (Fahmy et al. 2007: 547; Fahmy 2010: 697), there is a considerable amount of studies in the context of political communication. Literature and past studies on visuals and news photographs suggest images are particularly powerful in evaluating social and political beliefs and experiences, and visual images are influential in evaluating political environments (Fahmy et al. 2009: 8). There are also studies that focusing on the characteristics of political candidates (see Coleman and Banning 2006; Grabe and Bucy 2009, 2011). For instance, Coleman and Banning (2006), who studied the 2000 presidential election in the USA, found that there was a significant difference between the visual framing of the two candidates, George Bush and Al Gore. The mass media framed visual images of Al Gore more positively than George Bush. It is stated that this is mostly related to (visual) framing bias. Grabe and Bucy's (2009) study can be considered as another example in visual framing in news content on political election campaigns. They offered three frames (*the ideal candidate*, *the populist campaigner*, and *the sure loser*) to measure the visual framing of candidate character traits. In that study, the four United States presidential elections (The 1992 Election: George H. W. Bush vs. Bill Clinton, The 1996 Election: Bob Dole vs. Bill Clinton, The 2000 Election: George W. Bush vs. Al Gore, The 2004 Election: George W. Bush vs. John Kerry) were compared and analyzed. Grabe and Bucy (2009: 128) found that visual frames of candidates orchestrated by image handlers do make their way into network news coverage of presidential elections, offering voters both idealized and derisive depictions of candidates.

## 6. Visual Bias

Bias refers to a systematic tendency or slant favoring one side, position, politics, or ideology over another (McQuail 1992: 191; Waldman and Devitt 1998: 302), and Entman (2010a: 331) argues that "a significant majority of the public believes the news media are biased." Entman (2007, 2010a, 2010b) mentions three types of framing bias in the media: *distortion bias*, *content bias*, and *decision-making bias*. Distortion bias means falsifying the reality in the news. Content bias refers to consistently slanted framing of mediated communication that promotes the success of a specific interest, party or ideology in competitions to control government power. Decision-making bias refers to the influence of journalists' belief systems, motivations, and mindsets on the texts they produce. Therefore, the presence or absence of a visual in the media content, the choice of visual

elements, the frequency of use, positioning, perspective, technical interventions (editing, cropping, coloring, effects, etc.) affects the visual bias in the media.

In the context of political communication, especially during election periods, the visual representation of the political candidates in the media gains particular importance. Many research (see Barrett and Barrington 2005; Waldman and Devitt 1998) has shown that visual images of political candidates can influence voter behavior and perceptions. For example, Waldman and Devitt (1998: 303) underline that manipulations in various photo characteristics including facial expression and camera angle can produce changes in evaluations of political candidates. Visual images and photographs play a vital role in the formation of impressions of political candidates. According to Coleman (2010: 250), bias studies have found that emotional expressions by political leaders had a direct emotional effect especially on television viewers. Therefore, by choosing certain images – politicians smiling or looking tired – rather than other images, journalists impart powerful framing effects to the audience.

## 7. Objective and Research Questions

This study is based on the premise that the press has the power to support or not a political candidate by visual framing. Hence, the study analyzes how the presidential candidates (*Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, and Selahattin Demirtaş*) were framed visually in the Turkish press during the 2014 Turkish Presidential Election period. The study also examines whether or not there is a visual framing bias in the news photographs of candidates. The following research questions were addressed:

**RQ1:** Is there visual framing bias of presidential candidates' photographs among newspapers?

**RQ2:** Does the political intimacy and/or ideological bias of the newspapers affect the presidential candidates' visual framing?

## 8. Method

In the analysis, 10 Turkish daily national newspapers have been selected from different media groups and different parts of the political spectrum. These newspapers and their ideological/political views are as follows: *Evrensel* (left-wing extremist, socialist, anti-government), *BirGün* (left-wing extremist, socialist, anti-government), *Cumhuriyet* (left-of-center, secular, social democrat, anti-government), *Sözcü* (secular, social democrat, anti-government), *Hürriyet*<sup>6</sup> (mainstream, liberal, centrist), *HaberTürk*<sup>7</sup> (mainstream,

---

<sup>6</sup> *Hürriyet* had been under the control of the Doğan Media Group, until April 2018. The newspaper, regarded as the 'flagship' of the Turkish press, was acquired by the Demirören group, known for its closeness to the government.

<sup>7</sup> It has ceased newspaper publishing.

liberal, centrist, pro-government), *Sabah* (mainstream, right-of-center, pro-government), *Zaman*<sup>8</sup> (right-of-center, conservative, Islamist), *Yeni Akit* (right-wing extremist, pro-government, Islamist), and *Ortadoğu* (right-wing extremist, anti-government, nationalist, conservative). The election news covered 55 days between 16 June 2014, the announcement of the first candidate, and 9 August 2014, by which time the day before the election day. Coleman (2010: 246) underlines that “the most obvious and easiest visual unit for coding is the still photograph in a newspaper or magazine”, thus the photographs of the candidates as visual media content were subjected to analysis. The news were all from the front pages of each newspaper since this page is particularly significant (Clayman and Reisner 1998: 178) and mostly supported with visuals.

In this study, overall, a total of 616 visuals (photographs) from 10 newspapers were analyzed. The unit of the analysis was the news photographs of the candidates. The visuals of candidates were selected regarding only the elections, and they were analyzed by using the content analysis method to examine the way newspapers depict political leaders' images. In the definition of the (visual) frames, the deductive approach (see de Vreese 2005; Matthes and Kohring 2008; Semetko and Valkenburg 2000) was adopted which news content is analyzed by predefined frames. In the deductive approach, the extent to which predefined frames are seen or repeated in the news is examined.

This analysis is based on the methodology of Grabe and Bucy's (2009, 2011) studies, and also adaptation of them from TV to newspaper. Therefore, each photograph was coded according to their proposed visual framing coding schema (see Table 1) including three frames: *the ideal candidate*, *the populist campaigner*, and *the sure loser*. The presence (value = 1) or absence (value = 0) of a visual category was coded for each candidate per news photography. Each news photograph might be conformed with and can be coded in more than one visual category. Headlines, captions, spots, and cartoons/caricatures are considered in the coding process. Grabe and Bucy (2011: 223) underline this coding procedure does not assess the relative strength of a frame, however, it provides a conservative quantitative measure of the presence of frames for each candidate.

---

<sup>8</sup> It has ceased newspaper publishing. Topuz (2003: 411) states that *Zaman*, which was evaluated under the heading of the conservative and Islamist press, had been affiliated with the Fethullah Gülen Community. Relations between the Gülen Community and the political power started to deteriorate gradually in late 2010, and then completely broke off (see Taş 2018). *Zaman* was strongly pro-government until that time.

**Table 1.** Coding of Visual Frames of the Political Candidates

	Identified visual frames				
	The ideal candidate		The populist campaigner		The sure loser
	<i>Statesmanship</i>	<i>Compassion</i>	<i>Mass Appeal</i>	<i>Ordinariness</i>	
Visual images, photographs and/or headlines, captions	<p><u>Influentials</u>: Visual manifestations of statesmanship signal the mythic proportions of the presidency, projecting power, authority, control, and active leadership.</p> <p><u>Patriotism</u>: Depictions and symbols about patriotism can be symbolically transferred from the environment when the candidate appears against the backdrop of the flag or other historically potent symbols.</p> <p><u>Progress</u>: Appearances at ceremonies or campaign visits to symbolic venues such as war memorials or locations associated with economic authority or technological advancement play on cherished principles and buttress the myth of the statesman as an emblem of national pride, economic development, and industrial progress.</p> <p><u>Entourage</u>: Appearances with high-ranking peers. The celebratory pomp and spectacle of politics provokes emotional and aesthetic responses that include enthusiasm, joy, awe, and wonderment.</p> <p><u>Campaign paraphernalia</u>: Parades, posters, etc.</p> <p><u>Confetti shower</u>: Confetti or balloons authenticate and impose reference to the power and authority of a candidate as a potential chief executive.</p> <p><u>Wearing a suit</u>: Formal dress (suit and tie) give a positive candidate portrayal.</p>	<p><u>Children</u>: Baby-holding and -kissing involve perhaps the most clichéd construction of candidate compassion on the campaign trail.</p> <p><u>Family</u>: Presidential candidates also have a history of surrounding themselves with their own children and grandchildren for public reinforcement of family friendliness.</p> <p><u>Women</u>: protecting women and children as well as honoring family. And admiring female supporters.</p> <p><u>Religion</u>: Candidates in sanctuary and/or praying.</p> <p><u>Affinity gestures</u>: nonverbal affinity gestures, including waving, shaking hands, and paying focused attention to supporters.</p> <p><u>Individual interaction</u>: Visual depictions with camp followers and/or public.</p> <p><u>Physical contact</u>: Embracing, hugging, etc.</p>	<p><u>Celebrities</u>: Appearances and/or endorsements with singers, actors/actress, athletes, etc.</p> <p><u>Audience</u>: Speakers who are surrounded by an audience that responds positively.</p> <p><u>Approving audience</u>: Positive audience reaction shots can also make featured speakers appear more interesting and popular.</p> <p><u>Crowds' interaction</u>: Interactions with audiences spontaneously.</p>	<p><u>Casual dress</u>: A suit, but without a jacket, and with their shirtsleeves rolled up.</p> <p><u>Sports dress</u>: Casual and sports clothing (jeans, sports shirts, and shorts) more directly signals that a candidate is an everyday citizen.</p> <p><u>Rolled sleeves</u>: casual and comfort clothing.</p> <p><u>Ordinary people</u>: Appearances with ordinary people.</p> <p><u>Physically active</u>: Various activities with people and/or athletic and work-related activities.</p>	<p><u>Disapproving audience</u>: (Negative audience reaction) Signs of nonverbal audience disapproval, including head shaking, frowns, or inattentiveness, may also erode a speaker's authority and character dynamism.</p> <p><u>Small audience</u>: The photographs of meeting area with limited participation, separated and disorganized audiences.</p> <p><u>Physically weak</u>: Visual displays of physical weakness, deft acne, and inappropriate behavior have also all been shown to undermine perceptions of leadership potential.</p> <p><u>Defiance behavior</u>: Aggressive mood. For example, table thumping during stump speech, or another.</p> <p><u>Inappropriate behavior</u>: Behaviors that incompatible with the current situation.</p>

Source: Author's compilation from Grabe and Bucy (2009: 289-292; 2011: 222-225).

## 9. Findings

The coverage of the news showed that the frequency of photos of political leaders is different. As Entman (1991: 9) emphasized “the essence of framing is sizing-magnifying, shrinking elements of the depicted reality to make them more or less salient.” Table 2 indicates there is an obvious difference among candidates. More than half of all news photos published featured the ruling party leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. *Sabah*, which is known for being a pro-government newspaper, covered Erdoğan’s photographs the most. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu ranked second after Erdoğan. The newspaper that gave the most coverage of İhsanoğlu’s photographs was *Ortadoğu*. Selahattin Demirtaş was the candidate whose photographs were the least published in the newspapers. Demirtaş appeared with maximum photographs in *Evrensel*, whereas some newspapers, generally from the centrist, liberal and right-wing extremist, did not publish his photos.

**Table 2.** The frequency of the news photographs of candidates by newspapers

Newspapers	Presidential candidates			Total
	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu	Selahattin Demirtaş	
<b>Ortadoğu</b>	38	61	-	99
<b>Hürriyet</b>	44	41	11	96
<b>HaberTürk</b>	46	18	9	73
<b>Yeni Akit</b>	53	18	-	71
<b>Sözcü</b>	45	22	-	67
<b>Sabah</b>	61	5	-	66
<b>Cumhuriyet</b>	18	16	8	42
<b>BirGün</b>	25	7	7	39
<b>Evrensel</b>	8	6	20	34
<b>Zaman</b>	4	21	4	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>616</b>

Source: Author.

Considering the photographic framing findings, Table 3 shows Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was generally framed favourable by mainstream, liberal, and/or right-wing newspapers. It is clear that *Sabah* is the leading newspaper which framed Erdoğan’s photographs as the ideal candidate 28 times, but never framed him as a sure loser. The dominant visual frame element was “statesmanship” (see Figure 1, 3) in Erdoğan’s ideal candidate photographs. Interestingly, the newspaper that highlighted Erdoğan’s populist images the most in the campaign was *Sabah*, as well. *Yeni Akit*, *HaberTürk*, and *Hürriyet* were respectively following newspapers which framed Erdoğan with highly positive photographs and references as an ideal candidate. As a “compassion” factor in the ideal candidate frame, the hand gesture photographs, in which Erdoğan put his hand over his heart, was frequently used in pro-government newspapers (see Figure 4). *Evrensel* and *Zaman* were

the newspapers that did not frame Erdoğan ideally. *Ortadoğu* framed Erdoğan as the sure loser by repeating photographic framing 30 times.

**Table 3.** The frequency of photographic framing of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Visual Frames	Newspapers									
	BirGün	Evrensel	Cumhuriyet	Sözcü	Hürriyet	HaberTürk	Sabah	Zaman	Ortadoğu	Yeni Akit
The ideal Candidate	2	-	2	2	15	19	28	-	1	23
The populist campaigner	5	1	4	1	5	9	23	-	2	19
The sure loser	-	3	4	9	5	5	-	3	30	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>43</b>

Source: Author.

### Examples of the Ideal Candidate Frame, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

#### *Statesmanship*



**Figure 1.** Erdoğan, Linked to influencers (*Sabah*, August 6)

#### *Compassion*



**Figure 2.** Erdoğan, Linked to children (*Yeni Akit*, June 16)



Figure 3. Erdoğan, Linked to campaign paraphernalia  
(*HaberTürk*, June 22)



Figure 4. Erdoğan, Linked to affinity gestures  
(*HaberTürk*, July 6)

### Examples of the Populist Campaigner Frame, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

#### *Mass Appeal*



Figure 5. Erdoğan, Linked to celebrities  
(*BirGün*, July 20)

#### *Ordinariness*



Figure 6. Erdoğan, Linked to casual dress  
(*Yeni Akit*, July 14)



Figure 7. Erdoğan, Linked to crowds interaction  
(*Yeni Akit*, June 26)



Figure 8. Erdoğan, Linked to ordinary people  
(*Yeni Akit*, July 29)

### Examples of the Sure Loser Frame, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan



Figure 9. Erdoğan, Linked to physically weak  
(*Ortadoğu*, July 3)



Figure 10. Erdoğan, Linked to defiance behavior  
(*Zaman*, July 22)

Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu (see Table 4) was framed as the ideal candidate by *Ortadoğu* most. *Hürriyet*, *HaberTürk*, and *Sözcü* framed İhsanoğlu with positive photographic images respectively. In the photographs in which İhsanoğlu was framed as the ideal candidate, the “compassion” (see Figure 12, 14) element was more intense compared to the element of “statesmanship.” *Evrensel*, which covered İhsanoğlu’s photographs least, never attributed him either an ideal candidate or a populist campaigner. *Ortadoğu* also framed İhsanoğlu as the populist campaigner 8 times, but never framed him as a sure loser. Known as a strong pro-government, *Yeni Akit* framed İhsanoğlu as the sure loser most.

**Table 4.** The frequency of photographic framing of Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu

Visual Frames	Newspapers									
	BirGün	Evrensel	Cumhuriyet	Sözcü	Hürriyet	HaberTürk	Sabah	Zaman	Ortadoğu	Yeni Akit
The ideal candidate	1	-	6	9	19	10	1	5	39	3
The populist campaigner	1	-	-	1	4	1	-	3	8	-
The sure loser	1	3	1	-	2	1	1	-	-	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: Author.

### Examples of the Ideal Candidate Frame, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu

#### *Statesmanship*



**Figure 11.** İhsanoğlu, Linked to campaign paraphernalia (*Ortadoğu*, August 1)

#### *Compassion*



**Figure 12.** İhsanoğlu, Linked to children (*Zaman*, July 30)



Figure 13. İhsanoğlu, Linked to entourage  
(*Hürriyet*, July 7)



Figure 14. İhsanoğlu, Linked to affinity gestures  
(*Yeni Akit*, July 5)

### Examples of the Populist Campaigner Frame, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu

#### Mass Appeal



Figure 15. İhsanoğlu, Linked to audience  
(*Ortadoğu*, July 15)

#### Ordinariness



Figure 16. İhsanoğlu, Linked to ordinary people  
(*Zaman*, July 9)



Figure 17. İhsanoğlu, Linked to crowds interaction  
(*Sözcü*, June 28)



Figure 18. İhsanoğlu, Linked to physically active  
(*Hürriyet*, July 8)

### Examples of the Sure Loser Frame, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu



Figure 19. İhsanoğlu, Linked to physically weak  
(*HaberTürk*, August 4)



Figure 20. İhsanoğlu, Linked to disapproving audience  
(*HaberTürk*, July 5)

Selahattin Demirtaş is the candidate who was framed least by newspapers (see Table 5). *Sözcü*, *Sabah*, *Ortadoğu*, and *Yeni Akit* did not cover his photographs ever. *Evrensel*, left-wing extremist and well-known anti-government, was the leading newspaper that framed Demirtaş the most as both the ideal candidate and the populist campaigner. *HaberTürk*, *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, and *BirGün* framed him as the ideal leader following *Evrensel*. Interestingly, Demirtaş was not framed as the sure loser in any newspapers.

**Table 5.** The frequency of photographic framing of Selahattin Demirtaş

Visual Frames	Newspapers									
	BirGün	Evrensel	Cumhuriyet	Sözcü	Hürriyet	HaberTürk	Sabah	Zaman	Ortadoğu	Yeni Akit
The ideal candidate	2	6	2	-	3	4	-	1	-	-
The populist campaigner	2	6	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	-
The sure loser	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	4	12	3	-	5	5	-	1	-	-

Source: Author.

### Examples of the Ideal Candidate Frame, Selahattin Demirtaş

#### Statesmanship



**Figure 21.** Demirtaş, Linked to wearing a suit (*Evrensel*, July 16)

#### Compassion



**Figure 22.** Demirtaş, Linked to family (*HaberTürk*, July 20)

## Examples of the Populist Campaigner Frame, Selahattin Demirtaş

### *Mass Appeal*



Figure 23. Demirtaş, Linked to audience  
(*Evrensel*, July 26)

### *Ordinariness*



Figure 24. Demirtaş, Linked to casual dress  
(*HaberTürk*, August 4)

## Discussion and conclusions

The 2014 Turkish presidential election, which took place in a highly polarized political atmosphere, was the first competitive popular presidential election in Turkey. The campaign passed like a two-horse race between the ruling party candidate Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, the joint candidate of the opponent. Whereas Erdoğan, the most covered candidate in the media, held numerous campaign rallies, İhsanoğlu preferred NGO visits, face-to-face communication with voters, and organized small meetings during the election. The third candidate Selahattin Demirtaş was not covered much in the Turkish newspapers. The pro-government press described Erdoğan's triumph as the victory for democracy, while the opposition parties and anti-government press claimed that he would drag the country into an authoritarian regime.

This study investigated the visual framing bias in the Turkish press through the election. Overall, there were imbalances and differences in the framing of presidential candidates' news photographs. The ruling party candidate Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was mostly framed as an ideal candidate by the right-wing, mainstream, centrist, and pro-government press. Therefore, his statesmanship and leadership image were more prominent in these newspapers. The joint candidate Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu was framed as the ideal candidate by the centrist, liberal, left-wing, and anti-government newspapers. Selahattin Demirtaş was generally framed favorable in the liberal and/or left-wing extremist newspapers. The anti-government press mostly sided with İhsanoğlu, and rarely Demirtaş.

Candidates who were visually framed as an ideal candidate in the newspapers were also framed as the populist (see Table 3, 4, 5). This can be evaluated as a reflection of the rising populism both as a political strategy (Barr 2019) and a political communication style (Jagers and Walgrave 2007), especially in European and Turkish politics. Furthermore, the frequent appearance of a political candidate in a particular

newspaper during the election campaign period may be a natural prerequisite for framing the candidate as an ideal candidate in the Turkish press.

This study is based on Grabe and Bucy's (2009, 2011) visual framing analysis. Grabe and Bucy (2009: 128) concluded that there was no systematic journalistic (visual) bias in their research on four election periods between 1992-2004 in the USA, and there was no consistent pattern of favoring either one side over another (Grabe and Bucy 2011: 232). Unlike Grabe and Bucy (2009, 2011), the findings of the present study showed that there could be a structural bias in the Turkish press, such that the visual framing is strongly based on the newspapers' political intimacy to the political parties and their ideological positioning. As revealed by many studies before (see e.g., Bayram 2010; Cengiz and Hoffmann 2012; Çarkoğlu 2007; Çarkoğlu and Yavuz 2010; Çarkoğlu et al. 2014; Iseri et al. 2019; Özçetin and Baybars-Hawks 2018; Panayırıcı et al. 2016; Toker 2015; Yıldırım et al. 2020), this is probably related to the Turkish media environment characterized by 'press-party parallelism' and/or 'political polarization'.

Finally, the present study had some limitations. The research was limited to the 2014 election, newspaper photographs, and content analysis. The findings prevent an assertive generalization. In order to make more appropriate evaluations, other election periods should be compared, apart from newspapers different media outlets should be included, and also the images of politicians on audience perception should be explored. Conducting comprehensive research in this way will undoubtedly contribute to the visual framing and visual political communication literature.

## References

- Akser, M. and Baybars-Hawks, B. 2012. "Media and democracy in Turkey: Toward a model of neoliberal media autocracy." *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 5 (3): 302-321. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18739865-00503011>
- Aydın-Düzgüt, S. and Balta, E. 2019. "When elites polarize over polarization: Framing the polarization debate in Turkey." *New Perspectives on Turkey* 60: 153-176. <https://doi.org/10.1017/npt.2018.15>
- Aydin, M., Çelikpala, M., Yeldan, E., Güvenç, M., Zaim, O.Z., Hawks, B.B., Sokullu, E.C., Şenyuva, Ö., Yılmaz, O., and Tıgılı, S.D. 2021. *Quantitative Research Report: Turkey Trends 2020*. İstanbul: Kadir Has University Turkey Studies Group, Akademetre and Global Academy. [online]. [cit. 2. 5. 2021]. Available at: [https://www.khas.edu.tr/sites/khas.edu.tr/files/inline-files/TEA2020\\_ENG\\_WEBRAPON.pdf](https://www.khas.edu.tr/sites/khas.edu.tr/files/inline-files/TEA2020_ENG_WEBRAPON.pdf)
- Bakiner, O. and Baser, B. 2014. "The 2014 presidential elections in Turkey: Old wine in a new bottle?" *Ethnopolitics Papers* 31. Political Studies Association Specialist Group on Ethnopolitics. [online]. [cit. 19. 4. 2021]. Available at: <https://curve.coventry.ac.uk/open/file/b81f09a1-7fe5-4412-af41-5a0fb8dd91a6/1/Ethnopolitics%20paper%2031.pdf>
- Barr, R.R. 2019. "Populism as a political strategy." In: C. de la Torre (ed.). *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism*. New York: Routledge, 44-56. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315226446-4>

- Barrett, A.W. and Barrington, L.W. 2005. "Bias in newspaper photograph selection." *Political Research Quarterly* 58 (4): 609–618. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290505800408>
- Bayram, S. 2010. "Political parallelism in the Turkish press, a historical interpretation." *Turkish Studies* 11 (4): 579–611. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2010.540115>
- Berger, P.L. and Luckmann, T. 1966. *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. England: Penguin Books.
- Brüggemann, M. 2014. "Between frame setting and frame sending: How journalists contribute to news frames." *Communication Theory* 24 (1): 61–82. <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12027>
- Bulut, E. and Yörük, E. 2017. "Digital populism: Trolls and political polarization of Twitter in Turkey." *International Journal of Communication* 11: 4093–4117.
- Carragee, K.M. and Roefs, W. 2004. "The neglect of power in recent framing research." *Journal of Communication* 54 (2): 214–233. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2004.tb02625.x>
- Cengiz, F. and Hoffmann, L. 2012. "The 2011 general elections in Turkey: Potential implications on local and international politics in the shadow of a discourse change?" *Parliamentary Affairs* 65 (1): 255–269. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsr035>
- Chong, D. and Druckman, J.N. 2007. "A theory of framing and opinion formation in competitive elite environments." *Journal of Communication* 57 (1): 99–118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00331.x>
- Clayman, S.E. and Reisner, A. 1998. "Gatekeeping in action: Editorial conferences and assessments of newsworthiness." *American Sociological Review* 63 (2): 178–199. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657322>
- Coleman, R. 2010. "Framing the pictures in our heads: Exploring the framing and agenda-setting effects of visual images." In P. D'Angelo and J. A. Kuypers (eds.). *Doing news framing analysis: Empirical and theoretical perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 233–261.
- Coleman, R. and Banning, S. 2006. "Network TV news' affective framing of the presidential candidates: Evidence for a second-level agenda-setting effect through visual framing." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 83 (2): 313–328. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900608300206>
- Çarkoğlu, A. 2007. "A new electoral victory for the 'pro-Islamists' or the 'new centre-right'? The Justice and Development Party phenomenon in the July 2007 parliamentary elections in Turkey." *South European Society and Politics* 12 (4): 501–519. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608740701731457>
- Çarkoğlu, A. and Yavuz, G. 2010. "Press-party parallelism in Turkey: An individual level interpretation." *Turkish Studies* 11 (4): 613–624. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2010.540116>
- Çarkoğlu, A., Baruh, L., and Yıldırım, K. 2014. "Press-party parallelism and polarization of news media during an election campaign: The case of the 2011 Turkish elections." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 19 (3): 295–317. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161214528994>
- D'Angelo, P. 2002. "News framing as a multiparadigmatic research program: A response to Entman." *Journal of Communication* 52 (4): 870–888. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2002.tb02578.x>
- D'Angelo, P. and Kuypers, J.A. 2010. "Introduction: Doing news framing analysis." In P. D'Angelo and J.A. Kuypers (eds.). *Doing news framing analysis: Empirical and theoretical perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203864463>

- de Vreese, C. H. 2005. "News framing: Theory and typology." *Information Design Journal + Document Design* 13 (1): 51–62. <https://doi.org/10.1075/idjdd.13.1.06vre>
- EIU. 2021. "Global democracy has a very bad year." [online]. [cit. 22. 4. 2021]. Available at: <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2021/02/02/global-democracy-has-a-very-bad-year>
- Entman, R.M. 1991. "Framing US coverage of international news: Contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran air incidents." *Journal of Communication* 41 (4): 6–27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1991.tb02328.x>
- Entman, R.M. 1993. "Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43 (4): 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>
- Entman, R.M. 2007. "Framing bias: Media in the distribution of power." *Journal of Communication* 57 (1): 163–173. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00336.x>
- Entman, R.M. 2010a. "Framing media power." In P. D'Angelo and J. A. Kuypers (eds.). *Doing news framing analysis: Empirical and theoretical perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 331–355.
- Entman, R.M. 2010b. "Media framing biases and political power: Explaining slant in news of Campaign 2008." *Journalism* 11 (4): 389–408. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884910367587>
- Fahmy, S. 2004. "Picturing Afghan women: A content analysis of AP wire photographs during the Taliban Regime and after the fall of the Taliban Regime." *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies* 66 (2): 91–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0016549204041472>
- Fahmy, S. 2007. "'They took it down': Exploring determinants of visual reporting in the toppling of the Saddam statue in national and international newspapers." *Mass Communication and Society* 10 (2): 143–170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205430701265638>
- Fahmy, S. 2010. "Contrasting visual frames of our times: A framing analysis of English- and Arabic-language press coverage of war and terrorism." *International Communication Gazette* 72 (8): 695–717. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048510380801>
- Fahmy, S., Cho, S., Wanta, W., and Song, Y. 2009. "Visual agenda-setting after 9/11: Individuals' emotions, image recall, and concern with terrorism." *Visual Communication Quarterly* 13 (1): 4–15. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15551407vcq1301\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15551407vcq1301_2)
- Fahmy, S., Kelly, J. D., and Kim, Y. S. 2007. "What Katrina revealed: A visual analysis of the hurricane coverage by news wires and U.S. newspapers." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 84 (3): 546–561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900708400309>
- Fowler, R. 1991. *Language in the news: Discourse and ideology in the press*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Gamson, W.A. and Modigliani, A. 1989. "Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach." *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (1): 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.1086/229213>
- Gitlin, T. 1980. *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the new left*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Grabe, M.E., and Bucy, E.P. 2009. *Image bite politics: News and the visual framing of elections*. New York: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195372076.001.0001>
- Grabe, M.E. and Bucy, E.P. 2011. "Image bite analysis of political visuals: Understanding the visual framing process in election news." In: E.P. Bucy and R.L. Holbert (eds.). *The Sourcebook for Political Communication Research: Methods, Measures, and Analytical Techniques*. New York: Routledge, 209–237.

- Greenberg, J. 2002. "Framing and temporality in political cartoons: A critical analysis of visual news discourse." *Canadian Review of Sociology* 39 (2): 181–198. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1755-618X.2002.tb00616.x>
- Grigoriadis, I.N. 2015. "The Turkish presidential elections of 10 August 2014." *Mediterranean Politics* 20 (1): 105–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2014.997430>
- Hartley, J. 2005. *Understanding News*. New York: Routledge.
- Iseri, E., Şekercioglu, E., and Panayirci, U. C. 2019. "The sphere of consensus in a polarized media system: The case of Turkey during the catastrophic coup attempt." *International Journal of Communication* 13: 1462–1486.
- Iyengar, S., Gaurav S., and Yphtach L. 2012. "Affect not ideology: A social identity based perspective on polarisation." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76 (3): 405–431. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfs038>
- Jagers, J. and Walgrave, S. 2007. "Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium." *European Journal of Political Research* 46 (3): 319–345. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00690.x>
- Kalaycıoğlu, E. 2015. "Turkish popular presidential elections: Deepening legitimacy issues and looming regime change." *South European Society and Politics* 20(2): 157–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2015.1046264>
- Keyman, F. 2014. "The AK Party: Dominant party, new Turkey and polarization." *Insight Turkey* 16 (2): 19–31.
- Knobloch, S., Hastall, M., Zillmann, D., and Callison, C. 2003. "Imagery effects on the selective reading of internet newsmagazines." *Communication Research* 30 (1): 3–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650202239023>
- Mancini, P. and Swanson, D.L. 1996. "Politics, media and modern democracy: Introduction." In: D.L. Swanson and P. Mancini (eds.). *Politics, media and modern democracy: An international study of innovations in electoral campaigning and their consequences*. New York: Praeger, 1–26.
- Matthes, J. and Kohring, M. 2008. "The content analysis of media frames: Toward improving reliability and validity." *Journal of Communication* 58 (2): 258–279. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.00384.x>
- McCombs, M. and Ghanem, S. 2001. "The convergence of agenda setting and framing." In: S.D. Reese et al. (eds.). *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 67–82.
- McCoy, J., Rahman, T., and Somer, M. 2018. "Polarization and the global crisis of democracy: Common patterns, dynamics and pernicious consequences for democratic politics." *American Behavioral Scientist* 62 (1): 16–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218759576>
- McQuail, D. 1992. *Media performance*. London: Sage Publications.
- McQuail, D. 2010. *McQuail's mass communication theory*. London: Sage Publications.
- Messaris, P. and Abraham, L. 2001. "The role of images in framing news stories." In: S.D. Reese et al. (eds.). *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 215–226.

- Negrine, R. and Papathanassopoulos, S. 1996. "The 'Americanization' of political communication: A critique." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 1 (2): 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X96001002005>
- Nelson, T.E., Clawson, R.A., and Oxley, Z.M. (1997). Media framing of a civil liberties conflict and its effect on tolerance. *The American Political Science Review* 91 (3): 567–583. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952075>
- Özbudun, E. 2014. *The 2014 presidential elections in Turkey: A post-election analysis. Global Turkey in Europe*. Roma: Istituto Affari Internazionali.
- Özçetin, B. and Baybars-Hawks, B. 2018. "Framing the Russian aircraft crisis: News discourse in Turkey's polarized media environment." *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 15 (57): 33–47. <https://doi.org/10.33458/uidergisi.518041>
- Pan, Z. and Kosicki, G.M. 1993. "Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse." *Political Communication* 10 (1): 55–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.1993.9962963>
- Pan, Z. and Kosicki, G. M. 2001. "Framing as a strategic action in public deliberation." In: S.D. Reese et al. (eds.). *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 35–67.
- Panayırçı, U. C., İşeri, E., and Şekercioğlu, E. 2016. "Political agency of news outlets in a polarized media system: Framing the corruption probe in Turkey." *European Journal of Communication* 31 (5): 551–567. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323116669455>
- Parry, K. 2010. "A visual framing analysis of British press photography during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict." *Media, War and Conflict* 3 (1): 67–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635210353679>
- Pfau, M. et al. 2006. "The effects of print news photographs of the casualties of war." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 83 (1): 150–168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900608300110>
- Rodriguez, L. and Dimitrova, D.V. 2011. "The levels of visual framing." *Journal of Visual Literacy* 30 (1): 48–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23796529.2011.11674684>
- Scheufele, B. 2004. "Framing-effects approach: A theoretical and methodological critique." *Communications* 29 (4): 401–428. <https://doi.org/10.1515/comm.2004.29.4.401>
- Scheufele, D.A. 1999. "Framing as a theory of media effects." *Journal of Communication* 49 (1): 103–122. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02784.x>
- Schwalbe, C.B. 2006. "Remembering our shared past: Visually framing the Iraq war on US news websites." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12 (1): 264–289. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00325.x>
- Selçuk, O. and Hekimci, D. 2020. "The rise of the democracy – authoritarianism cleavage and opposition coordination in Turkey (2014–2019)." *Democratization* 27 (8): 1496–1514. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1803841>
- Selçuk, O., Hekimci, D., and Erpul, O. 2019. "The Erdoğanization of Turkish politics and the role of the opposition." *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 19 (4): 541–564. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2019.1689902>
- Semetko, H.A. and Valkenburg, P.M. 2000. "Framing European politics: A content analysis of press and television news." *Journal of Communication* 50 (2): 93–109. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2000.tb02843.x>

- Shoemaker, P.J. and Reese, S.D. 1996. *Mediating the message: Theories of influences on media content*. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman.
- Siebert, F. S., Peterson, T., and Schramm, W. 1956. *Four theories of the press*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Silcock, B.W. 2008. "The battle of ideological images: CNN vs. FOX in visual framing of the invasion of Iraq." *Electronic News* 2 (3): 153–177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19312430802285306>
- Somer, M. 2019. "Turkey: The slippery slope from reformist to revolutionary polarization and democratic breakdown." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681 (1): 42–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218818056>
- Swanson, D.L. 1992. "The political-media complex." *Communication Monographs* 59 (4): 397–400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759209376280>
- Tankard, J.W. 2001. "The empirical approach to the study of media framing." In: S.D. Reese et al. (eds.). *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 95–105.
- Taş, H. 2018. "A history of Turkey's AKP-Gülen conflict." *Mediterranean Politics* 23 (3): 395–402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2017.1328766>
- Toker, H. 2015. "More national less European? The comparison of the last two general elections in Turkey." *European Journal of Communication* 30(2): 188–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323114545722>
- Topuz, H. 2003. *II. Mahmut'tan holdinglere Türk basın tarihi (From Mahmud II to holdings history of the Turkish press)*. İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.
- Tuchman, G. 1978. *Making news: A study in the construction of reality*. New York: The Free Press.
- TurkuazLab. 2020. *Dimensions of polarization in Turkey 2020* [online]. [cit. 26. 4. 2021]. Available at: <https://www.turkuazlab.org/en/dimensions-of-polarization-in-turkey-2020/>
- Van Aelst, P., Sheafer, T., and Stanyer, J. 2012. "The personalization of mediated political communication: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings." *Journalism* 13 (2): 203–220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884911427802>
- Waddill, P.J. and McDaniel, M.A. 1992. "Pictorial enhancement of text memory: Limitations imposed by picture type and comprehension skill." *Memory & Cognition* 20 (5): 472–482. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03199580>
- Waldman, P. and Devitt, J. 1998. "Newspaper photographs and the 1996 presidential election: The question of bias." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 75 (2): 302–311. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909807500206>
- Wischmann, L. 1987. "Dying on the front page: Kent state and the Pulitzer Prize." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 2 (2): 67–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08900528709358296>
- Yesil, B. 2016. *Media in new Turkey: The origins of an authoritarian neoliberal state*. Urbana/Chicago/Springfield: University of Illinois Press. <https://doi.org/10.5406/illinois/9780252040177.001.0001>
- Yıldırım, K., Baruh, L., and Çarkoğlu, A. 2020. "Dynamics of campaign reporting and press-party parallelism: Rise of competitive authoritarianism and the media system in Turkey." *Political Communication* 38 (3): 326–369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1765913>

Yilmaz, I, and Bashirov, G. 2018. "The AKP after 15 years: Emergence of Erdoganism in Turkey." *Third World Quarterly* 39 (9): 1812–1830. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2018.1447371>

Zinecker, H. 2009. "Regime-hybridity in developing countries: Achievements and limitations of new research on transitions." *International Studies Review* 11 (2): 302–331. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2486.2009.00850.x>

## Newspapers

BirGün (2014), 16 June – 9 August.

Cumhuriyet (2014), 16 June – 9 August.

Evrensel (2014), 16 June – 9 August.

HaberTürk (2014), 16 June – 9 August.

Hürriyet (2014), 16 June – 9 August.

Ortadoğu (2014), 16 June – 9 August.

Sabah (2014), 16 June – 9 August.

Sözcü (2014), 16 June – 9 August.

Yeni Akit (2014), 16 June – 9 August.

Zaman (2014), 16 June – 9 August.

## Appendix



**Figure A1.** Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's campaign logo



**Figure A2.** Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu's campaign logo



**Figure A3.** Selahattin Demirtaş's campaign logo