

**T.C.**  
**TURKISH - GERMAN UNIVERSTY**  
**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**HOW DO EUROPEAN BROADCASTERS FRAME  
TÜRKIYE'S SYRIA OPERATIONS? AN ANALYSIS OF  
RELATED NEWS IN BBC, DW, AND FRANCE 24.**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**Ayşe Humeyra ATILGAN**

**ADVISOR**

**Prof. Dr. Hartmut MARHOLD**

**ISTANBUL, June 2022**

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**(188101015)**

**The Submission Date to Institute : June 24, 2022**

**Thesis Defense Date : Aug. 17, 2022**

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**ISTANBUL, June 2022**

# DECLARATION

I confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signature:



Name: Ayşe Humeyra ATILGAN

Date: Aug. 17, 2022

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to my advisor Prof. Dr. Hartmut Marhold, who guided and supported me all the way and gave me enough space for an independent study that is free from the advisor's personal areas of interest or any other such restrictions. This endeavor may not have been possible without his confidence in me and his encouragement after my study was interrupted due to some critical health matters. Additionally, I am also grateful to the jury members Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels and Asst. Prof. Dr. Philipp Decker, who participated in thesis defense and provided me with feedback on the study and made suggestions to improve the work and to take it a step further.

Special thanks to my dear friend Research Assistant Dr. Burcu Altun Birgun for her assistance throughout this master thesis project. She showed every kind of support and encouragement from the very beginning of applying for a master thesis program to finalizing the study. Words cannot express my gratitude to her, who devoted her time and energy to help me both technically and intellectually whenever I was stuck in the process.

Lastly, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my parents, Ahmet and Emine, sister Tuba, and brother Sahan, as well as my best friends, Alime, Hacer and Ezgi, for their prayers and moral support that I needed to deal with a series of personal problems while I was working on the thesis. Their belief in me was so valuable and kept my motivation high to complete the study. I should not also miss out my three cats, Leyla, Suzi, and Sirin; I feel so lucky for all the entertainment and emotional support they gave me within this period.

**Ayşe Humeyra ATILGAN**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No
DECLARATION.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	v
TÜRKÇE ÖZET.....	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	vii
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
CHAPTER 1 .....	9
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE .....	9
CHAPTER 2 .....	11
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	11
A. IR THEORIES AND CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH.....	11
B. MEDIA ROLE IN IR.....	15
C. MEDIA FRAMING EFFECT.....	19
CHAPTER 3 .....	25
SYRIAN CIVIL WAR AND TÜRKİYE’S INVOLVEMENT .....	25
A. STATES AND NON-STATE ACTORS IN SYRIAN CIVIL WAR (2011/-).....	25
B. TÜRKİYE’S ROLE IN REGION AND ITS SYRIA OPERATIONS .....	27

<b>CHAPTER 4 .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>RESEARCH.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>A. METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>1. Research Method.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>2. Data Collection .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>3. Data Analysis .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>B. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>LIST OF REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>CURRICULUM VITAE.....</b>	<b>83</b>

# ABSTRACT

## **HOW DO EUROPEAN BROADCASTERS FRAME TÜRKİYE’S SYRIA OPERATIONS? AN ANALYSIS OF RELATED NEWS IN BBC WORLD, DEUTSCHE WELLE, AND FRANCE 24.**

The power of media in constructing public interpretations of the domestic, regional, or global issues has long been discussed in the fields of communication and journalism, as well as contemporary politics and international relations. This paper looks at the framing effect of media – that is covering stories in a well-planned particular way offering the audience a certain way of thinking – by examining the news stories of BBC World, Deutsche Welle, and France24 on Türkiye’s military operations in Syria. Reviewing relevant literature and using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, this study employs a case study of the three European broadcasters’ framing of “Operation Euphrates Shield (2016)”, “Operation Olive Branch (2018)” and "Operation Peace Spring (2019)". Data - a total of 45 news texts – has been collected from the web pages of the three broadcasters and has been analyzed through content analysis. This research is case-specific and reveals how BBC World, Deutsche Welle, and France24 framed the three military operations in terms of their targets, aims, supporters and opponents, and effects, without any claim to make generalizations on the framing patterns of the broadcasters.

**Key Words:** Media, framing, Syria operations.

**Date:** June 24, 2022

# TÜRKÇE ÖZET

## AVRUPA YAYINCILARI TÜRKİYE'NİN SURİYE OPERASYONLARINI NASIL ÇERÇEVELİYOR? BBC WORLD, DEUTSCHE WELLE, VE FRANCE 24'TEKİ İLGİLİ HABERLERİN ANALİZİ.

Medyanın yerel, bölgesel veya küresel meselelerde algı inşa etmedeki gücü, iletişim ve gazeteciliğin yanı sıra çağdaş siyaset ve uluslararası ilişkiler alanlarında uzun zamandır tartışılmaktadır. Bu çalışma, BBC World, Deutsche Welle ve France24'ün Türkiye'nin Suriye'deki askeri operasyonları hakkındaki haberlerini inceleyerek medyanın çerçeveleme etkisine, yani haberleri planlanmış bir şekilde sunma ve okuyucuyu belirli bir düşünme biçimine sevk etme gücüne bakmaktadır. İlgili literatür gözden geçirildikten sonra, nitel ve nicel araştırma yöntemlerinin beraber kullanıldığı çalışmada, bu üç yayıncının “Fırat Kalkanı Operasyonu (2016)”, “Zeytin Dalı Operasyonu (2018)” ve “Barış Pınarı Operasyonu (2019)” konularındaki haberleri çerçevelemesi vaka çalışması yöntemi ile ele alınmıştır. Araştırmaya bu yayıncılardan toplam 45 haber metni dahil edilmiş ve veriler içerik analizi ile çözümlenmiştir. Bu araştırma burada ele alınan vakaya özgüdür ve herhangi bir genellemeye varma iddiasında bulunmadan BBC World, Deutsche Welle ve France24'ün bahsi geçen üç askeri operasyonu hedefleri, amaçları, destekçileri ve muhalifleri ile etkileri bakımından nasıl çerçevelediğini, okuyucuya nasıl sunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Medya, çerçeveleme, Suriye operasyonları.

**Tarih:** 24 Haziran, 2022



## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AK Party / AKP</b>	: The Justice and Development Party
<b>EU</b>	: European Union
<b>FETO</b>	: Fetullah Terrorist Organization
<b>NATO</b>	: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NGO</b>	: Non-governmental organization
<b>O. E. S.</b>	: Operation Euphrates Shield
<b>O. O. B.</b>	: Operation Olive Branch
<b>O. P. S.</b>	: Operation Peace Spring
<b>UN</b>	: United Nations
<b>UNSC</b>	: United Nations Security Council

# LIST OF TABLES

	<b>Page No</b>
<b>Table 1.</b> The number words used to refer to each operation in every set of five news stories published by each broadcaster.....	44
<b>Table 2.</b> The number of "terror"-related, "Kurd"-related, and IS-related words used in each operation published by each broadcaster.....	46
<b>Table 3.</b> Frames in BBC / DW / F24 news texts over Operation Euphrates Shield (2016).....	49
<b>Table 4.</b> Frames in BBC / DW / F24 news texts over Operation Olive Branch (2018).....	55
<b>Table 5.</b> Frames in BBC / DW / F24 news texts over Operation Peace Spring (2019).....	63

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

There is no doubt that the media has a vital role in influencing public opinion on issues of culture, economy, politics, foreign and security affairs, as well as daily life. The power of media is often neglected, however, at times of crisis, national or global, the role of media becomes a much-debated public discourse. Its role as a key resource for officials and the public to make sense of unfolding events all around the world is significant. When reporting on both domestic and international matters, the media frames the incidents in a certain way affecting and creating public perceptions. It is not only the reflecting power of media but also the constructing power, which should be understood. Whether a group, for instance, is described in media as “freedom fighters” or “terrorist organization” makes a big difference in perceptions leading either to positive or negative and sometimes hostile attitudes among the public. As Georgiou (2013) says, "we need to understand how media contribute to framing meanings of the self, the Other, the society we live in."

There are numerous studies over the relationship between media coverage and public perceptions towards a series of global issues. Looking at the representation of migrants and refugees in media, Balabanova (2015) criticizes that the subject of migration is "highly politicized or even securitized." She draws similarities between the theory of securitization and media framing and argues that, "they both hinge upon the importance of language in delivering arguments about cause-and-effect and power relations". When analyzing the role of media, one should think about the language, concept, and definitions, Balabanova (2015) explains. The term "illegal asylum-seeker", for instance, is against the general understanding of human rights as everyone has the right to claim asylum. Instead "irregular migrant" or "undocumented migrant" can be preferred.

Another study, Mertens (2016), looks at the European media coverage of Islam in a globalizing world and finds that there is a tendency in many news reports across Europe to construct a negative picture of Muslims “and thereby contributing to a

general climate of intolerance and discriminations against Muslim minorities.” Through a comparison of newspaper articles in the five European countries, the study conducted quantitative content analysis and compared the results quantitatively. The study also showed national differences in reporting. “The importance of this national factor outweighs the importance of the ideological differences between progressive and conservative newspapers,” Mertens (2016).

Since the beginning of Syrian conflict in 2011, Türkiye has said its policy in the region have focused on the protection of Syria’s territorial integrity and unity as well as a peaceful political solution to the conflict. However, as the tension turned into a major conflict, which killed thousands of civilians and displaced millions of others to various regions, Türkiye also faced serious problems. Besides the humanitarian challenges and responsibilities for millions of Syrian refugees fleeing their country, Türkiye also faced security threat on its border. With the aim of “fighting against terrorism” and “protecting national security”, the country launched a set of military operations including the “Operation Euphrates Shield” on Aug. 24, 2016, “Operation Olive Branch” on Jan. 20, 2018, and "Operation Peace Spring" on Oct. 9, 2019. Türkiye’s operations were widely covered by international media organizations, sometimes in line with Turkish media outlets accepting the country’s “right to self-defense against terror threat from Syria”, and sometimes condemning Türkiye for its “invasion” and accusing Turkish military of “targeting civilians and Kurds” in the region.

As the Syria-related news has been high on the global agenda, and Türkiye – as a neighboring country – is much referred in the media both in terms of the country's humanitarian roles such as hosting many Syrian refugees and delivering humanitarian aid to those in the war-torn country, and in terms of its military operations for a stated purpose of ensuring national security, a study on this topic could contribute to a deeper understanding of what happens in the region and how it is published in the Western media. Believing that the representation of international events may lead any reader to have a positive or negative image of a country and its citizens, I have had a growing interest to find out how Türkiye, its foreign policies and actions are represented especially in the Western media outlets. The current study will try to find out “How do European broadcasters frame Türkiye’s Syria operations?”

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **A. IR THEORIES AND CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH**

There is no perfect theory or a single approach that can explain today's complex system of international relations. However, there are many scholars believing that theories of international politics give us a chance to understand the complex practices in world politics. In the study of IR, there are basically three schools of thought: realism, liberalism, and constructivism, with several other approaches that can be handled under those main categories, such as utopianism, neo-realism, neo-liberalism, democratic peace theory, intergovernmentalism, marxism, or feminism and postcolonial approaches. Each of them focuses on different variables to explain the international structure and state behaviours as well as relations between state, power, war, and sovereignty. Realist approaches that were dominant throughout the Cold War (American-Soviet bipolar rivalry) assume that states are like human beings – they have an instinct to bring others under control. Hans J. Morgenthau believes that states struggle for power and thus there is an enduring tendency for conflict between them. According to Kenneth Waltz's neo-realism, or structural realism, the international system is "anarchic" and "self-help", so "there is no central authority to protect states from one other" and "each state has to survive on its own" (Walt, 1998, p.31).

Liberal theorists such as Robert Keohane emphasize the role of international institutions and argue that those institutions have a key role in preventing wars by stopping selfish state behaviour. States are still central players in world politics but international organizations are equally important. In liberal thought, non-military instruments such as economy, cooperation, diplomacy, and democracy are believed to have key roles in world peace. Pointing to the politics of interdependence – that states depend on each other – Keohane and Nye (2012) argue that there is extensive interdependence of countries in economics and communications. They point to the "international transactions – flows of money, goods, people and messages across international boundaries" (p. 7) and say that "such transactions have increased

dramatically since World War II” (p. 8). Although interdependent states focus on cooperation, not only survival and national security, international conflict is not easy to disappear, Keohane and Nye say, adding that “conflict will take new forms, and may even increase” (p.7).

Finally, constructivists argue that states are not the most important actors in world politics and that state behaviour is shaped or constructed by individuals, political elites, or NGOs. Ideas and discourse, social international norms and interests all matter in a state’s behaviour (Walt, 1998). “Although power is not irrelevant, constructivism emphasises how ideas and identities are created, how they evolve, and how they shape the way states understand and respond to their situation,” (Walt, 1998, p. 41). So, “how states define themselves and their interests” (Walt, 1998, p.41) affects a state’s own practices and interaction among other states. Apart from that, actors’ personal opinions and political decisions as well as public opinion, and media are all believed to have roles in the construction of a state’s politics.

There are some scholars believing that each theory stands in opposition to another one while some others believe that two or more theories could be considered complementary (theoretical synthesis) and work together to help our understanding of foreign policies. According to Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger (1997), there are realists who have a power-based approach to the study of international relations, neoliberals who have an interest-based approach, and cognitivists who have a knowledge-based approach. Under "strong cognitivism" (p.154) as they put it - which has a different ontology from "weak cognitivism" (p.155) - there is also "Wendt's specific approach" (p.188) that is "constructivism." Wendt’s “Anarchy is what states make of it” (1992) focuses on the power of identities and interests of state actors in the construction of world politics. In other words, the actors' perceptions of the self and the other and their goals shape their foreign policy decisions. "It makes a great difference for interaction whether *ego* [a state] considers himself a friend or a foe of *alter* [another state]" (Hasenclever, Mayer and Rittberger, 1997, p. 186, italics in original, parentheses added). Thus, states can develop either egoistic / competitive identities or collective / cooperative identities, which will lead to different actions in the international system, a conflict or an alliance, for instance. Central themes underlined by IR constructivists also

include change across time and spaces, which means historical context is significant to understand international relations and to make sense of what is happening. They also point at the importance of norms, rules, and language as well as the process of interaction in meaning making and in acting. States are believed to adapt themselves into norms – a standard of appropriate behaviour – following pressure from the public, international organizations, and media.

### **Construction of meaning-making through news, or journalism**

Neumann and Zierold (2010) looks at national stereotyping in the 18th century England in order to "illustrate the dynamic functioning of worldmaking". They argue that in the travelogues of the time, which people read to learn about other's experiences of foreign countries, many dialogues, descriptions, and narratives were used to construct images of the self and the other, i.e. the Brits and the French in this case. By portraying the manners and dressing styles of the French and the British, and taking the individual portrait as a representation of the society, those travelogues were indeed used to construct national stereotypes and thus to establish social norms, they argue. Those travelogues "seemingly... played a major role in imagining cultural otherness, i.e. in the making of foreign worlds" (p. 110-111). Also looking at the role of other media products such as 18th century comedies, poems, songs, novels, leaflets, and newspapers in constructing images of the Englishman and the foreigner, Neumann and Zierold (2010) argue that "media are not just artifacts or products, but also agents" (p. 116) that play a key role in "our individual, social, and cultural ways of worldmaking" (p. 117).

Fierke's (2013) constructivist analysis suggests that frameworks are significant for giving meaning and responding to a situation. Examining the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, and the War on Terror, Fierke (2013, p.200) says "the question from a constructivist perspective is whether there were alternative frameworks for giving meaning to and responding to this attack. " The framework of 'war on terror' "gave reasons for a range of acts that would not otherwise have been considered acceptable," (p. 200) he argues and says that the rules on detention, torture, and government surveillance have all changed as 'war on terror' justified extraordinary acts. Fierke also argues that images of violence in media such as photos of Arab prisoners being

humiliated at prison led to the questioning in the international community of the legality of US actions. "While the USA initially received widespread support and sympathy from the international community, this support waned over time as the practices of the Bush administration appeared increasingly to violate the rules and norms of international law." (p. 202). His constructivist analysis emphasizes the importance of rules and norms for constructing reality and how exposure to images in media adds to meaning making of the community.

Nünning (2010) also discusses over the worldmaking power of narratives in terms of its effect on people's making sense of the world. Events and narratives are not "found in the world but built into a world" says Nünning (2010, p. 193, quoting Nelson Goodman). Giving examples of the Crimean War as well as 9/11 and the Iraq War, she says they are "also perspective-dependent, culturally specific, and historically variable contingent constructs which are produced by discourses, narratives, and media," (p. 193). Referring to the media narratives over Iraq's production of weapons of mass destruction following 9/11, Nünning (p.195) says that narratives "are a very powerful, and potentially dangerous, way of worldmaking." Although those narratives failed to tell the truth in the end, they still had the "reality-changing potential" (p.195) that affected people's meaning-making. Thus, she argues that "powerful narratives can themselves be weapons of mass destruction" (p.195).

Not every happening is an event, she says, and reiterates many times throughout her article that events are constructed and stories are made by the people and by the media. Going deep into the discussion of what makes ordinary happenings an event, or a historical event, or a media event, and giving various definitions (from scholars) of what event means, Nünning argues that "events are not something that is objectively given but rather the result of selection, abstraction, prioritization, and weighting [...]" (p. 201). Media events, she says, are representation of events and stories, not the mere happenings, and adds: "different meanings can be assigned to the 'same event' by different observers, the choice of a point of view also has to be taken into consideration, [...]" (p. 202). Nünning (2010) also underlines the coverage of wars in media and argues that perspectives of witnesses, reporters, and photographers always do matter in terms of narrative representation of wars.



The following full quotation is a clear explanation of how different media organizations, or even different journalists, may turn the same happenings into different events depending on their point of views as well their values and norms.

"Not only does the observer's spatial and temporal perspective of perception already play a decisive role in the choice of certain elements of the event, but his or her ideological perspective, i.e. his or her values and norms, is important as well. The same is true for the processes of composition through which a story becomes a narrative of a particular kind, as well as for the verbalization which creates the text or the representation of the story."(p. 205)

## **B. MEDIA ROLE IN IR**

The term media was not used in its present meaning before 1850s, the years which saw the inventions of telegraphy and photography - significant developments in the communication technology, Eliassen (2010) argues as he looks at the history of the media concept, "Is 'media' an adequate term to analyze and describe the technologies that transferred information and formatted worlds in the period before the term receives its present meaning?" Eliassen (2010, p.123) asks and says that it is better to think 'media' as a term of modernity. Its modern definition is "a method of communication or entertainment" (Cambridge Dictionary) that covers such areas as blogs, online web sites, TV shows, radio programs, and newspapers, as well as the products and services of new media, digital media, and social media.

Media, in all its forms, is no doubt a very significant way that has been used to promote culture and values, especially in an age of Internet and information technologies, which allow all types of messages to be quickly delivered to a broad audience. Big companies, political leaders, non-governmental organizations and many other actors use media and Internet to attract support from crowds for their products, policies, or campaigns. A well-known example here could be the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty -- a legally binding international agreement that bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of antipersonnel mines. Although the Pentagon opposed the treaty, a New-York based international campaign triggered by a coalition of NGOs from dozens of countries, political elites, as well as celebrities including Princess Diana of Wales, resulted in bringing the treaty into existence. More and more examples can be provided

here showing the use of Internet-based networks and other media sources in an attempt to win the public support for desired outcomes. They would contribute to strengthening the idea that media sources are used to affect the way how people think of a particular incident, as well as a state, its citizens, or its domestic and foreign policies.

"Soft power" is a term coined by Joseph Nye (2004) with which he refers to a state's ability to attract and persuade. His definition for power in general is "the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants" (p.2). He says there are several ways for that such as coercion (threats and sanctions), inducement (payment), or attraction (culture and values). Discussing the changing nature of power, Nye says that states in today's globalized world may not always succeed in using their hard powers, i.e., population strength, natural resources, economic strength, and military assets. They also have to employ the soft power resources in order to get what they want. Soft power, Nye says, is the attractive power, which uses neither force nor money to produce desired outcomes, but uses "the attractiveness of one's culture and values" (p.7).

Pointing to the early efforts of Western countries, including France, Germany, and Italy, during the 18th century and afterwards to promote their languages and cultures by opening offices and institutes abroad, Nye says (2004) wielding soft power was part of those states' diplomacy goals. Nye (2004, p.101) also points at the invention of radio and the European countries' attempts in 1930s to broadcast in foreign languages. "Communists in the Soviet Union and Fascists in Germany and Italy competed to promote favorable images of their countries and ideologies to foreign publics" through foreign-language radio broadcasts, he says (p. 101). The British broadcaster BBC, founded in 1922, was already broadcasting in many European languages and Arabic, he adds. Similar to that is the growth of Voice of America (VOA) during the second World War that was broadcasting in over 20 languages. While informing the public about what is happening around the world, those radio broadcasters also served to promote cultural life as well as foreign diplomacy of the states. It is not much different with the television news. "During the Gulf War, CNN and BBC had the field largely to themselves as they framed the issues. For example, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1991 was described in terms of Iraqi aggression

rather than recovering the lost province of Kuwait, which is how the Iraqis saw it," Nye explains (p. 54), and continues: "By the time of the Iraq War, Al Jazeera and others were active competitors in framing the issues. For instance, the same image of moving forces could accurately be described by CNN as 'coalition forces advance' or by Al Jazeera as 'invading forces advance'." With his argument and examples, Nye points to the power of framing in media to support a certain point of view and encourage cooperation from the public.

Looking at the role of media in contemporary politics, a linguistics scholar, and media critic Noam Chomsky (1997) provides the reader with what he describes as "the first modern government propaganda operation" (p.11) of Woodrow Wilson as the president of the United States. He tells how Wilson led his "pacifistic" nation into World War One by conducting a government propaganda, which succeeded in creating a "warmongering" nation. The media strongly supported the government, Chomsky says, as the business circles also worked to encourage people into war. He says all those efforts "worked very well and taught a lesson: state propaganda," (p.13) which was later used by many dictators such as Hitler and "has been pursued to this day." Pointing out that the techniques of propaganda are used nowadays by the specialized class in order to govern and control the rest of the society, Chomsky (p.21) says: "Propaganda to a democracy is what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state."

Another example of state propaganda that Chomsky (1997) discusses in detail is the Gulf War (1990–91), an international conflict that was triggered by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. He argues that the US administration wanted to proceed with the war and thus ignored the voices of the opposition, both among its own nation who were against the war and the voices of the Iraqi democratic opposition who were asking for support to establish a parliamentary democracy in Iraq. He claims that the media did not cover the opposition stance against war because peace would not serve the US interests of that time. Instead, people were made to believe that the war was needed in order to stop illegal occupation and the violation of human rights - the "manufacture of consent" in the words of Chomsky. That is "how a well-functioning propaganda system works," (p. 54).

So far, the scholars argued how media is used by various actors including states to win the public support or to affect their interpretations of the domestic, regional, or global issues. There is also the role of the individual journalist in creating public perceptions. Pointing to the "movement of media power from the organization to the individual", Huijser and Little (2013, p. 69) argue that the role of a journalist does matter for public perceptions of what is happening here and there. What a journalist does is basically to report news to the public. When they do this, they describe what they see in their way of seeing the world. Either this is a traffic accident, which is full of factual details, or a diplomatic meeting, which can be interpreted in different ways, journalists are using their own minds to report. Observing and understanding why journalists behave in certain ways at particular times is not the core subject of this study, however, thinking about the different reactions of journalists at the same incident and what makes them report in that particular way could help us understand better the role of journalists in creating public perceptions.

Making a distinction between journalists and media workers, Little (2013, p. 212) says journalists are "researchers and fact-finders" who try to explain issues or find the right sources to do it for the sake of public's right to know. A journalist, therefore, would need - in addition to the practice-based skills of reporting, researching, interviewing, writing, broadcasting, and producing - to have a set of moral qualities including objectivity, fairness, empathy, honesty, responsibility, and reasonableness. All such values seem to have a role in affecting a journalist's way of reporting. As Huijser and Little (p. 69) puts it, journalism is "a social practice that relies on individual engagement" with a range of ethical issues. Freedom and independence are two other ethical issues that are directly linked to a journalist's reporting news. It is often discussed how free a journalist is to do objective stories that would truly reflect what is happening locally or globally. Or, how could a journalist employed by a large media company maintain some sort of independence avoiding any directions of the companies and the pressure to report in the way their companies want to see it? Although Little (p.9) argues that "[I]t is possible to work for a media corporation and develop your own journalistic identity" and that serving an employer is not an obstacle to develop journalistic autonomy and identity, the practice may not always be the same as the theory.

## **C. MEDIA FRAMING EFFECT**

Researchers in media studies basically talk about three related effects of the media: agenda-setting (or gatekeeping) priming and framing. Sometimes they are referred to as frame building and agenda building with a focus on the process of message construction by various of actors. Surely, each of these processes affect the way how a certain piece of news is covered and presented to the audience. "The activities of interest groups, policymakers, journalists, and other groups interested in shaping media agendas and frames can have an impact on both the volume and character of news messages about a particular issue," (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007, p.12). This study focuses on the framing effect of media, of the news in particular, on people's making sense of the world events, however the other two effects will also be briefly explained before moving on with framing in more detail.

### **1. Agenda-setting / Gatekeeping**

What most early media studies referred to as "gatekeeping" is more recently referred to as "agenda-setting". Both refer to media's power in determining the public agenda, in other words, who or what should get particular attention and coverage in the media. Traditionally, it has been the mass media which had the gatekeeping or agenda-setting function, however with growing number of media channels, such as blogs, social media, and online web sites, the gatekeeping role of the media has also changed (Bennett and Pfetsch, 2018). In an era of digital media, there are more than one agenda set by various platforms, "which seldom converge in the authoritative power to set 'the' public agenda" (Bennett and Pfetsch, p. 249). An example of agenda-setting could be any politician's efforts to raise a topic of interest for the public via media when for instance the country has been going through a financially difficult time. The leader of a country may bring the issue of the establishment of a nuclear power plant into discussion so that people would not think much about the financial problems at least for a while. Looking at the leaders' practises worldwide, and media coverage of the leaders, such agenda-setting samples can be seen quite often.

## **2. Priming**

'Priming' is indeed very much related to agenda-setting. "By making some issues more salient in people's mind (agenda setting), mass media can also shape the considerations that people take into account when making judgments about political candidates or issues (priming)," according to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007, p.11, parenthesis in original). Priming which lexically means "to prepare someone or something for a particular situation" (Cambridge Dictionary), is to make the audience prepared to look at a particular incident by activating their unconscious, which then influences their views. According to Fairhurst (2011), priming is "a conscious act that imprints your unconscious with new pathways for the brain to follow when triggered," (p. 65), and it "involves activating something in our short- or long-term memory, which then triggers an in-kind response in either what we say or what we do," (p. 64). Fairhurst says priming is like wearing sunglasses on a sunny day. "You have the initial experience of less glare, but you quickly forget that you are seeing with a colored lens. It is the same with priming your unconscious mind," (p. 65). For instance, after the July 15 coup attempt in Türkiye happened in 2016, which the government says was staged by Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) against the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the mass media published news stories recalling what happened and what was aimed with earlier coup attempts in the country in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997. The public's memory of previous attempts was activated, which possibly influenced their views.

## **3. Framing**

Framing is also seen in many earlier media studies as a phase of agenda-setting, however researchers have lately accepted it as a paradigm on its own for communication studies as well as political communication with more focus on audience effects. Basically, it means to cover stories in a well-planned particular way rather than just reporting the facts. Again, Bennett and Pfetsch (p. 248) argue that "the interactions among legacy news, alternative information sites, and social media are changing the dynamics of framing". There are studies in the field showing that all these effects of

media are related to and mostly based on one another. However, this study particularly focuses on the framing effect of certain media outlets, and therefore framing will be discussed in more detail with various of examples in the field.

To frame, in a very broad sense, means to form an edge to something, anything, a picture frame, for instance, that is used to show one particular picture or a frame of a house, which is the structure used to build the house. In communication, it means to express something choosing your words carefully. In a more specific description, it means to carefully plan or organize ideas, meanings etc. in a particular way. Just like fixing a border around a painting or a photograph, you create borders around certain ideas and meanings so that the audience is offered a particular way of thinking or feeling about something. Here comes the issue of media framing, the language used in the news texts and their possible effects on the audience.

Different scholars of communication and media studies have made different definitions of framing; it is impossible to list all of them. However, we need several of those definitions to have a better understanding of the framing issue. Much cited by scholars in the field is Goffman, who says a frame or "schemata of interpretation", as he defines, "allows its user to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms (1986, p.21). For Entman, (1993, p.52) framing "involves selection and salience." A definition by him is as follows: "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 for the item described." According to Scheufele and Tewksbury, (2007, p.11) framing is "based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences." Other definitions also include a process of inclusion and exclusion, that is frames are constructed eliminating some voices while supporting others. Pointing to the rising interest in the concept of framing across many disciplines and in media studies, scholars Reese, Gandy, and Grant (2008) offer a comprehensive work on framing with many articles of authors from various fields in the sub-chapters of theoretical and methodological perspectives on framing, as well as specific cases of framing and the implications of framing for the new media

technologies. Reese also (p. 11) makes a definition: "Frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world."

In his empirical approach to the study of media framing, Tankard (2008, p. 95) says that "the media can frame issues in ways that favor a particular side without showing an explicit bias." He argues that it is important to focus on media framing, which he says is an alternative to the years-long discussion of objectivity and bias, as it will help us better understand the strength of the mass communication on changing the ideas of the public. Tankard (2008, p. 96) gives the example of abortion, which can be framed as "an issue primarily concerning the life of the unborn child" or "an issue primarily concerned with the freedom of choice of the mother". The two different framings will set different terms of a discussion over the issue, he says. Here, whether the media frames it in one way or the other will lead the readers to have different opinions on the matter. More importantly, however, the media framing can be as powerful as to drive the masses into a desired result. As Tankard puts it (2008, p. 96), "Media framing is important because it can have subtle but powerful effects on the audience, even to the point of helping to overthrow a president." What supports his argument could be the example of Arab Spring movement in the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2010 and 2011. Frames of "pro-democracy" protests and "violent crackdowns" by security forces that probably encouraged and inspired masses of demonstrators demanding civilian governments led to the fall of regimes in some countries such as Tunisia and Egypt. Surely, there are a number of sociological, political and economic causes which brought the protesters in the streets, but the power of media and the way how those mass movements of people are covered by international broadcasters cannot be ignored. If the protests had been framed as "violent" and the response of the security forces as "ensuring social order", the results may not have been the same.

The power of media framing is directly linked to the power of language. As Fairhurst says (p.5), language "becomes a key issue not just in our own sensemaking, but in how effectively we impact the sensemaking of others." Referring to Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963 "as one of the greatest speeches of the



twentieth century,” (p.89), Fairhurst underlines the significance of language and says the use of vocabularies and metaphors make a great difference in inspiring people. He focuses on framing as an art and craft (p.91) and says that anyone who wants to master the art of framing should first learn how to use language functions. Also looking at leaders’ use of framing in their speeches in various forms, Fairhurst argues that their language has a context-shaping feature.

There are also many studies discussing how journalists exercise framing when they make their stories following their interaction with their sources. Although journalists who report news are expected to be objective or unbiased, they somehow use frames to tell about an issue, a person, or an event. Without going into much detail about individual journalists' framing exercises, it would be a pertinent remark to say that journalists go through a process of framing from the very beginning of choosing their angle on a specific story to selecting their sources, i.e. whom to quote, what to quote, and where to place the quotations in the story. Scheufele (1999, p.115) says: "Journalists actively construct frames to structure and make sense of incoming information. The formation of frames is moderated by variables such as ideology, attitudes, and professional norms and is eventually reflected in the way journalists frame news coverage." He also argues that among other sources of influence on media framing are “political orientation of the medium” as well as “political actors, authorities, interest groups, and other elites” (p.115). He says that “frames suggested by interest groups or political actors as soundbites are adopted by journalists and incorporated in their coverage of an issue or event,” (p.116) adding that such a “frame-building function of mass media” is mostly seen on new issues.

However, it is also argued that the rise of Internet and the developments in the new media technologies - the addition of new tools such as photos, videos, audios, graphics, animations, web links, etc. to the news texts - have changed the framing effect of the conventional news reporting. Readers are offered more diverse perspectives provided by online news sources. Pavlik (2008, p.317) for instance, argues that hypermedia, which enables a person to link texts to images, videos, sounds, or to other related websites, gives the reader the opportunity "to see a story from multiple perspectives or points of view, thus expanding the news frame." He says hypermedia is

vitaly important especially for the younger generations who, he says, prefer to see stories with more details, background, context, and from multiple perspectives. Whether media frames affect today's audience more or less compared to earlier generations could be another research topic in addition to the question of how the process of media frames' influencing the audience work.

# **CHAPTER 3**

## **SYRIAN CIVIL WAR AND TÜRKİYE’S INVOLVEMENT**

### **A. STATES AND NON-STATE ACTORS IN SYRIAN CIVIL WAR (2011/-)**

What started as peaceful protests against the government in Syria in March 2011 later turned into a civil war in which many international actors were involved. There were mainly two sides: The one which supported the Bashar al-Assad regime and the other one that opposed it. Russia and Iran were two states that strongly supported Assad’s fight against “terrorists” while the US, the EU, many other European countries, as well as Türkiye and Qatar supported opposition groups in the country against the regime’s “mass murder” of its own citizens.

In just six months after the anti-government protests started, over 2,500 civilians were already killed by Syrian military operations against demonstrators (Reuters, 2011, Oct. 5). International community urged for the United Nations Security Council to adopt sanctions on Damascus. However, Russia and China, two permanent members of the Council, both cast vetoes in October 2011 blocking a UNSC resolution that would have condemned Assad’s crackdown.

“The Security Council this afternoon failed to adopt a resolution that would have condemned “grave and systematic human rights violations” in Syria, and would have warned of options for action to be considered against the Government of President Bashar al-Assad if the unfolding situation warranted, including measures under the section of the United Nations Charter that allowed sanctions.” (UN statement, 2011, Oct. 4)

“The resolution would have demanded that Syrian authorities immediately stop using force against civilians and allow the exercise of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and other fundamental rights. It would have called for the release of all political prisoners and peaceful demonstrators.” (UN statement, 2011, Oct. 4)

In the months and years that followed, clashes became more common between government forces and opposition groups. There were a series of efforts and initiatives by international organizations to bring the conflict to an end, which all failed in the end. Russia and China continuously used their veto power in favor of the Syrian regime at UN Security Council meetings.

On the morning of Aug. 21, 2013, reports of chemical weapons attacks in Syria hit the global headlines. The attacks on the opposition-controlled Damascus suburbs of Eastern and Western Ghouta, located 16 kilometers apart, killed hundreds of civilians including large numbers of children. Following the Ghouta chemical weapons attacks, calls came for international military action in Syria. “The US and Britain paved the way for intervention, saying it would be a response to a violation of international law,” (The Guardian, 2013, Aug. 28). While a UN inspection of suspected sites of chemical attacks was ongoing, “Washington, London and Paris have all made it clear that they would not wait for the UN report to take action based on their own intelligence findings.” However, no immediate international military intervention came, and instead an agreement was reached between Russia, Syria, and the US on Sept. 14 to place all of Syria’s chemical weapons under international control. Meanwhile, “the international allies of the Syrian government and the rebels stepped up their support, raising the prospect of a regional proxy war,” (Brittanica, Syrian Civil War). Proxy war is “a war fought between groups or smaller countries that each represent the interests of other larger powers, and may have help and support from these,” (Cambridge Dictionary).

“Efforts by Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar to fund and arm rebels became increasingly public in late 2012 and 2013. The United States, which had been reluctant to send weapons for fear of inadvertently arming radical jihadists who would someday turn against the West, eventually started a modest program to train and equip a few vetted rebel groups. The Syrian government continued to receive weapons from Iran and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. By late 2012 Hezbollah had also begun sending its own fighters into Syria to battle the rebels.” (Brittanica, Syrian Civil War)

Among other fighting forces in the field were the Nusrah Front, an al-Qaeda affiliate operating in Syria, and a new one ISIS – the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. As ISIS, also called Daesh, launched a series of operations in both Syria and Iraq, both the US (in 2014) and Russia (in 2015) launched air strikes against targets in Syria. By 2016, ISIS fighters “was beginning to collapse under the strain of its simultaneous confrontations with three rival coalitions — Kurdish forces and their American allies, pro-Assad Syrian forces supported by Iran and Russia, and a Turkish-backed coalition of rebel groups,” (Brittanica, Syrian Civil War). The Free Syrian Army was an umbrella group of rebels supported clearly by Türkiye.

While fighting continued in the field between many different armed groups supported by rival states, and with increasing intervention of Western states in the conflict, diplomacy was also underway with many rounds of talks, in Geneva and Astana, in which representatives of Bashar al-Assad's regime and representatives of the opposition came together to bring an end to the conflict. So far, all have failed. No political solution came out of the negotiations. During the 11-year-long war, hundreds of thousands of people have been killed and millions more displaced, according to UN estimates.

## **B. TÜRKİYE’S ROLE IN REGION AND ITS SYRIA OPERATIONS**

Having discussed over the Syrian civil war with many international actors involved, it is now time to have a look at Türkiye’s role in the region and its involvement in the conflict. With the stated aims of “preventing migration flows from the war-torn country to various Turkish provinces” and “ensuring its border security against terror threat coming across the border” according to Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The country launched a series of three military operations in Syria. However, in order to better understand why Türkiye got involved in the Syrian conflict, one should first have at least a general view of its changing foreign policy, and its changing relations with its neighbors in particular, in the last two decades.

## **1. Türkiye's changing relations with its neighbors**

Türkiye's clearly defined intention has been to improve relations with all its neighbors, namely the Black Sea, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East. Quoting the then-foreign minister of Türkiye, Ahmet Davutoglu, over Türkiye's aim to have "zero problems" with its neighbors, Tolay and Linden (2012) suggest that the country might fail in reaching the goal partly due to the different goals of the domestic actors in other states. "Foreign relations outcomes are often not the same as foreign policy intentions," (Tolay and Linden, p.1). What Davutoglu did not take into account while setting Türkiye's "zero problems" foreign policy was the Arab Spring in 2011 and the follow-up conflicts which are still ongoing in the region.

Linden (2012) says that in the last decade Türkiye's relations with its neighbors changed dramatically in various fields including economy, energy, trade, migration, and security. Comparing between 1990s and 2000s, he says Türkiye's relations with its neighbors has changed from "confrontation, mistrust, the use of threats and force" to reconciliation, economic and political cooperation, and recognition of common interests. "Türkiye in the 2000s represents a fundamentally different actor," says Tocci (2012, p.195) – one another scholar discussing Türkiye's changing role both regionally and globally. It is a mixture of many internal and external factors that shape a state's foreign relations including its neighborhood policies. Among those factors are firstly the internal factors such as political and economic developments in the country, and a new identity-building process, and secondly external factors such as international actors' attitudes towards the country, migration from neighboring countries, and regional developments. These will be briefly discussed to contribute to grasping the country's regional and international relations.

### **Internal factors**

Tocci and Walker (2012) argue that along with the regional and international dynamics that affected Türkiye's policies toward its neighbors Iran, Iraq, Syria, as well as Israel-Palestine conflict, it is mainly domestic factors that led to changes in the country's neighborhood policies. "Key agents have been the Justice and Development Party (AKP) governments as well as a range of non-state actors in the economic and

civil society domains," they say (p.35). Describing AK Party as "the historical successor of Türkiye's right-leaning Islamic conservative movement" (p.48), the authors say that the party used the domestic public support and the rising regional influence for its policies in the Middle East. For the past 20 years, AK Party has enjoyed a popular support winning all the parliamentary elections successively. The ruling of one political party, "and the strong political support it has enjoyed since 2002 are striking developments in a country more accustomed to unstable coalition governments," Tolay and Linden say (2012, p.7) as they point to the government's power to transform the country in line with its foreign policy goals.

Tolay (2012, p.133) also points to three developments in Türkiye's foreign policy decision-making processes: a change in foreign policy, a change in government's decision-making power, and an increased role of non-state actors in world politics. A "liberal and outward-looking foreign policy," (p.133) and "accepting migration," as well as "the decline of military's political power" (p.134) and "less securitized approach to foreign policy" are all such developments that have changed the foreign policymaking in Türkiye in the past decades. There is also the rising role of both domestic and international NGOs, which urge the government on certain international matters through reports they publish.

Economically, Türkiye's growth in the first decade of AK Party governments made the country see its neighbors as markets for its home-produced goods. Many businessmen made investments in the Middle East and Balkans thus urging the government to make friendly ties to support the economic environment. Non-state actors, business people for instance, influenced the country's neighborhood policies. Looking at Türkiye's changing economic relations with its neighbors after the end of the Cold War, Straubhaar (2012, p.174) says that "Türkiye moved from the periphery to the center of a region that is transforming politically, socially, and economically very fast." The country was positioned as a bridge between the West and the East "between communist and capitalists economic systems" Straubhaar says adding it had no strong ties with its neighbors. With the end of the Cold War, however, the nation states neighboring Türkiye all became potential importers and markets for Turkish exports. Providing tables with GDPs of Türkiye and its neighbors in the Black Sea and the

Middle East, Straubhaar (p. 175) argues that they all “developed rapidly in the past 20 years”, which led to rise in trade relations. The author also underlines the Russian energy flows to Türkiye as well as Turkish exports to Russia. Nevertheless, comparing foreign trade relations between Türkiye and its neighbors as well as Türkiye and Europe in different years, Straubhaar (2012, p.190) points out that for Türkiye, Europe has been “the most important trading partner”. He says that “both sides, Türkiye and the EU need each other. The EU still is and will be for the next decade by far the most important economic neighbor to Türkiye,” (p.186). For several reasons, including the small population and GDP of Türkiye’s neighbors and their mostly belonging to the low-income countries, Straubhaar argues that there is not much potential for a strong economic relation between Türkiye and its neighborhood.

What could be another perspective on the country's changing relations with neighbors is the process of a new identity-building and self-definiton. Tolay and Linden (2012, p. 8.) for instance claim that "Türkiye sees itself as - and has been - both a democracy and heir of the Ottoman Empire." The authors also take into consideration the role of the leader and say that the statements and actions of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are factors that affect policymaking - tough difficult to prove empirically. Linden (2012, p.220) argues that Türkiye, under [then-Prime Minister, current President] Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has been "promoted as the natural leader of the Muslim world." These views can contribute to one’s understanding of the country’s increasing role in the Middle East as well as its developing relations with the African continent. And yet, Tocci and Walker, pointing to the complexity of the country's identity, say: "Oddly, Türkiye has become more European, more democratic, more Islamic, and increasingly more nationalist simultaneously," (p.50). They also argue that "the lack of a coherent opposition or ideology other than AKP's is dangerous for both domestic and foreign policy."

As a transition between the internal and external factors is the rising significance of Türkiye's geopolitical and geostrategic role in the region, which is directly linked to the issues of energy, trade, security, and migration. The country’s position as an energy corridor between oil-rich Middle East and European market is highly significant. Europe wants to ensure energy security and to reduce dependence on Russia in the area



of energy while Türkiye wants to become an energy hub. Also, Türkiye itself has been almost totally dependent on neighbors, and mostly on Russia, for its domestic energy consumption, and thus have had to act in the region in line with its energy security concerns. After the country announced the discovery of major natural gas reserves in the Black Sea, near the Turkish coast, its dependence on neighbors is expected to decrease. The country even aims "to be an energy exporter" (Anadolu Agency, 2020, Aug. 21).

### **External factors**

Global actors leading the world politics such as the United States and the European Union, as well as Britain and Russia, have impacts on most countries' foreign policies, including that of Türkiye and its ties with the neighboring countries. As Linden (2012, p. 220) asks:

"[C]an one fully assess Türkiye's ambitious search for influence in its neighborhood without an appreciation of its long-standing sense of being alienated from and taken for granted by the West, including both the United States and Europe?"

Türkiye has been a NATO ally since 1952 and "since then NATO has been the cornerstone of Türkiye's defense and security policy" (Turkish Foreign Ministry, 2022d). The country acted as a barrier for the US against Soviet Russia during the Cold War. Following the end of the Cold War, much of Turkish foreign policy, be it in the Balkans or in the Middle East, was in line with transatlantic policies, according to Tocci (2012). The US, in return, supported Türkiye's European integration for a set of other reasons which would in the end serve its own global interests. "Our vision of a Europe that is undivided, democratic, and at peace for the first time in all of history will never be complete unless and until it embraces Türkiye..." (Tocci, p.200, quoting former US president Bill Clinton). Türkiye's full membership in the EU would also mean a strengthened strategic relationship with the US. However, in the 21st century, Türkiye got "more cooperative and more constructive in its region but also increasingly independent from its Western allies," as Tocci puts it (p.198). A very well-known example of this could be the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which Turkish parliament rejected. With the Obama administration, US-Turkish relations got closer again and

Türkiye was seen as a key partner in issues related to Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq, Tocci and Walker say, adding that the US support to Türkiye's fight against the PKK also contributed to the relations between Türkiye and Kurdish leaders of northern Iraq.

Türkiye's ties with Russia – its Black Sea neighbor, is “deeply-rooted” with diplomatic relations beginning in 1492 (Turkish Foreign Ministry, 2022c). Türkiye recognized the Soviet Union in 1920 and the Soviet Russia was the first country in the world to recognize the Republic of Türkiye, during the Turkish War of Independence. During the Cold War, however, when NATO was a critical player of the US bloc, Türkiye was a NATO member and acted together with its Western allies. It was only after the end of the Cold War that the two nations “took steps towards strengthening mutual trust and good neighborliness as well as diversifying areas of cooperation by utilizing opportunities to improve bilateral relations” (Turkish Foreign Ministry, 2022c). Cooperations and high-level visits continued in the following years. After 2000, trade between the two countries has “grown dramatically” (Linden, 2012, p.70) “and in 2008 Russia became Türkiye's largest trading partner”. When it comes to energy, Türkiye relies heavily on Russia for most of its imports of gas and oil while Russia sees Türkiye a key market and a channel for its energy exports to the EU. Pointing at many differences between the two countries in their foreign policies, for instance over Kosovo, Azerbaijan, and the Balkans, Linden (p. 71) says those differences were not impediment to progress in Turkish-Russian relations. Between Ankara and Moscow “[t]here are enough common strategic and economic interests” which would “make the new Russian-Turkish relationship unrecognizable compared to Cold War days” (Linden, p.71). This argument seems to be still valid today looking at, on the one hand, the big differences between the two countries in their policies over Syrian civil war and Russian annexation of Crimea, and on the other hand, the high-level visits between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan as well as a number of cooperations in fields of trade, tourism, and energy including a key TurkStream gas pipeline project that starts on the Russian coast, runs over 930 km through the Black Sea and comes ashore in Türkiye offering a key solution for the energy supply security of Europe. Briefly, the end of the Cold War and “a return of Russian assertiveness” are among the changes that have led to a new environment for Türkiye's relations with the neighboring states (Linden, p.79).

Relations with the EU also have a point in explaining Türkiye's policy with its neighbors, especially in the Middle East. Türkiye's EU accession process started with 1963 Ankara agreement and since then the country has been making efforts to get full membership. At 1999 Helsinki summit, the country became a "candidate member" of the EU – a step that launched its accession process. The country began a process of democratic transformation in the first decade of the 21st century "making possible initiatives such as the 'democratic opening' toward the Kurds in 2009, with repercussions on relations with Northern Iraq as well as with Syria and Iran," (Tocci and Walker, p.46). However, following the years after 2005, when the EU opened accession negotiations, the years-long waiting for full membership made Türkiye feel rejected by a Europe that once inspired it. Whether such a feeling of rejection made the country move away from Europe towards the Middle East has been much debated. "[T]he EU's tortured consideration of Turkish membership has an impact not only on the evolving nature of Türkiye's self-definition and domestic politics but also on Türkiye's policies toward its neighbors..." (Tolay and Linden, 2012, p.6).

Migration to and through Türkiye has very much affected relations with the Europe - a final destination for many refugees or asylum-seekers. Migration "has become a central political issue in the EU-Türkiye relations in the past twenty years," (Tolay 2012, p. 124.) - and grew even more significant since then. Looking at Türkiye's regional power with a focus on the flow of people and goods, Tolay (2012, p.119) says the country has turned into a country of migration, which has "a significant impact on the country's foreign relations." That claim was even before the huge waves of migration of Syrian civilians, who fled the civil war in their country. As the war reached its eleventh year, the number of Syrian migrants in Türkiye has exceeded 3.5 million. Therefore, migration naturally became a significant foreign policy issue for the country. With a focus on the movement of people and goods between Türkiye and its neighbors, mainly Iran and Iraq, Tolay says, (2012, p. 124) "relations with Syria have a very organic link to migration as most families living in the border area are split across the border and movements of population are common." That "organic link" seems to have resulted in the mass migration waves of Syrian people into Turkish cities since the beginning of Syrian civil war.

The author also argues that Türkiye uses migration issue as a weapon to pressure accession negotiations with the EU. That argument seems to have proven true - if not before - with a 2016 migration deal between the EU-Türkiye. In a statement, (European Council, press release) the EU and Türkiye agreed that Türkiye would stop any irregular crossing of migrants to Greek Islands and in return the EU was expected to accelerate the accession process and lift the visa requirements for Turkish citizens. These were the main expectations of the two sides along with other issues in the agreement such as close cooperation and financial aid to migrants. In the years following the deal, Türkiye has several times warned that it would open the borders for migrants urging the EU to do its responsibilities (TRTWORLD, 2020 March 2).

The EU has "contradictory demands on Türkiye regarding asylum and migration, asking it to be more restrictive and more humanitarian at the same time," Tolay (p.131) argues. Before migrants started to reach European borders, there was a tendency to encourage Türkiye to open its borders to newcomers saying it would contribute to peace in the region as well as to the development of European norms and values on migration. Turkish migration policy was even believed to show "an obvious trend of continuous Europeanization of Turkish norms and policies" and "gradual compliance with the standards set by the EU in terms of migration and asylum policy," (Tolay, p.137). However, dramatic changes happened following the Syrian civil war, which has deeply affected Türkiye's migration policy, relations with the EU, and other international actors. As the number of migrants has exceeded 3.5 million, the country argued that it cannot tolerate new waves of migration.

Regional developments in the Middle East following the 9/11 attacks in the US had all impacts on Türkiye's ties with the neighboring countries including the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Al Qaeda terrorism, peace processes between Israel and Palestine, political dynamics of the Middle East and instability in some countries, Iran's increasing role in the region, connection between Middle East security and international security, as well as ideological and sectarian factors between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Tocci and Walker (2012, p.35) argue that Türkiye's involvement in the Middle East has increased since the end of the Cold War "but the nature of its involvement has changed in recent years."

“Today, Türkiye presents itself as a mediating power in the region, intent on developing relations with all actors in order to promote peace and regional integration. Ankara has mediated between Israel and Syria, Israel and Hamas, Syria and Iraq, as well as within the broader Sunni and Arab world and between the United States and Iran.” (Tocci and Walker, 2012, p.36)

The authors discuss that the issue of PKK terrorism had been "a prime source of conflict between Türkiye and Syria, Türkiye and Iraq, and Türkiye and Iran," (Tocci and Walker, 2012, p.47) Türkiye regards PKK and its branches in the neighboring countries all terror groups, and thus has long disputed with Syria over its support for the PKK. “From the inception of violence in Türkiye by the PKK, Türkiye had consistently argued that Syria was the organization’s major baker,” say Tocci and Walker (p.40), adding that “the PKK’s regional networks increasingly forced Turkish foreign policy to deal with countries like Syria from an adversarial position.” Relations with Syria later improved after Damascus “changed its strategy concerning the PKK” and expatriated the group’s leader from Syria in 1998 (Tocci and Walker, p.40).

“Türkiye’s tensions with Syria began to ease in 1998 with Syria’s ouster of the P.K.K. leader Abdullah Ocalan. Syria’s recent offer to give asylum to 1,500 P.K.K. rebels if they renounce their armed conflict was another sign of improving relations,” (The New York Times, 2009 Oct. 13). In the following years, bilateral relations continued to improve producing cooperation in various fields. In 2004, Syria's President Bashar al-Assad visited Türkiye, which was followed by the visit of Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Damascus. The leaders signed various bilateral agreements and a positive atmosphere appeared between the two nations. A free-trade agreement came into effect in the same year triggering trade flows between the two countries. Expectations were that Türkiye would be a gate for Syria towards Europe and Syria would be a gate for Türkiye towards the Middle East. The following years saw even more improved relations with mutual abolishment of visas between the two countries and a High Level Strategic Cooperation Council in 2009. (Turkish Foreign Ministry, 2022b). It was after “[t]he events that erupted in Syria in March 2011” that led to changes in Türkiye’s approach to relations with Syria (Turkish Foreign Ministry, 2022a).

Soon after the start of the clashes in Syria, hundreds of civilians began to escape violence and make their ways to neighboring Türkiye. The developments led to souring relations between the two countries. “Gradually losing hope in the situation in Syria, Ankara is distancing itself from Syrian President Bashar Assad,” (Dunya, 2011 June). The following months heard harsh statements of Turkish authorities against Syrian president. They “lost confidence” in Assad’s government, (The New York Times, 2011 Aug. 28) and said Assad “could not stay in power against the will of the people,” (Anadolu Agency, 2012 May 18).

“Since the outset, the basic parameters of Türkiye’s policy with regard to the developments in Syria have been the preservation of the territorial integrity and unity of Syria, ending the bloodshed and the peaceful conclusion of the political transition process that would address the legitimate demands of the Syrian people.” (Turkish Foreign Ministry, 2022a)

The country said it has been facing serious political, security and humanitarian challenges and responsibilities caused by the conflict. In an effort to remove those challenges, the security concern in particular, the country carried out “counter-terrorism operations”. The operations were conducted “...on the basis of international law, in accordance with its right to self-defense as outlined in Article 51 of the UN Charter and the relevant Security Council resolutions on counter terrorism.” (Turkish Foreign Ministry, 2022a).

## **2. Military Operations - Euphrates Shield (2016), Olive Branch (2018), Peace Spring (2019)**

Operations that will be analyzed in this study will be briefly explained here based on the information on Turkish Foreign Ministry website so that the content can be compared to how the broadcasters covered the operations in the following research section.

### Operation Euphrates Shield (Aug. 24, 2016)

In a stated aim of rooting out IS/ Daesh presence “from the Syrian territories it borders”, Türkiye launched "Operation Euphrates Shield" on Aug. 24, 2016. “The Free

Syrian Army, supported by the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), have cleared from terrorists of over an area of 2,015 km<sup>2</sup> and neutralized 2,647 DEASH fighters.” IS/elements were weakened by the operation and the group “lost its territorial control in Syria by the end of March 2019 due to subsequent operations conducted by the Global Coalition.”

#### Operation Olive Branch (Jan. 20, 2018)

Around one and a half year later, the Turkish Armed Forces and the Free Syrian Army supported by Türkiye launched “Operation Olive Branch” on Jan. 20, 2018. The objectives of the operation were “to ensure our border security, to neutralize terrorists in Afrin and to liberate the local population from the oppression and tyranny of terrorists.”

Different from the previous operation, the country points to the “threat posed by the PKK/YPG terrorist elements located in Afrin” and the “presence of DEASH elements in Afrin” together. It says “the lives and properties of the local population as well as to our citizens living in the bordering Turkish provinces escalated due to harassment fires and attacks.” “Afrin was liberated as of 18 March 2018. In less than two months, an area of approximately 2,000 km<sup>2</sup> was cleared from PKK/YPG and DEASH elements.”

#### Operation Peace Spring (Oct. 9, 2019)

This operation focuses mainly on the “the ongoing PKK/YPG threat and the inability of the U.S. to effectively address our legitimate security concerns.” “In order to eliminate the PKK/YPG threat to its national security, Türkiye held talks with the U.S. on the establishment of a safe zone in the Syrian territories neighboring Turkish border between February and September 2019.” Although the sides reached during the talks “a preliminary understanding on the safe zone,” Türkiye says “the commitments undertaken by the U.S. have not been fulfilled.” Therefore, the country with the support of the Syrian National Army launched "Operation Peace Spring" on Oct. 9, 2019. Both the U.S. and the Russian Federation “accepted the legitimacy of the operation”, according to the foreign ministry statement.

Reading through all the three operations, the country sets the following as the objectives of its military operations:

- to eliminate the terror threat to national security,
- to eradicate Daesh/IS presence from Syrian territories,
- to eliminate PKK/YPG threat
- to contribute to the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity and unity,
- to liberate the local population from the oppression and tyranny of the terrorists
- to lay the ground for the dignified, safe and voluntary returns of displaced Syrians

“Türkiye has been conveying to the U.S. and the Russian Federation that it reserves the right to self-defense against threats and attacks by terrorist elements,” (Turkish Foreign Ministry, 2022a). The country says both the US and Russia have accepted the legitimate security concerns of Türkiye. The country also denies “baseless allegations” including that the operations lead to a humanitarian crisis, weaken the fight against Daesh/IS elements, disrupt the political process in Syria and change the demographic structure in the region.



# **CHAPTER 4**

## **RESEARCH**

Chapter four, the research section, is divided into two main parts. The first part “Methodology” describes in detail what I did in this study and which materials I used as instruments. It gives a precise description of the data collection and data analysis procedures. The second part “Findings and Discussion” presents the results in tables, which are all followed by the interpretation and discussion of the findings.

### **A. METHODOLOGY**

#### **1. Research Method**

This study uses a combined method of qualitative and quantitative research, which is aimed at describing and understanding of a case or several cases. Unlike quantitative research, the study is not interested in measuring frequencies or explaining regularities. The materials are thus not numbers and frequencies as in quantitative research, but texts are used as data.

The research is a case study, which is one of the most commonly used study designs in qualitative research. The case study, as Kumar (2011, p.123) explains, “is of immense relevance when the focus of a study is on extensively exploring and understanding rather than confirming and quantifying.” He says that a case study “provides an overview and in-depth understanding of a case(s), process and interactional dynamics within a unit of study but cannot claim to make any generalizations to a population beyond cases similar to the one studied.”

A case could be anything, a person, a group, a country, or an event, which will become “the basis of a thorough, holistic and in-depth exploration of the aspect(s) that you want to find out about,” (Kumar, 2011, p.123). In this study, three European broadcasters’ (BBC, DW, and France24) framing of Türkiye’s Syria operations are the cases that are all considered as single entities. The study on these cases is expected to provide insight into the events, i.e. Türkiye’s operations in Syria.

## 2. Data Collection

Europe has dozens of news agencies, as well as hundreds of newspapers, TV channels, and radio stations. In this study, the media organizations are limited to three broadcasters: Germany-based DW, France-based France 24, and UK-based BBC World, all of which cover international news. As Internet is currently the most popular form of audio-visual consumption, online broadcasting of those media organizations was chosen instead of the printed media, or the news agencies such as Reuters, AFP, or DPA, which indeed provide most of the content to those broadcasters. Among dozens of TV broadcasters from a total of 27 member states of the EU, the most widely known international broadcasters DW and France 24 from the two leading countries, France and Germany (also among the founding EU members) were chosen. As for the BBC World News, the broadcaster is one of the world's earliest media companies and currently the largest broadcast organization with dozens of foreign news bureaus and hundreds of journalists abroad. Although the UK, which joined the union in the first enlargement of 1973, left the union on Jan. 31, 2020 (Brexit), the country is still a leading European country.

For the data collection process, the internet search engine Google was used. Operation name [i.e. Euphrates Shield] was the key word entry searched in the Internet for each separate broadcaster. `site:bbc.com "Euphrates Shield"` or `site:dw.com "Euphrates Shield"` or `site:france24.com "Euphrates Shield"` all brought out the related news from the broadcasters. Among all the listed news stories, the first 5 stories by date published by each broadcaster immediately after the related operation began were selected and analyzed. The same procedure was carried out for each operation. Five stories about each operation by a single broadcaster makes a total of 45 stories. The study is limited to news articles, thus filtering out timelines, opinion pieces, question & answers, photos, videos, and photo-video captions. All the news stories on the web pages of the analyzed broadcasters also included various photos embedded in the news texts. However, the use of visuals as framing resources would need separate research. In my analysis, I also did not take into account the length of stories, and the total number of related stories in each broadcaster (i.e. which of those broadcasters covered more stories than the other) as well as other factors such as the selection and placement of

quotations. A total of 45 news texts from chosen media organizations were analyzed with content analysis to find out how Türkiye's military operations in Syria were framed. The coding procedure was conducted by hand and findings were presented in tables.

### **3. Data Analysis**

This study uses qualitative content analysis to find out how the selected European broadcasters frame Türkiye's Syria operations. Content analysis provides a detailed and case-focused description instead of drawing generalizations and producing precise predictions for the future publications of the news broadcasters. Content analysis can be more qualitative or more quantitative in nature depending on the research question and what the researcher wants to focus on, Hermann (2008, p.167) says. "Anything that is intended to communicate a message is usable as material for content analysis," according to Hermann (p.152), including political leaders' speeches, interviews, letters, books, films, TV programs, newspaper articles, and party manifestoes.

For this study, news stories published online by selected broadcasters are chosen as the materials. Although there is available computer-assisted software to conduct content analysis to reduce time and effort, I preferred to do it manually both because the number of news pieces was manageable by hand and because I thought I could work on the hard copy more effectively. Using this method, I systematically worked through each news piece. I already had a list of categories that I thought would emerge in the news pieces, but most of the categories emerged from data as I read through each story. By coding the categories and counting them later, the content in news pieces from each broadcaster was analyzed in a qualitative way.

I followed "The List of Frames Approach" by Tankard (2008), who says his approach "makes the rules for identifying frames explicit and takes the subjectivity out of frame identification," (p.102). Here are the steps he recommended:

- Make the range of possible frames explicit,
- Put the various possible frames in a manifest list,
- Develop keywords, catchphrases and symbols to help detect each frame,
- Use the frames in the list as categories in a content analysis, and
- Get coders to code articles or other kinds of content into these categories.

Following the steps he recommended, I analyzed the content in a systematic way and double-checked the way I followed to increase the reliability of the results.

## **B. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, the findings of the study will be presented in a total of five tables, each of which is followed by a discussion of the findings. First, Table 1 will show “the number of words used to refer to each operation published by the three broadcasters,” as the language used in the news texts matter as discussed earlier. Whether the operation is framed as “a military intervention”, “an offensive” or “an invasion” certainly makes a difference.

The choice of words matters. How a person, a group, an organization, or any happening is regarded is reflected by words. If, for instance, the act of an armed forces in another country is seen as an “occupation”, then it means the armed forces are accepted as an “occupier” and the land as “occupied” territories. Here is an example from Türkiye’s Anadolu News Agency, which refers to the Palestinian lands as occupied territories by Israel. The story on the remarks of Türkiye's consul general in Jerusalem is about “a series of activities in the northern occupied West Bank to highlight the Palestinian struggle and Israeli violations.” (See: Türkiye stands by Palestinians in struggle for freedom, AA, 2021) “Under international law, all Jewish settlements in occupied territories are considered illegal,” the story also says.

Table 2 will present “the number of ‘terror’-related, ‘Kurd’-related, and IS-related words used in news stories on each operation” since the words in a content that a reader or listener is exposed to affect their interpretation of the issues. As suggested by Bantimaroudis and Ban (2008, p.177) "A careful examination of word choices and the extent of their use in news coverage can reveal much about the organizing ideas, the framing choices, of the media."

Then, Tables 3, 4, and 5 will be presented. First, the news stories over Operation Euphrates Shield will be discussed looking at the frames grouped under main themes in Table 3. Then the same procedure will be applied for the other two operations, Olive Branch and Peace Spring, based on the findings presented in Table 4 and Table 5 respectively.

**Table 1. The number of words used to refer to each operation in every set of five news stories published by each broadcaster.**

Theme	Operations	Broadcasters (f)		
		BBC	DW	F24
<b>operation/ intervention / campaign</b>	E.S. - 2016	9	17	13
	O.B. - 2018	23	19	21
	P.S. - 2019	24	24	28
<b>attack / assault / aggression / offensive / onslaught</b>	E.S. - 2016	6	9	9
	O.B. - 2018	34	33	12
	P.S. - 2019	41	38	39
<b>invasion / incursion / occupation</b>	E.S. - 2016	3	2	9
	O.B. - 2018	5	1	1
	P.S. - 2019	5	4	8

Table 1 shows us that in the BBC stories, the first group of words that have rather neutral meanings were used more than the other groups of words in reference to Operation Euphrates Shield. Words “operation, intervention, or campaign” were used 9 times while only 6 words meaning “attack” and just 3 words meaning “invasion” were used in the same stories.

“Türkiye says its **intervention** is targeting both IS fighters and a Syrian Kurdish-led alliance that is attempting to advance on Jarablus.” (BBC, Aug. 24, 2016).

However, in the following two operations, Olive Branch and Peace Spring, the broadcaster used the second group of words (attack, assault, aggression, offensive, onslaught) more often than the others. In reference to Olive Branch, 34 words with a meaning of “planned military attack” were used while the number increased to 41 in Peace Spring. More precisely, “offensive” was by far the most used word in reference to Türkiye’s military operations in Syria.

“Thousands of civilians in the northern Syrian region of Afrin are reportedly trying to flee as Türkiye continues its ground **offensive**.” (BBC, Jan. 22, 2018)

“It was thought the **offensive** - Türkiye's third military operation in northern Syria in three years - would initially focus on a 100km (62-mile) stretch between Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain, a sparsely populated, mainly Arab area.” (BBC, Oct. 9, 2019)

The last group of words (invasion, incursion, or occupation), which are synonyms in the meaning of “an army’s using military force to enter and take control of another country” were rarely used in BBC stories analyzed in this study.

The pattern is almost the same in DW stories. According to the table, the first group of words (operation/ campaign/ intervention) were used more than the other groups in covering Operation Euphrates Shield. However, both in Olive Branch and Peace Spring, words in the second group (attack, assault, aggression, offensive, onslaught) were used more often than the others. Again, words with a meaning of an army’s taking control of a place (invasion, incursion, or occupation) with the hardest reference to the operation were not so much used. Below are several examples:

“Türkiye's **intervention** underlines a shift in how the Turkish government sees the Syrian civil war...” (DW, Aug. 24, 2016)

“Türkiye's air and ground **assault** against Kurdish forces in Afrin, known as "Operation Olive Branch" has opened a new front...” (DW, Jan. 25, 2018)

“Numerous governments spoke out against the **offensive** that began on Wednesday, ahead of a UN Security Council meeting on Thursday to discuss Syria.” (DW, Oct. 10, 2016)

In France24 stories, it is a bit different in that the number of words used in the second and third group are equal in stories about Operation Euphrates Shield, and the number of words in the first group is not much higher. The distribution of words in reference to the operation is more balanced when compared to the coverage of other broadcasters.

“Damascus swiftly condemned the Turkish military **operation**, with Syria’s foreign ministry calling the **incursion** a breach of its sovereignty, according to state television.” (F24, Aug. 24, 2016)

However, this is not true for the stories about operations Olive Branch and Peace Spring. As can be seen in the table, the first group of words (operation/ campaign/ intervention) were used more than the other groups in news texts related to Olive Branch while the words in the second group (attack, assault, aggression, offensive,

onslaught) were used more often than the others in texts related to Peace Spring. Overall, one can see that the last group of words were used more by France24 than other broadcasters

“The Turkish **campaign** risks further increasing tensions with NATO allies including the United States, which has supported the YPG in the fight against IS.” (F24, Jan. 21, 2018)

How the world is reacting to Türkiye's **assault** in Syria (F24, Oct. 9, 2019)

“Syria's Kurds battled to hold off a Turkish **invasion** on Thursday after air strikes and shelling launched a long-threatened operation that could reshape the country and trigger a humanitarian crisis.” (F24, Oct. 10, 2019)

**Table 2. The number of "terror"-related, "Kurd"-related, and IS-related words used in each operation published by each broadcaster.**

Theme	Operations	Broadcasters (f)		
		BBC	DW	F24
<b>terror/ terrorism/ terrorist / counter-terrorism etc.</b>	E.S. - 2016	4	5	8
	O.B. - 2018	13	10	14
	P.S. - 2019	12	8	5
<b>Kurd/ Kurdish/ Kurdistan/ pro-Kurdish/ anti-Kurdish etc.</b>	E.S. - 2016	21	60	50
	O.B. - 2018	44	50	26
	P.S. - 2019	76	51	39
<b>IS / ISIL / Islamic State / Daesh</b>	E.S. - 2016	53	33	46
	O.B. - 2018	10	8	11
	P.S. - 2019	46	25	14

Table 2 shows us that the number of terror-related words in news texts of all the three broadcasters are less in every case than the number of Kurd-related and IS-related words. This is not to suggest that a broadcaster describes a certain group as a “terror organization” or just militia, fighters, rebels and so on, although it certainly does make a difference in public perceptions, as discussed earlier, how they regard an armed group and refer to the group in the news. Here, the table shows the number of words that a reader or listener is exposed to, which will affect them while interpreting the issues.



Almost in one third of the total data, i.e. 12 out of 45 news texts, there is no single mention of the word "terror" even to describe the so-called Islamic State (IS), or ISIL, or Daesh. One of the rare sentences that refer to IS as a "terrorist group" is in a France24 story, which tells that Türkiye's operation will "undermine international efforts to fight the Islamic State terrorist group". As can be seen, the description of Islamic State as a terror group is in a quotation from Saudi Arabia foreign ministry. (France24, Oct.9, 2019)

Another France24 story with the headline "Türkiye shells Kurdish forces in northern Syria" (Aug. 25, 2016), there is no mention of terrorism although the text with over 1,000 word-count includes more than 15 mentions of IS. In the same text, there are also 14 mentions of Kurdish "militia / forces / fighters", but the story lacks Türkiye's view of those groups. It would be a safe and easy way to add that Türkiye sees those groups as terrorist organizations, which could give the reader another perspective why the country carries out those operations on its Syrian border.

Similarly, a BBC story with the headline "Syria war: Thousands flee Turkish assault on Afrin enclave" (Jan. 23, 2018), and a DW story with the headline "Turkish tanks clash with Kurd-backed forces in Syria, monitor group reports" (Aug. 27, 2016), neither refer to any group as a terrorist organization nor mention about how Türkiye sees those groups. Any reader or listener, who is engaged in these stories, will be exposed to no terror-related word, but many Kurd-related words, such as "Kurdish militia/ rebels/ fighters" in reference to those groups PKK / PYD / YPG, which Türkiye accepts as terror organizations. Among them, PKK is also on the EU terrorist list. The lack of this background will both make the story weak and will lead the reader in a certain direction while interpreting the issues.

The table also shows us that the total number of Kurd-related words in all data almost double the total number of IS-related words, which could suggest that the broadcasters regard Türkiye's operations in Syria as a Kurdish issue rather than an IS issue. That could also support the inference based on Table 3 that the broadcasters are mostly using the frame of "Türkiye's Syria operations target Kurdish militia / fighters / forces" not IS terrorists.

Findings over frames will be discussed based on three tables provided for each operation: Euphrates Shield, Olive Branch and Peace Spring. Following each table showing the number of frames used by the broadcasters, discussion will be presented with samples from the news texts under three sub-titles for each separate broadcaster. As Entman (1993, p.52) points out, one of the locations of framing in the communication process is “the text”, where frames are “manifested by the presence or absence of certain key words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgements.” Texts can make certain information more salient, which increases the possibility that the readers will receive and process the information, Entman argues.

**Table 3. Frames in BBC/ DW/ F24 news over Operation Euphrates Shield (2016)**

Themes	Categories / Frames	Broadcasters (f)		
		BBC	DW	F24
<b>Targets of Türkiye's Syria operation</b>	1. Türkiye's Syria operation targets Daesh (IS) fighters / or terrorists	4	8	8
	2. Türkiye's Syria operation targets Kurdish 'terror groups' PKK / PYD / YPG	-	1	-
	3. Türkiye's Syria operation targets Kurdish militia / fighters / forces	3	10	10
	4. Türkiye's Syria operation targets Kurds / Kurdish people / Kurdish towns	-	3	-
<b>Aims of Türkiye's Syria operation</b>	5. Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at maintaining its border security against militant groups / terror attacks.	1	-	2
	6. Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at creating a buffer zone / security zone / safe zone on the border.	2	-	-
	7. Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at stopping migrant flows and enabling safe return of Syrian refugees to their towns.	1	-	-
	8. Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at helping local population against oppression and violence.	-	-	-
<b>Supporters/ opponents of Türkiye's Syria operation</b>	9. Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during the operation against Daesh / IS.	8	2	8
	10. Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during the operation against Kurdish fighter groups / militants / PKK-PYD-YPG forces.	2	-	2
	11. Türkiye's Syria operation receives US support.	2	8	7
	12. Syrian government forces and Kurdish forces act together against Türkiye's operation.	-	-	-
	13. International actors (EU countries / USA / Russia) react negatively to Türkiye's operation.	-	-	-
<b>Effects of Türkiye's Syria operation</b>	14. Türkiye's operation destroys Syria's territorial integrity or sovereignty.	-	1	1
	15. Türkiye's operation destroys region's security and stability / or efforts to end Syrian war.	-	-	-
	16. Türkiye's operation harms Kurdish groups' gains from or battle against Daesh/ IS.	-	2	-
	17. Türkiye's operation harms international fight against Daesh / IS.	-	-	-
	18. Türkiye's operation causes Kurdish casualties / Kurdish displacement / destruction in Kurdish towns.	-	-	-
	19. Türkiye's operation causes human rights violations / displacement / civilian casualties.	-	2	4
	20. Türkiye suffers damage / casualties resulting from its Syria operation.	1	1	3
	21. Türkiye's Syria operation helps local population / or enables safe return of refugees to their towns.	-	-	-

## 1. Which frames does BBC use in covering Türkiye's Operation Euphrates Shield?

In a set of five news texts by BBC, one of the most used frames is “*Türkiye's Syria operation targets Daesh / IS fighters / or terrorists*” in terms of the operation's target, which is followed by “*Türkiye's Syria operation targets Kurdish militia / forces*”. The two frames go hand in hand in the same sentence almost all the time. Several examples will show it clearly:

“Türkiye says its intervention is targeting both IS fighters and a Syrian Kurdish-led alliance that is attempting to advance on Jarablus.” (BBC, 2016)

“Turkish forces have targeted IS inside Syria, but have also attacked Kurdish fighters in the same region.” (BBC, 2016)

“For Türkiye, the impetus was two pronged: to oust the jihadists while also preventing Kurdish fighters from filling the vacuum.” (BBC, 2016)

In these sentences, the underlined parts tell the reader that Türkiye's targets in the operation are “IS fighters” or “the jihadists” as well as “Syrian Kurdish-led alliance” or “Kurdish fighters”.

In terms of the operation's aims, BBC mostly uses the frame of “*Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at creating a buffer zone / security zone / safe zone on the border*”, which can be clearly seen in the following sentence:

“Ankara says it will push on with Operation Euphrates Shield hoping to create a de facto buffer zone close to its vulnerable border...” (BBC, 2016)

One another frame that is used quite a lot is: “*Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during operation against Daesh (IS) fighters / or terrorists.*” The following sentences are an example.

“Between nine and 12 tanks crossed the frontier, followed by pick-up trucks believed to be carrying hundreds of fighters from Turkish-backed factions of the rebel Free Syrian Army (FSA). Within hours, several of the factions involved announced they had liberated Jarablus from IS fighters.” (BBC, 2016)

**“The rebel faction is participating in a Turkish-led offensive against IS militants and Kurdish fighters along another stretch of border...” (BBC, 2016)**

A very similar frame used less often is *“Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during the operation against Kurdish fighter groups / militants / PKK-PYD-YPG forces.”* This time, the reader is told that Türkiye and Syrian opposition fight together against Kurdish groups, not IS or Daesh.

Here is a sentence, invented based on the frames mostly used by the broadcaster, which shows how BBC readers will possibly regard Türkiye’s Op. Euphrates Shield:

**Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during its operation that targets IS fighters (or terrorists) as well as Kurdish forces in the region with an aim to create a security zone on the border.**

## **2. Which frames does DW use in covering Türkiye’s Operation Euphrates Shield?**

Different from the BBC, in DW’s five news texts on Op. Euphrates Shield, the most used frame is *“Türkiye’s Syria operation target Kurdish militia /fighters / forces”*. Here are several examples to support this:

**“Türkiye’s Syria offensive aimed at Kurdish YPG”** (DW, headline, 2016). The whole story is telling the reader that “Syrian-Kurdish forces”, not Daesh/IS fighters, are the main targets of Türkiye’s operation in Syria. However, there are also sentences in the story explaining that the operation was launched against both “Islamic State” forces and Kurdish forces.

Another story with a similar headline is **“Türkiye shells Kurdish militia in Syria”** (DW, headline, 2016). Again, the story puts emphasis on Türkiye’s targeting the Kurdish forces in northern Syria. The story also suggests that Türkiye’s operation destroyed Kurdish fighters’ struggle against IS fighters. Indeed, that frame *“Türkiye’s operations harm Kurdish groups’ gains from and fight against Daesh/ IS”* is also used in DW’s stories. Several sentences will exemplify:

“Türkiye's push into Syria was announced to push back the self-styled Islamic State but also appear intent on blocking Kurdish gains.”

“Türkiye's military campaign Euphrates Shield effectively creates a barrier of tanks and troops dividing territorial gains made by Syria's Kurds.”

DW stories also use the frame of “*Türkiye’s Syria operation targets Kurds / Kurdish people / civilian residential places*” in such sentences as:

“Euphrates Shield targets IS, engages Kurds”

“Turkish forces have struck civilian homes and positions held by a Kurdish group...”

Another frequently used frame is “*Türkiye’s Syria operation receives US support*”, which can be seen in these examples:

“Türkiye rolls on with Syria operation as US confirms retreat of Syrian Kurds” (DW, headline, 2016)

“... Turkish forces, backed by the United States, have crossed the Syrian border and openly intervened against ‘Islamic State’ (IS) forces.” (DW, 2016)

“Perhaps seeking to placate Türkiye, US Vice President Joe Biden said during a Wednesday visit to Ankara that the YPG had been instructed to remain east of Euphrates River or lose US military support.” (DW, 2016)

Here is a sentence, invented based on the frames mostly used by the broadcaster, which shows how DW readers will possibly regard Türkiye’s Op. Euphrates Shield:

Türkiye’s military intervention into Syria targets Kurdish forces in the region, but also IS fighters (or terrorists), as well as civilian residential places held by Kurdish fighters, which sometimes cause civilian casualties. Türkiye’s intervention in Syria gets clear support from the United States.

### **3. Which frames does France24 use in covering Türkiye’s Operation Euphrates Shield?**

The most used frames by France24 over this operation are: “*Türkiye’s Syria operation targets Daesh / IS fighters / or terrorists*” and “*Türkiye’s Syria operation*

*target Kurdish militia / fighters / forces*". The broadcaster uses two frames almost equally, either in separate sentences or in a single one. Several examples will show it clearly:

**"Last month, Ankara launched an ambitious military offensive in northern Syria dubbed "Euphrates Shield", sending in tanks and special forces to support opposition fighters in a bid to remove IS fighters and Kurdish militia forces from its frontier."**

**"The Turkish army on Wednesday launched the two-pronged offensive against Islamic State (IS) group jihadists but also Syrian Kurdish militia detested by Ankara, sending in dozens of tanks and hundreds of troops."**

**"Turkish troops fired on U.S.-backed Kurdish militia fighters in northern Syria on Thursday, highlighting the complications of an incursion meant to secure the border region against both Islamic State and Kurdish advances."**

The underlined parts tell the reader that Türkiye's operation target "IS fighters" and "Kurdish militia". Except for one sentence in the whole set of five stories, there is no mention of "terror groups" as Türkiye's targets in reference to forces of both Daesh and Kurdish groups. That sentence uses the phrase "terror groups" in quotation marks and gives reference to Türkiye's state-based Anadolu news agency.

**"Anadolu agency reported that the army had carried out strikes against a weapons arsenal and a command post belonging to 'terror groups'." (France24, 2016)**

In several sentences, the broadcaster frames the operation's aim as *"maintaining its border security against terror attacks"*. Another frame used widely is *"Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during operation against Daesh (IS) fighters / or terrorists."* In several sentences, that frame appears together with the one *"Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during the operation against Kurdish fighter groups / militants / PKK-PYD-YPG forces."* The following sentence is an example:

**"By supporting the rebels, mainly Arabs and Turkmen fighting under the loose banner of the Free Syrian Army, Türkiye is hoping to push out Islamic State militants and check the advance of U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters."**

One of the five stories focuses heavily on civilian casualties caused by Türkiye's operation. The story starts with the headline **'Civilians killed' as Türkiye presses Syria offensive (France24, 2016)**, which clearly uses the frame of *"Türkiye's operations cause civilian casualties"*. In the story, there are sentences explaining the reader that Turkish air strikes killed dozens of people in areas captured from Kurdish militia. The same story also tells about the death of a Turkish soldier as the first confirmed Turkish fatality in the operation, thus using the frame of *"Türkiye suffers damage / casualties from shelling on border towns - following its Syria operations."*

Another widely used frame is *"Türkiye's Syria operation receives US support"*, which can be seen in these sentences:

**"US Special Forces to back Turkish troops in Syria" (France24, headline, 2016)**

**"U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry told Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu by phone on Thursday that YPG fighters were retreating to the east side of the Euphrates, as Türkiye has demanded, foreign ministry sources in Ankara said." (France24, 2016)**

Here is a short story, invented based on the frames mostly used by the broadcaster, which shows how France24 readers will possibly regard Türkiye's Op. Euphrates Shield:

**Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during a military offensive that targets Kurdish forces as well as IS fighters (or terrorists) in the region with an aim to maintain border security. The intervention also receives US support. However, the operation causes civilian casualties in areas held by Kurdish militia.**



**Table 4. Frames in BBC / DW / F24 news over Operation Olive Branch (2018)**

Themes	Categories / Frames	Broadcasters (f)		
		BBC	DW	F24
<b>Targets of Türkiye's Syria operation</b>	1. Türkiye's Syria operation targets Daesh / IS fighters / or terrorists	1	-	-
	2. Türkiye's Syria operation targets Kurdish 'terror groups' PKK / PYD / YPG	2	3	2
	3. Türkiye's Syria operation targets Kurdish militia / fighters / forces	13	10	9
	4. Türkiye's Syria operation targets Kurds / Kurdish people / Kurdish towns	-	2	-
<b>Aims of Türkiye's Syria operation</b>	5. Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at maintaining its border security against militant groups / terror attacks.	-	-	-
	6. Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at creating a buffer zone / security zone / safe zone on the border.	4	1	1
	7. Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at stopping migrant flows and enabling safe return of Syrian refugees to their towns.	-	-	-
	8. Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at helping local population against oppression and violence.	-	-	-
<b>Supporters / opponents of Türkiye's Syria operation</b>	9. Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during the operation against Daesh / IS.	-	-	-
	10. Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during the operation against Kurdish fighter groups / militants / PKK-PYD-YPG forces.	10	4	6
	11. Türkiye's Syria operation creates tension with the US.	3	3	6
	12. Syrian government forces and Kurdish forces act together against Türkiye's operation.	-	-	-
	13. International actors (EU countries / USA / Russia) react negatively to Türkiye's operation.	4	1	2
<b>Effects of Türkiye's Syria operation</b>	14. Türkiye's operation destroys Syria's territorial integrity or sovereignty.	1	-	-
	15. Türkiye's operation destroys region's security and stability / or efforts to end Syrian war.	-	1	-
	16. Türkiye's operation harms Kurdish groups' gains from or battle against Daesh/ IS.	-	-	-
	17. Türkiye's operation harms international fight against Daesh / IS.	-	-	-
	18. Türkiye's operation causes Kurdish casualties / Kurdish displacement / destruction in Kurdish towns.	-	-	-
	19. Türkiye's operation causes human rights violations / displacement / civilian casualties.	10	2	7
	20. Türkiye suffers damage / casualties resulting from its Syria operation.	5	2	7
	21. Türkiye's Syria operation helps local population / or enables safe return of refugees to their towns.	-	-	-

Before moving on with the discussion on Table 4 (Op. Olive Branch, 2018), one thing needs to be pointed out. Frame number 11 in Table 3 “*Türkiye’s Syria operation receives US support*” was changed in Table 4 to “*Türkiye’s Syria operation creates tension with the US*”. The news texts of the three broadcasters on Op. Olive Branch framed the operation as something that led to strained relations between the two NATO allies, US and Türkiye, while they previously used a frame of US support to Türkiye’s 2016 operation. That is a clear change of framing.

#### **4. Which frames does BBC use in covering Türkiye’s Operation Olive Branch?**

In terms of the target of the operation, BBC widely uses the frame of “*Türkiye’s Syria operation targets Kurdish militia / fighters / forces*” – a clear difference from the 2016 operation, which was rather regarded as an operation targeting Daesh / IS forces as well as Kurdish militia. Here are a few examples:

**“The military operation launched on Saturday, ‘Olive Branch’, is aimed at moving Kurdish forces from Afrin.” (BBC, 2018)**

**“President Erdogan vowed on Sunday to crush the Kurdish fighters in Syria, as well as the PKK.” (BBC, 2018)**

**“...Türkiye launched an offensive to drive Kurdish militia out of the Afrin region on Saturday.” (BBC, 2018)**

BBC also says “*Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during the operation against Kurdish fighter groups*”. That is another big change, because the Türkiye-backed Syrian opposition was framed in the 2016 operation as a supporter of Türkiye in the fight against Daesh / IS, not against Kurdish fighters. So, now the two are fighting Kurdish groups together, according to BBC.

**“Turkish ground troops, assisted by rebels from the Free Syrian Army (FSA), crossed into northern Syria on Sunday as part of its offensive - called "Operation Olive Branch" - to push out the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG).” (BBC, 2018)**

**“About 10,000 Syrian rebels are reportedly taking part in the offensive, while Turkish officials estimate that there are between 8,000 and 10,000 YPG fighters in Afrin.” (BBC, 2018)**

By reporting what the then Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said, BBC gives the operation’s aim as *“creating a safe zone on the border.”* Here is the sentence that appeared almost with no change in four out of five BBC texts:

**“Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said the aim was to establish a 30km (19-mile) "safe zone" deep inside Syria.” (BBC, 2018)**

Instead of a supporter of Türkiye’s operation, which was the case in 2016, this time the US is framed as “a NATO ally that is opposed to Türkiye’s operation against Kurdish militia”. Thus, the operation is framed as *“creating tension with the US.”* The United States is not the only opponent, there are other *“International actors (EU countries / or Russia) reacting negatively to Türkiye's operation.”*

**“Ankara has condemned the US for supporting the YPG and this latest development in the Syrian civil war puts Türkiye on a collision course with its Nato ally.” (BBC, 2018)**

**“Moscow will demand Türkiye halt its military operation at the UN meeting...” (BBC, 2018)**

**“Politicians in Germany, meanwhile, reacted angrily to Türkiye's use of German-made Leopard tanks. The chairman of the parliamentary foreign affairs committee said Germany should not carry out a planned upgrade of the tanks for its Nato ally.” (BBC, 2018)**

Another frame that did not appear in the previous operation but was used quite a lot in this one is *“Türkiye’s operation causes human rights violations / displacement / civilian casualties.”* All of the stories tell something about the wounded, killed, or displaced civilians in Türkiye’s Syria operation without specifying if they were Kurdish, Arab, or with another ethnicity. Here are a few examples:

**“Syria war: Thousands flee Turkish assault on Afrin enclave” (BBC, headline, 2018)**

**“An estimated 5,000 people have been displaced by clashes between Turkish-led forces and Kurdish fighters in north-western Syria, the UN says.” (BBC, 2018)**

**“Twenty-four civilians had also died, it added - 22 in Turkish air and artillery strikes, and two as a result of Kurdish fire.” (BBC, 2018)**

There are also several sentences that mention Turkish casualties, both civilians and soldiers, thus using the frame of *“Türkiye suffers damage / casualties resulting from its Syria operation.”*

The following short story is an invented one based on the frames mostly used by the broadcaster, which shows how BBC readers will possibly regard Türkiye’s Op. Olive Branch:

**During an offensive in Afrin, Syria, Turkish troops and allied Syrian rebels fight against Kurdish militia with a stated aim of creating a safe zone along the border. The offensive left many civilians wounded, killed, or displaced, while Türkiye also suffered casualties from shelling on border towns. Türkiye’s move made relations with its NATO ally US strained and led to negative reactions from other international actors including France, Germany and Russia.**

## **5. Which frames does DW use in covering Türkiye’s Operation Olive Branch?**

*“Türkiye’s Syria operation targets Kurdish militia / fighters / forces”* is how DW framed Op. Olive Branch in terms of its targets. Compared to how the broadcaster framed the 2016 operation, which was regarded as both against the “Islamic State” forces and “Kurdish forces”, this time the reader is told that Türkiye targets only Kurdish fighters in Syria. Example sentences from a set of five DW texts are as follows:

**“The Turkish offensive on Kurdish militias in the Syrian border city Afrin has raised the question of how the Assad regime will react.” (DW, 2018)**

**“The Turkish army said the land and air assault aimed to hit positions held by the People’s Protection Units (YPG) and “Islamic State” (IS) militants. However, IS is not known to have a presence in Afrin.” (DW, 2018)**

**“...its latest offensive in Syria aimed at uprooting the Peoples' Protection Units (YPG), a Kurdish militia, on its southern border.” (DW, 2018)**

Any DW reader / listener who is exposed to the sentences above will possibly understand that there are no Daesh / IS forces in the region where Türkiye carries out its operation, and that the main targets of the attacks are Kurdish fighters. In these sentences, as well as many others, YPG and other Kurdish groups are framed as “Kurdish militia”.

However, a few sentences also give background to how Türkiye sees those Kurdish groups. So, it would not be wrong to say that several sentences frame the 2018 operation as targeting “*Kurdish ‘terror groups’ PKK / PYD / YPG*”. For instance, **“On Saturday, Türkiye launched a cross-border offensive into Syria in a bid to crush the YPG, which it regards as a terrorist group.”** The reader is also provided with Turkish context immediately after the group’s name is mentioned – not somewhere else in the story.

Another frame used by DW is “*Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during the operation against Kurdish fighter groups*”, which can be clearly seen in these examples:

**“Turkish warplanes on Saturday carried out airstrikes against Kurdish positions in the northwestern city of Afrin as Turkish-backed Syrian rebel fighters launched a ground offensive.” (DW, 2018)**

**“Roughly 25,000 FSA militants have joined Türkiye's offensive against Kurdish forces...” (DW, 2018)**

Similar to BBC’s framing Türkiye-US relations amid the operation, DW also frames that “*Türkiye’s Syria operation creates tension with the US.*” **“The onslaught has stirred diplomatic tensions between NATO allies Türkiye and the United States.” (DW, 2018)**

Not more than several times, the broadcaster also uses the two frames “*Türkiye’s operation causes human rights violations / displacement / civilian casualties*”, and “*Türkiye suffers damage / casualties resulting from its Syria operation.*” Examples:

**“In addition, such a move would aggravate the plight of the at least 800,000 civilians in the city, who are already suffering amid a poor humanitarian situation.**

**“A missile also hit the Turkish border town of Reyhanli, killing one person and wounding more than 30, the town's mayor told broadcaster NTV.”**

Here is a short story invented based on the frames mostly used by the broadcaster, which shows how DW readers will possibly regard Türkiye's Op. Olive Branch:

**Türkiye launched an assault in Syria, where Turkish-backed Syrian rebel fighters also participate in the fight against Kurdish militia. Although Türkiye says they also target Daesh / IS forces, there is currently not any IS presence in the region. The assault causes civilian casualties and Türkiye itself also suffers from attacks on border towns. Türkiye-US relations also turned sour over the onslaught.**

## **6. Which frames does France24 use in covering Türkiye's Operation Olive Branch?**

Like the BBC and DW, France 24 also frames this operation as *“targeting Kurdish militia / fighters / forces”*. Again, the broadcaster regarded the previous operation as targeting both “IS fighters” and “Kurdish militia”, but this time there is no mention of Daesh / IS forces as targets of Türkiye. In several sentences out of five texts, the reader is provided with background that Türkiye sees those Kurdish fighters as terror groups. The rest refers to those groups as “Kurdish fighters battling the Islamic State.”

**“Turkish jets pound Kurdish militia in new Syria offensive” (F24, headline, 2018)**

**“...Ankara launched an offensive against Kurdish militia in Syria's Afrin region.” (F24, 2018)**

**“...Turkish ground troops entered northern Syria to push an offensive against the Kurdish Peoples' Protection Units (YPG), which Ankara considers a terror group.” (F24, 2018)**

**“... pressing Türkiye to halt its offensive against the Kurdish militia who have been battling jihadists.”**

*“Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during the operation against Kurdish fighter groups / militants / PKK-PYD-YPG forces”* is another frame used by France 24 in the stories over Op. Olive Branch. See the following two sentences:

**“Türkiye's army and rebel allies battled US-backed Kurdish militia in Syria's Afrin province on Sunday, stepping up a two-day-old campaign against YPG fighters that has opened a new front in Syria's civil war.”** (F24, 2018)

**“The operation, launched on January 20, sees Türkiye providing air and ground support to Syrian opposition fighters in an offensive against Kurdish militia in northwestern Syria.”** (F24, 2018)

Almost equal in numbers to the framing of Syrian rebels as supporters of Türkiye’s operation, the broadcaster frames the US as an opponent of its Syria operation. In other words, Op. Olive Branch led to strained relations between the two NATO allies, US and Türkiye, due to their different positions with the Kurdish armed groups.

**“Turkish relations with the United States have soured over Ankara's stance on the YPG -- which Ankara says is a "terrorist" offshoot of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).”** (F24, 2018)

**“The Turkish campaign risks further increasing tensions with NATO allies including the United States, which has supported the YPG in the fight against IS.”** (F24, 2018)

The frame of *“Türkiye’s operation causes human rights violations / displacement / civilian casualties”* is used quite a lot. Indeed, one of the five stories focuses heavily on civilian casualties caused by Türkiye’s 2018 operation. The story starts with the headline **“More civilians killed as Türkiye pursues Syria campaign”** and tells the reader that Türkiye’s offensive against Kurdish forces resulted in civilian casualties. That is exactly the same way how France24 framed the previous operation in 2016 with almost the same headline: **‘Civilians killed’ as Türkiye presses Syria offensive**. The frame can be clearly seen in the following sentences:

**“Clashes and air strikes again hit Syria's border region of Afrin on Monday, with new civilian casualties reported as Türkiye pursued an offensive against Kurdish forces.” (F24, 2018)**

**“At the main hospital in Afrin, a pick-up truck pulled up on Sunday carrying wounded civilians, including children in blood-stained clothes, who were rushed inside for treatment.” (F24, 2018)**

Another single story focuses on Turkish casualties in the operation thus using the frame *“Türkiye suffers damage / casualties resulting from its Syria operation.”* The story starts with the headline **“Rockets from Syria sow despair in Turkish border town”** and gives a detailed description of Turkish locals living on the border area.

**“A 17-year-old girl, Fatma Avlar, was pulled dead from the rubble, a victim of the latest strikes on the Turkish border town of Reyhanli since Ankara launched an offensive against Kurdish militia in Syria's Afrin region.”**

Here is a short story, invented based on the frames mostly used by the broadcaster, which shows how France24 readers will possibly regard Türkiye's Op. Olive Branch:

**Türkiye's military intervention in Syria, supported by Türkiye-backed Free Syrian Army, targets Kurdish fighter groups / militants / PKK-PYD-YPG forces. The operation creates tension with Türkiye's NATO ally, the US. There are civilian casualties in areas held by Kurdish militia while Türkiye also suffers from damage and casualties in border towns resulting from its operation.**



**Table 5. Frames in BBC / DW / F24 news over Operation Peace Spring (2019)**

Themes	Categories / Frames	Broadcasters (f)		
		BBC	DW	F24
<b>Targets of Türkiye's Syria operation</b>	1. Türkiye's Syria operation targets Daesh / IS fighters / or terrorists	-	1	1
	2. Türkiye's Syria operation targets Kurdish 'terror groups' PKK / PYD / YPG	1	-	-
	3. Türkiye's Syria operation targets Kurdish militia / fighters / forces	3	4	5
	4. Türkiye's Syria operation targets Kurds / Kurdish people / Kurdish towns	-	1	2
<b>Aims of Türkiye's Syria operation</b>	5. Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at maintaining its border security against militant groups / terror attacks.	-	-	-
	6. Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at creating a buffer zone / security zone / safe zone on the border.	9	1	5
	7. Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at stopping migrant flows and enabling safe return of Syrian refugees to their towns.	8	1	3
	8. Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at helping local population against oppression and violence.	-	-	-
<b>Supporters / opponents of Türkiye's Syria operation</b>	9. Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during the operation against Daesh / IS.	-	1	-
	10. Türkiye and Syrian opposition act together during the operation against Kurdish fighter groups / militants / PKK-PYD-YPG forces.	2	1	2
	11. US opens way for Türkiye's Syria operation by pulling out its troops from border.	2	5	2
	12. Syrian government forces and Kurdish forces act together against Türkiye's operation.	4	2	-
	13. International actors (EU countries / USA / Russia) react negatively to Türkiye's operation.	2	8	9
<b>Effects of Türkiye's Syria operation</b>	14. Türkiye's operation destroys Syria's territorial integrity or sovereignty.	-	-	-
	15. Türkiye's operation destroys region's security and stability / or efforts to end Syrian war.	-	-	-
	16. Türkiye's operation harms Kurdish groups' gains from or battle against Daesh / IS.	5	4	-
	17. Türkiye's operation harms international fight against Daesh / IS.	-	-	-
	18. Türkiye's operation causes Kurdish casualties / Kurdish displacement / destruction in Kurdish towns.	2	-	-
	19. Türkiye's operation causes human rights violations / displacement / civilian casualties.	5	6	5
	20. Türkiye suffers damage / casualties resulting from its Syria operation.	1	1	2
21. Türkiye's Syria operation helps local population / or enables safe return of refugees to their towns.	-	-	-	

Table 5 (Op. Peace Spring, 2019) includes a tiny change that needs an explanation. Frame number 11 in Table 3 was “*Türkiye’s Syria operation receives US support*” and it was changed in Table 4 to “*Türkiye’s Syria operation creates tension with the US*”. Again, it was changed to “*US opens way for Türkiye’s Syria operation by pulling out its troops from border*” in Table 5. The change was made instead of adding new frames in each table in an effort to keep the tables as similar as possible. In terms of Türkiye-US relations over the analyzed military operations, news texts of the three broadcasters on Op. Peace Spring argued in various ways that Türkiye’s operation came following the then US President Donald Trump’s decision to withdraw forces from Syria. The same broadcasters framed the Op. Olive Branch (2018) as something that led to strained relations between the two NATO allies, US and Türkiye, while they previously used a frame of US support to Türkiye’s Op. Euphrates Shield (2016). Discussion now will continue with how the three broadcasters frame Türkiye’s latest operation in Syria.

## **7. Which frames does BBC use in covering Türkiye’s Operation Peace Spring?**

Op. Peace Spring is framed by BBC as targeting “Kurdish militia / fighters / forces” that can be clearly seen in several sentences including this one:

**“Türkiye’s military launched a cross-border operation against Kurdish-led forces in Syria in early October, after US troops who had been allied to the Kurds withdrew.” (BBC, 2019)**

However, in a set of five news texts by BBC, the focus is not on the target of the operation but on the aims and effects of the operation. Two frames over the operation’s aim were almost equally used by BBC. “*Türkiye’s Syria operation is aimed at creating a buffer zone / security zone / safe zone on the border*” and “*Türkiye’s Syria operation is aimed at stopping migrant flows and enabling safe return of Syrian refugees to their towns*”. Most of the time, the two frames appear in a single sentence.

**“The Turkish government plans to send two million of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees living on its soil to the ‘safe zone’.” (BBC, 2019)**

**“Türkiye is determined to secure President Erdogan's buffer zone, which simply can't be done without a significant, long-term military operation.” (BBC, 2019)**

**“This [resettlement and rehabilitation of Syrian refugees] seems to be a big part of what President Erdogan is trying to achieve.” (BBC, 2019)**

**“When the US declared the defeat of IS in March, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan pushed it to create a 'safe zone' clear of YPG fighters in north-eastern Syria where refugees could be resettled.” (BBC, 2019)**

In terms of supporters and opponents of Türkiye's Syria operation, the most widely used frame is *“Syrian government forces and Kurdish forces act together against Türkiye's operation”* which was not used at all in the previous two operations. On Op. Peace Spring, the stories tell the reader that Kurdish fighters and Syrian army fight together against Turkish attacks. Here are some examples:

**“After four days of fighting, the Kurds agreed a deal with the Syrian government for the Syrian army to be deployed on the border to help repel the Turkish assault.” (BBC, 2019)**

**“On 9 October, Turkish troops and allied Syrian rebels attacked. Four days later, the SDF turned to the Syrian government and its backer, Russia, for help. They agreed to deploy Syrian soldiers to stop the advance.” (BBC, 2019)**

What is different from the previous operation is also how BBC framed the effects of the operation. While the broadcaster heavily framed the 2018 operation as causing *“human rights violations / displacement / civilian casualties”* the latest operation is framed as *“harming Kurdish groups' territorial gains from or fight against Daesh/ IS”* in addition to causing human rights violations and civilian casualties.

**“On 11 October, the SDF said five IS militants had escaped from a prison in Qamishli after Turkish shelling nearby and that a car bomb had exploded next to the wall of a prison in Hassakeh, causing damage.” (BBC, 2019)**

**“The Kurdish forces have emphasised almost frantically that the hard-won gains in their long battle against IS are now being put at risk.” (BBC, 2019)**

**“The Kurds are basically saying to the West: the war that we fought on your behalf is at risk because of what Türkiye wants to do.” (BBC, 2019)**

The following story is an invented one based on the frames mostly used by the broadcaster, which shows how BBC readers will possibly regard Türkiye's Op. Peace Spring:

**The latest Turkish offensive in northern Syria targets Kurdish forces and hits territories held by Kurdish fighters. According to Turkish authorities, the operation has two objectives: To create a safe zone on the border and to enable safe return of Syrian refugees to their towns. However, the offensive left many civilians wounded, killed, or displaced, and harmed Kurdish groups' fight against Daesh/ IS. As a result, the Kurds made a deal with the Syrian government for the Syrian army to be deployed on the border to help stop the advance of Turkish armed forces.**

#### **8. Which frames does DW use in covering Türkiye's Operation Peace Spring?**

Like BBC, DW texts also frame Op. Peace Spring as targeting "*Kurdish militia / fighters / forces*" not Daesh / IS forces or terrorists. Several sentences will exemplify:

**"... Turkish military has killed 109 'terrorists' referencing Syrian Kurdish fighters." (DW, 2019)**

**"Türkiye has begun an assault on US-backed Kurdish fighters in northeast Syria that many fear will destabilize the region." (DW, 2019)**

**"Türkiye launched a long-threatened military operation in northeastern Syria Wednesday targeting a US-backed, Kurdish-led militia alliance..." (DW, 2019)**

The last two sentences are taken from a text whose title is clearly suggesting that Türkiye targets Kurdish people as an ethnic group with its operation.

**"Türkiye unleashes offensive against Kurds in northern Syria" (DW, headline, 2019)**

The headline frames "Kurds" as target of the operation, instead of saying Kurdish militia, fighters, or forces. Such framing, especially in the headline, will most possibly make the reader be conditioned to think that Türkiye's war is against Kurdish civilian population. The effect on the reader could be developing a negative attitude towards Türkiye, which certainly needs another detailed study on reader attitudes.

Another such headline that puts Türkiye and Kurds in hostile positions is:

**“Airstrikes, shelling as Türkiye and Kurds clash in Syria” (DW, headline, 2019).**

Again, the use of “Kurds” as an ethnic group instead of Kurdish fighters or armed forces – whether deliberately or not – could create a situation in reader’s mind that Türkiye targets the civilian Kurdish population for some reason.

In a set of five DW texts over the operation, there is almost no mention of the operation’s aims. The stories mostly focus on the opponents of the operation as well as its effects. The most used frame is *“International actors react negatively to Türkiye's operation.”* Here are some sentences showing the operation framed in that way:

**“A split UN Security Council on Thursday failed to agree on Türkiye's offensive in northeast Syria, with European members urging a halt to military action.” (DW, 2019)**

**“The meeting was called at the request of the body's European members – Germany, France, the UK, Belgium, and Poland, all of which had expressed alarm at Türkiye's move.” (DW, 2019)**

**“Several other EU leaders also spoke out against the attack.” (DW, 2019)**

**“Numerous governments spoke out against the offensive that began on Wednesday, ahead of a UN Security Council meeting on Thursday to discuss Syria.” (DW, 2019)**

Neither a supporter nor an opponent of Türkiye’s 2019 operation is the US, which is framed by DW as *“opening way for Türkiye’s Syria operation by pulling out its troops from border”*. There are some sentences explaining that Türkiye’s operation came following Trump’s decision to withdraw forces from Syria.

**“Despite Washington's criticism, the US withdrawal from Syria is widely seen as a green light to Türkiye to move against the Kurds.” (DW, 2019)**

**“The Turkish operation began after US President Donald Trump announced on Sunday that US troops would pull out from the border region, essentially allowing NATO ally Türkiye to begin military operations against the US-backed force of 60,000 fighters that has led the battle against IS.” (DW, 2019)**

As the underlined parts clearly show, DW frames that US made it possible for Türkiye to carry out its latest operation in Syria.

As for the effects of the operation, the two frames are widely used: *“Türkiye’s operation harms Kurdish groups’ territorial gains from or fight against Daesh/ IS”* and *“Türkiye’s operation causes human rights violations / displacement / civilian casualties.”*

**“Dozens of Kurdish fighters, several Turkish soldiers, and at least 10 civilians have been killed since Türkiye began its operation earlier this week. Hundreds of IS supporters have been freed as the Kurds have had to focus on protecting their towns and cities. The UN estimates that more than 100,000 people have had to flee their homes.” (DW, 2019)**

The underlined parts tell the reader that in addition to military casualties, civilians were also killed in Turkish operation, which led to the displacement of thousands of locals. Moreover, it is framed that Kurdish fight against IS / Daesh was weakened and they had to free hundreds of IS supporters under arrest in order to better fight against Turkish attacks.

The following story is an invented one based on the frames mostly used by the broadcaster, which shows how DW readers will possibly regard Türkiye’s Op. Peace Spring:

**A number of international actors, including EU member states and some US lawmakers have spoken against Türkiye’s offensive in Syria, which targets Kurdish fighters. The decision of Donald Trump to pull out its forces from the Syrian border seems to have opened the way for Türkiye’s military operation that put US-backed Kurdish forces in a difficult position against IS / Daesh. The offensive also caused many civilian casualties as well as leaving many locals displaced.**

## 9. Which frames does France24 use in covering Türkiye's Operation Peace Spring?

Just like the BBC and DW, texts in France24 also mostly frame Op. Peace Spring as targeting “*Kurdish militia / fighters / forces*” with several exceptions that frame the operation as “*targeting Kurdish people / civilian residential places*” that can be seen in the sentences provided below:

**“World governments reacted with concern Wednesday after Türkiye launched a military offensive on Kurdish forces in northern Syria...” (France24, 2019)**

**“The two areas lie just across the border from the Syrian towns of Tal Abyad and Ras Al-Ain, which have been the focus of Türkiye's operation against Syrian Kurdish forces since it was launched on Wednesday.” (France24, 2019)**

**“Air strikes targeting ‘civilian areas’ causing ‘huge panic’” (France24, 2019)**

**“Türkiye launches air and ground military operations against Kurds in northern Syria” (France24, headline, 2019)**

The last two are samples showing how the operation is framed as targeting Kurdish civilians instead of “fighters” or “terrorists”. Although such framing is rare throughout France24 texts, when it is in the headline its effect on the reader is possibly much more than just a sentence within the text. There is another similar headline among this set of five texts that suggests Turks and Kurds are in a battle.

**“Syria Kurds battle Turkish invasion” (France24, headline, 2019)**

Looking at the words in the headline, one can see that it is the “**Kurds**” not “Kurdish fighters” or “terrorists” who are fighting against Türkiye’s “**invasion**” not “operation” or “offensive”. Thus, the word choice somehow creates an image of an ethnic Turkish-Kurdish war. The story starts with a sentence that also point at a possible humanitarian crisis that Türkiye’s operation could cause.

**“Syria's Kurds battled to hold off a Turkish invasion on Thursday after air strikes and shelling launched a long-threatened operation that could reshape the country and trigger a humanitarian crisis.” (France24, 2019)**

The story starts by telling its reader that Turks are in Syria to take control of the areas where Kurds are living and that the move will possibly lead to a humanitarian crisis. Indeed, that frame “*Türkiye’s operation causes human rights violations / displacement / civilian casualties*” is the most used one by France24 in terms of the operation’s effects. Here are several examples:

**“In addition to feared deportations from Türkiye, the latest flare-up was sending thousands of fearful civilians -- both Kurdish and Arab -- onto the roads across the targeted Kurdish-controlled areas.” (France24, 2019)**

**“...first with airstrikes and then with a ground offensive prompting thousands of civilians to flee the region.” (France24, 2019)**

**“According to the Britain-based observatory, at least 19 SDF fighters and eight civilians were killed in the first hours of the assault.” (France24, 2019)**

Reporting Turkish authorities and Turkish media, France24 frames the aim of the operation as “*creating a buffer zone / security zone / safe zone on the border*” and “*enabling safe return of Syrian refugees to their towns*”.

**“The first one was conducted late Wednesday against Tal Abyad, one of the main Kurdish-controlled towns in the area where Ankara wants to set up a buffer zone stretching some 30 kilometres (20 miles) into Syria.” (France24, 2019)**

**“Erdogan, who is politically embattled at home, wants a buffer zone in which to send back some of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees his country hosts.” (France24, 2019)**

The last sentence also makes a claim that Turkish President is having a lot of problems or a difficult political process in the country and maybe with his position as a leader. (**Erdogan, who is politically embattled at home...**) However, this claim is not supported by any argument throughout the text. So, that part in the sentence seems to be there to give the reader a frame about Erdogan’s position as the story is neither about Turkish politics nor leaders’ efforts to hold on their positions when they are “embattled at home.”

An exactly the same thing appears in another one of France24 stories over Op. Peace Spring. The story makes a subtitle “**Erdogan's weakening position with Türkiye**”, however, there is no other single sentence related to that claim. The reader



cannot know why is Erdogan's position weakening in his country? What does that have to do with the Syria operation? What is the relevance here? It seems that such an unsupported claim could only be a poor effort of framing.

Last but not least, the broadcaster widely uses the frame of *“International actors react negatively to Türkiye's operation.”* Giving quotations from EU chief, German, French, and Dutch ministers, as well as US lawmakers, the stories display negative reactions to Türkiye's operation. Here are a few of them:

**“The broad offensive -- which Erdogan dubbed "Operation Peace Spring" -- drew international outrage and warnings, including from within Trump's own camp, and will be discussed in an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council...” (France24, 2019)**

**“EU calls on Türkiye to ‘stop operations’” (France24, 2019)**

**“EU chief Jean-Claude Juncker demanded a halt to the operation, telling Ankara the bloc would not pay for any so-called "safe zone" that might be created.” (France24, 2019)**

The following story is an invented one based on the frames mostly used by the broadcaster, which shows how France24 readers will possibly regard Türkiye's Op. Peace Spring:

**Türkiye says its assault in Syria against Kurdish fighters is aimed at creating a buffer zone on its border in part to enable safe return of Syrian refugees. However, Turkish offensive causes displacement of many people in the region as well as civilian casualties. The assault received much criticism and condemnation from global actors including EU, France, Germany, Britain and US lawmakers, which demanded a halt to the operation.**

Among a total of 21 frames under 4 themes, there are three of them which do not appear in any of the texts: *“Türkiye's Syria operation is aimed at helping local population against oppression and violence”*, and *“Türkiye's operation harms international fight against Daesh / IS”* and *“Türkiye's Syria operation helps local population / or enables safe return of refugees to their towns”*. Surely, sometimes the coverage of a certain issue by a broadcaster is significant not for what is included in the frame, but for what was excluded. Although “liberating the local population from the

oppression and tyranny of the terrorists” is one of the clearly set objectives of Turkish Foreign Ministry, the broadcasters do not frame the operation’s aim in that way. They rather focus on efforts to establish a safe zone on the border as discussed above. Similarly, relieving local population or enabling safe return of refugees to their towns is not a result of Türkiye’s Syria operations according to the broadcasters. The stories also framed the operations as harming “Kurdish groups’ gains from or battle against Daesh/ IS” not as harming “the international fight against Daesh/ IS”.

Apart from the frames presented in the three tables, there are several others used very rarely. One such frame could be: “*More of IS foreign fighters from Europe, North Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East want to return home thanks to Türkiye’s operation against Daesh.*” (See: BBC, 2016, Syria conflict: Rebels set up internment camp for IS defectors) In the story on Op. Euphrates Shield, Türkiye’s operation is regarded as something that led to IS collapse and thus opening the way for foreign fighters, including many Europeans, to return home.

Another frame used by BBC in a single text is that “*US recognizes Türkiye’s legitimate concern for its security.*” (See: BBC, 2018, Syria offensive: US seeks to address Türkiye's 'legitimate' security concerns). The story on Op. Olive Branch is mainly about the willingness of US to discuss and work with Türkiye over its security concerns in northern Syria while it also covers other key players’ negative reactions at the operation. On the same operation, DW adds another frame: “*Russia approves Türkiye’s operation*” which can clearly be seen in this sentence: “The offensive would also not have been allowed to be carried out without Russian approval as Russia controls the airspace above Afrin.” (See: DW, 2018, Syrian conflict: Where does the Assad regime stand on the Afrin offensive?)

One another frame could be “*NATO recognizes Türkiye’s legitimate concern for its security*” though it has been used only several times. Under a subtitle about international reaction to Türkiye’s Op. Peace Spring, BBC reports NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg as saying Türkiye has legitimate security concerns on its border. The same story also includes similar remarks of the then US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. (See: BBC, 2019, US says it did not approve Türkiye's Syria offensive)

In a single text, DW frames Türkiye's latest operation in Syria as "*forcing Russia into a balancing act*". The whole story explains Russia's difficult position between Ankara and Damascus as the country has good relations with both. "Russian President Vladimir Putin didn't openly condemn Türkiye's Operation Peace Spring in the northeast of Syria - but it is clear he is hardly happy about the offensive," is a sentence from the text framing Russia's position over Turkish operation. (See: DW, 2019, Türkiye offensive in Syria forces Russia into a balancing act) Several DW stories also uses a frame of "*Kurds were left alone in their fight against Turkish operations in Syria despite their role in defeating Daesh / IS.*" "Trump's decision to withdraw US troops from the border has been widely criticized in Washington as a betrayal of its Kurdish allies in northern Syria and risking a resurgence of IS." (DW, 2019)

There are also changes in framing patterns from the first operation to the last one, and changes in framing choices may be indicative of changes in policies of the broadcaster or the country where it is based – but that would certainly need a separate study.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It has long been discussed that states and political actors use various means to effect the public's sense-making about policy issues or global matters. Media is one of them - maybe the most important one of them - and within media, framing is the most salient effect. How a topic is portrayed in media can shape audience perception of events. "News stories are told most commonly as narratives, based on facts, but woven together into a coherent package via framing techniques," (Pavlik, 2008, p. 312).

The current study has tried to find out "How do European broadcasters frame Türkiye's Syria operations?" A combined method of qualitative and quantitative content analysis has been conducted on news pieces chosen from the BBC, DW, and France24. The news texts as portrayals and discussion of the Syrian conflict within the international community were chosen as coding units. As presented in the previous section, two tables show the number of some words used in the texts as repetition of certain words and phrases throughout a story can construct meaning by telling readers what the important story elements are. Then, three separate tables on each operation show the number of frames used in the news texts of the broadcasters with a discussion of how those frames appear in the texts.

In this study, the main questions over Türkiye's military operations in Syria were: 1. "Who were the targets of Türkiye's operations?" 2. "What were the aims of Türkiye's operations beyond its border?" 3. "Who were the supporters and opponents of Türkiye's operations?" and 4. "What were the effects of Türkiye's operations?" Answers to the questions provided by the selected broadcasters changed depending on the operation.

Operation Euphrates Shield (2016) was framed by BBC as targeting Daesh / IS fighters as well as Kurdish forces in the region with an aim to create a security zone on the border. German broadcaster DW framed the operation as targeting mainly Kurdish forces but also IS fighters, as well as civilian residential places held by Kurdish groups. France24 framed it as a military offensive that targets Kurdish forces as well as IS

fighters in the region with an aim to maintain border security. The broadcaster says that the offensive causes civilian casualties in areas held by Kurdish militia.

Operation Olive Branch (2018) was framed by BBC as an offensive in Afrin, Syria, which was fought by Turkish troops and allied Syrian rebels against Kurdish militia with a stated aim of creating a safe zone along the border. The offensive, according to BBC, left many civilians wounded, killed, or displaced, while Türkiye also suffered casualties from shelling on border towns. DW framed the operation as an assault targeting Kurdish militia, and a move that created tension between Türkiye-US relations. The same operation was framed by France24 as a military intervention supported by Türkiye-backed Free Syrian Army, which targets Kurdish fighter groups. The operation created tension with the US, as well as causing civilian casualties in areas held by Kurdish militia and in Turkish towns near the border, according to the French broadcaster.

Operation Peace Spring (2019) was framed by BBC as targeting Kurdish forces with the aims of creating a safe zone on the border and enabling safe return of Syrian refugees to their towns. However, the offensive left many civilians wounded, killed, or displaced, and harmed Kurdish groups' fight against Daesh/ IS, according to the British broadcaster. DW framed the operation as an offensive that targets Kurdish fighters and harms the group's fight against Daesh / IS. The withdrawal of US forces from the Syrian border seems to have opened the way for Türkiye's military operation, which received negative reactions from the international actors, DW frames. In France24 stories, Türkiye's operation is framed as an assault against Kurdish fighters, which is aimed at creating a buffer zone on its border but is highly condemned and criticized by global actors including EU, France, Germany, Britain and US lawmakers.

An analysis of the selected news from the three European broadcasters shows that Türkiye's operations in Syria were mostly framed as "a military intervention" or "assault", "offensive", and sometimes "invasion". They could, of course, have been framed in other ways - for example, as "a national security operation" or "a humanitarian mission" as well as "a fight against terrorism" and so on. Türkiye, which shares a long border with the war-torn Syria and home to around 4 million Syrian refugees, says its military operations across the border were aimed at "eliminating the

terror threat to national security” and “eradicating Daesh/IS presence from Syrian territories and PKK/YPG threat” as well as “liberating the local population from the oppression and tyranny of the terrorists” and “lay the ground for safe and voluntary returns of displaced Syrians”.

However, Turkish account of these military operations - the terror problem in particular - is not much reflected in the stories of the three European broadcasters, which may be indicative of different narratives between Türkiye and the EU. In his policy paper “Narratives matter,” Wessels (2020) explains that narratives are important for their role in determining policy activities and actions. He points at the EU’s changing narratives on Türkiye in the past three decades “from understanding Turkey as a candidate country... to Turkey as a de facto partner country... and, finally, Turkey as a problematic neighbor with a rising number of conflicts”. With regard to the civil war in Syria, Wessels (2020) underlines “a changed formulation in the geopolitical narrative on Turkey”: ‘a key partner of the European Union and a critically important actor in the Syrian crisis and the region’. As for the military operations, on the other hand, the author shares the EU’s condemning of the operations and regarding them as a threat to European security. Although the current study is case-specific and is not aimed at drawing any generalizations, it can contribute to the debate about different narratives between Türkiye and EU on major issues.

What the arguments in this study have hopefully shown is that media in general, as well as individual journalists, media patrons, governments, and the many effects of media have all some sort of power to shape the public's idea of what is happening here and there. For sure, the texts alone and the framing of issues presented in the media do not determine the overall meaning but interact with audience information and memory that is not in the text. The readers go through a process of filtering information and constructing their own understanding of the issues. However, it is inevitable that people make use of the information available to them, which is the media discourse in this case. In other words, when trying to make sense of an issue, people may not be aware of the frames constructed by either political actors or media outlets. “Much of the power of framing comes from its ability to define the terms of a debate without the audience realizing it is taking place. Media framing can be likened to the magician’s sleight of

hand-attention is directed to one point so that people do not notice the manipulation that is going on at another point.” (Tankard, 2008, p.97).

Further research on how the three military operations were framed by non-European international broadcasters such as CNN of USA, Al Jazeera of Qatar, or Press TV of Iran, NHK of Japan, and many others could provide a comparative look into the issue. It could even be better to look at how Turkish public broadcaster TRT World also framed the same stories. Research into the effects of media framing on public opinion formation is also recommended as it could be a precious contribution to the field. Other recommendations include a study on what factors might account for the difference in framing the same stories by different broadcasters or newspapers. What are some factors such as the structural and ideological influences that lead editors and reporters to frame issues in a certain way and not the other? What are the roles of social norms and values, pressures of interest groups, and ideological or political tendencies of individual journalists? The effect of visual framing is another study topic that could be searched into how visual framing differs from verbal framing. Also, the amount or placement of quotations or whom they are from could be another research - something the current study did not take into account as it would require another detailed work. A final recommendation to all readers: Consider carefully when you read, hear, or watch the news. It matters, because framing affects your perception of reality - whatever is that reality.

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