The Effects of Gravitation on the Inter-Media Agenda-Setting Central Process: The Case of the Murder of Hrant Dink

Kitle İletişim Araçları Arası Gündem Belirlemenin Merkezi Çekim Etkisi: Örnek Olay Hrant Dink’in Öldürülmesi.

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Abstract

While the first level agenda setting researches focus on the transfer of issue salience from the media to public agenda, second level agenda setting researches interest in the attributes emphasized in the news and their affect on the public agenda. Some of these researches tends to analysis the media agenda. Influences of the news media on each other are studied by the inter-media agenda setting researches at at both the first and second levels. The same researches examine also the effects of different types of media on each other. However there is the problem of lack of a systematic theoretical model. This is caused by the differentiation in the aims of researchers and in their research objects. The other problem in the inter-media agenda setting researches is that there is no research on the agenda setting effects of the newspapers which have different ideological and political identities. This research aims to scrutinize the inter-media agenda-setting effects among various newspapers that have got different points of view. The research is designed to test the central gravitation effects of the mainstream news papers. Here the Murder of Hrant Dink is selected as a case study.
Introduction

This research study investigates how mass media tools influence each other in the process of agenda setting through the analysis of daily newspapers in Turkey. Within the context of the inter-media agenda-setting research, it investigates how the agenda of mass media comprise a central trend, their positioning in terms of news topics that set the agenda, and the functions of grouped news press agencies in the process. How mass media channels influence each other in the process of agenda setting, which is the subject of this research, is investigated through a sample case.

The study was prepared considering the structural characteristics of the press in Turkey and the sample case was selected in this context. This sample case was selected as the murder of Hrant Dink. The decisive factor in the selection of the case was that the event was a catalyst for the ideological stances of the press. From this aspect, it has the capacity to reveal the structural features of the press in Turkey. The reason for the selection of the murder of Hrant Dink is to establish good example to reveal the influence of ideological stances on topic preference and emphasis points on the topics.

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The topic is discussed in two dimensions. The first is composed of the topics on the axes of conflict and the second dimension is the level of emphasis on these topics. The criteria that comprise the first dimension are the attention placed on agenda topics by the newspapers according to their ideological structures. Attention is realized through the association of abstract categories that the public attention is focused on with concrete events that the news stories cover. The emphasis that comprises the second dimension refers to the density of a topic in the mass media that would make other topics secondary. The coverage of the murder of Hrant Dink, which was selected as the sample case, is discussed within the axis of conflict through different positioning of the topics and in the dimension of emphasis on the topic.

The struggle between press agencies with different ideological stances is carried out on two basic axes. The first of these is the emphasis on which subject is more important. The second is the identification of qualifications in the narrative related to the topic, which are high on the agenda of the hierarchy of items. The importance of this struggle in the mass media is the formation of public opinion, the production of information about the world that we live in, the shaping of individuals’ world visions, and the world image in their minds.

American humor writer Will Rogers stated “All I know is just what I read in the newspapers.” (McCombs, 2005: 1). There is humorous emphasis in this statement on the function of mass media to determine what we know. Lippmann defines the mental representation of information that sets the world image in our minds through the mass media as a “pseudo-environment” (Lippmann, 1949).

A large part of the mass media research has focused on the effects of mass media on our cognitive structures. According to McQuail (1987: 51; cited by: King, 1994: 26) “are engaged in the production and reproduction and distribution of ‘knowledge’, which is used as meaningful reference by people to make sense of experience, shape
perceptions of it, and contribute to the store of knowledge of the past and the continuity of current understanding.” According to Takeshita “The question of how the media mediate between the external objective reality and our social reality (our belief or what the world is like) has been one of the most fundamental themes in mass communication research.” (Takeshita, 1997:15). This direct relationship between the content of mass media and human thought was shaken by the findings from studies on the effect of propaganda within the communication studies from the 1930s to the 1950s; limited effect theories in communication theories were developed. An agreement about the concept that human thought cannot be determined directly by the mass media was reached. This opinion, through the expression in Cohen’s book “The Press and Foreign Policy”, has accepted in agenda setting studies and research after this date. According to Cohen (1963: 13) “the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.” This evaluation turned the focus of the research from the characteristics of mass media content to the issues. The study of what has been thought about has been the basic research area of the “agenda setting theories”.

**Agenda Setting Theory and Research**

According to the definition agenda-setting theories of Bichard, “Agenda setting research investigates the transfer of issue salience from one agenda to another.” (Bichard, 2001: 9). According to Dearing and Rogers, “The agenda-setting process is composed of the media agenda, the public agenda, and the policy agenda, and the interrelationships among these three elements” (Dearing and Roger, 1996: 5).

Agenda setting research examines the correlation between these three agendas. The first study that gave its name to the theory was McCombs and Shaw’s research related to the 1972 United States presidential elections (The Chapel Hill Study). This research, in fact, shaped the method of first-level agenda setting research. The research design is based upon the measurement of public agenda and the agendas of mass media (media agenda), and the identification of the relationship between the two agendas.

The pervasion of agenda setting research changed the topics of research with different design formats and different interdisciplinary research.

**Second-Level Agenda-Setting Theory and Research**

The second-level agenda-setting approach is a theoretical transformation to determine how to consider Cohen’s (1963) expression, “it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about”. It shifted the research design attention focusing only on topics (issue salience) to the attributes of topics (attribute salience). According to Lee (2005: 15) “attributes are certain features of objects or issues. Second level agenda setting suggested that certain attributes depicted in the media message were accentuated over other elements, and in turn, the attributes depicted in the media influence the public’s perception on those issues”.
“The first level of agenda setting deals with the transfer of object salience from the media to the public agenda, whereas the second level of agenda setting involves two major hypotheses about attribute salience:

1. The way an issue or other object is covered in the media (the attributes emphasized in the news) affects the way the public thinks about that object.

2. The way an issue or other object is covered in the media (the attributes emphasized in the news) affects the salience of that object on the public agenda” (Ghanem, 1997: 4).

Second-Level Agenda Setting, Framing of the Story, and Priming Research

Even though the agenda setting researchers do not concur, there is a close relationship between second-level agenda setting research and research on framing and priming. Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991, 3; cited by: Weaver, 2006: 143) have described “media frame the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration.” According to Entman, “Framing essentially involves the selection and salience. To affect how a frame is to select some aspects of reality and make them more salient in a Queen-size bed-text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” (Entman, 1993, 52; cited by: Weaver, 2006: 147) The priming research focuses on the effects of the qualifications. The cognitive priming concept was used in Iyengar and Kinder’s (1987) exploration of the impact of television news content. In this study, television news content was identified to determine not only the weight of the issues, but also the criteria on how political leaders were evaluated.

The connection between the cognitive structure and the frame brings the concept of “schema” to the fore. Schema is a cognitive structure organizing individuals’ thoughts.

This cognitive structure according to McLeod, Sun, Chi, and Pan (1990) reduces complicated information into a manageable number of frames, and they refer to frames as the architecture of cognition. According to Graber (1988), people use schematic thinking to handle information. They extract only those limited amounts of information from news stories that they consider important for incorporation into their schemata (Ghanem, 1997: 8).

Framing the news includes the identification of what is excluded and what is included, as well as the creation of the context from the relationship of elements within the frame. According to Ghanem (1997: 10), news framing can be examined in four basic dimensions, including:

- The topic of a news item (what is included in the frame).
- Presentation (size and placement).
- Cognitive attributes (details of what is included in the frame).
- Affective attributes (tone of the picture).

According to D’Angelo (2002: 873) there are four goals of news framing research. “These goals are (a) to identify thematic units called frames, (b) to investigate the antecedent conditions that produce frames, (c) to examine how news frame is active,
and interacts with, an individual’s prior knowledge to affect interpretations, recall of information, decision making, and evaluation, and (d) to examine how news frames shape social-level processes such as public opinion and policy issue debates.”

Second-level agenda-setting research defines the quality of the topic at the top of the agenda hierarchy through the emphasis placed on the characteristics of the topic. Most research examines whether prominent qualities are negative, neutral, positive, or negative. Framing research dwells on how the elements were built in a biased story. The priming research investigates how the thought structures of the audience are affected by changing the incident or topics that constitute the subject of the story.

At the intersection of the three research approaches, which are agenda setting, framing, and priming, how the viewer’s cognitive structure is affected by the issues that draw public opinion is examined. This cognitive structure is the basic element that comprises identity, and identity perception is part of the schema about the world in people’s mind. According to Kahneman and Tversky (1984), framing selects and emphasizes some part of the truth and disregards the rest.

The framing of the news includes the identification of what is included and what is excluded as well as the creation of the context from the relationship of the elements within the frame. The context is the ideological grounds that the story based on. The manner in which the context related to the agenda items in the mass media is formed has added another research field to the agenda-setting research. This is the study of the relationship between different mass media channels in relation to the agenda.

**Inter-Media Agenda Setting**

The basic design of agenda-setting research consists of collecting survey data for the public agenda, applying content analysis to television or newspaper stories selected as an example of the media, and testing to discover the correlation between data from two different sources.

In Palmgreen and Clarke’s (1991) study conducted in 1973 in Toledo, the relationship between the national and local issues and the national and local print and broadcasting agencies was examined. “Protess and McCombs (1991) found elite newspapers to have an inter-media agenda-setting effect on the news agendas of local newspapers and television news programs.” (Golan, 2006: 326) Reese and Danielian’s (1989) research analyzing the television and newspapers’ coverage of the drug issue investigated the agenda-setting effect among mass media channels. “Reese and Danielian (1989) identified the New York Times’ agenda setting role by illustrating that the NYTs coverage on the drug issue was followed by the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times. Some television networks also followed the NYT issues.”(Lee, 2005: 13).

Similar studies have been repeated in agenda-setting research conducted during the American election cycle. Roberts and McCombs (1994) studied the repetition of political advertisements in newspapers and on television. In the 1990 Texas gubernatorial
In second-level agenda-setting research, elements related to the attributes and the discussion format of the topic come to the fore. Second level research has investigated news attributes, the attention that is loaded onto the story characteristics, and how the political leaders and candidates were represented. However, the positioning of newspapers, their topic preferences, and which qualities of topics were made appealing has remained an unchartered area.

Although inter-media agenda setting spans different areas, research related to how mass communication channels with different ideological stances affect each other remains a neglected area. Different emphasis made on the attributes at the end of the research involves a type of ideological struggle. Yet this struggle is made on the basis of topical level attitudes rather than general identities.

At the top of the basic assumptions of this research is that there is a relationship between the ideological stances and the agenda hierarchy. Two groups of newspapers are grouped primarily based on the attributes of the topic and the elements that were brought to the fore or the attention that has been attached to it. As described in the above section, it is expected to observe a difference between the two groups on the first day the topic was presented. The first hypothesis to be tested was formulated in the following way: Groups’ emphases on the topic are different on the first day of publication.

It is expected to observe a change in the attention placed on the topic by the group that is positioned most distant to the topic at the top of the hierarchy in the first day’s agenda because of the central gravity effect. Therefore, it is assumed that a difference between the two groups would disappear on the second day, in which the two groups were different in their discussion of the topic on the first day. Because of this, the second hypothesis is formulated as such: On the second day that the topic was published, the difference between groups in placing emphasis on the topic has been eliminated.

Another assumption of the study is that the press agencies that are distant to the topic at the top of the agenda hierarchy because of their ideological stances had to change the emphasis placed on the subject due to the appeal placed on the topic. However, the difference between two groups in their emphasis on the topic on the first day and the
disappearance of the difference on the second day does not imply that the group that was
distant to the topic changed their approach to the topic. The third hypothesis was built to
test it: *There is a difference in the second group’s emphasis between the first and second
days.*

The research was designed for the hypotheses to be tested in the three steps.

**Method**

Data was collected with the content analysis technique in the examination of
the selected case study. The population identified for the study was the daily national
newspapers. In the stratified sample selected to collect data, editions of the newspapers
published on the day of the event and the subsequent day were selected. The first group of
newspapers included: Posta, Milliyet, Sabah, Bir Gün, Yeni Şafak, Radikal, and Takvim;
the second group of newspapers included: Milli Gazete, Ortadoğu, Türkiye, Gözcü,
Cumhuriyet, Vakit, Zaman, and Yeni Çağ.

For the first level, physical units, which define the appeal of the topic and determine
the placement of the topic in the agenda hierarchy, were used, and for the second level,
syntactic units such as headline, subheading, and spot for the detection of attention
directed to the qualities were used. Importance given to the topic by the newspapers on
the first day that the topic was brought to the agenda was used to define political identities
and ideological stances. Seven newspapers were evaluated from each of the two groups
that were classified, based on their emphasis of the topic.

The central gravitation effect of the news agenda is a concept that explains the
obligation of the newspapers to place reluctant emphasis on the topics that they stand
distant to because of their ideological stances. The research was designed in three stages.
The first stage tested whether there is a statistically meaningful difference between the
emphases of newspapers that were separated into two groups according to their stance on
the topic. The two variables in the first hypothesis formulated to address this issue are the
newspaper categories classified according to their discussion of the topic and the weight
of the percentage of page devoted to the topic on the front pages of the newspapers.
Independent samples t-test was selected to test the two groups related to the murder of
Dink. A probability level of $P = 0.05$ was selected as the confidence interval.

For this test, the members of two groups must be different; therefore the two groups
were completely classified to exclude each other. If there was a difference between the
two groups’ emphasis on the issue on the first day, this difference is assumed to disappear
in the second day due to the “central gravitation effect of the news agenda”. For this
reason, even though the newspapers in the first group would not prefer to give the same
level of emphasis, they increased their level of emphasis due to the “central gravitation
effect of the news agenda” and their difference from the other group would disappear. In
order to identify whether the difference disappeared or not, the second hypothesis was
formulated.
The expectation for the second day is disappearance of the difference. For this reason, an independent two-sample t-test was designed again for the second day values. A P value of 0.05 was selected for the confidence interval of this test, as well. The independent two-sample t-test was selected with the adoption of the same confidence interval for the third hypothesis, also.

Research Findings

In the murder of Hrant Dink, the first day reporting of the news by daily newspapers was examined in this study by separating the main groups into two. The discussion styles of the topic were used to determine the classification of the groups. The discussion style of the topic was measured with three elements:

- The subject locations
- Topic context or background events
- Description of the event quality

In the first group, newspapers that acknowledge the identity of Hrant Dink, interpret the murder as an attack towards partitioning the citizens, and report the news in a more emphasized fashion in comparison to other news was present. Newspapers in the second group can be grouped in two subgroups. The first consists of newspapers that left little space to the incident and normalize the event by presenting the incident as a murder story, and the other group consists of newspapers that explain the murder with the purpose behind it and propose that the murder was committed with a purpose beyond the rendered image. Although the stances and somewhat affiliated political identities of the newspapers are different, the similarities in their attitudes toward this incident place them in the same category. The newspapers’ reporting styles of the incident is evaluated below.

The First Group of Newspapers

Posta: The report of the incident that occurred was based on Hrant Dink. The use of “We have been shot” as the headline demonstrates that a common identity with the person who was killed was developed in the discourse. The titles of the two columnists on the front page strengthen the presentation of a common identity and identification. These are the pieces of Mehmet Ali Birand, “Enemies of Turks Killed Hrant”, and Rauf Tamer, “They Killed Us”. Additional information regarding the identity of Dink was provided, including the fact that he was raised in an orphanage and that he was in love. This also reinforces the positive identity that was portrayed of Dink. The rhetoric expressing facts such as the separation of his mother and father and being displaced on the street with three brothers facilitate the familiarization of Dink with the reader by making him a common man of the people. The construction of a positive identity was created through adjectives within the page, such as an “advocate of free thinking”. Posta newspaper devoted its
entire front page to this news story on January 20, 2007.

**Milliyet**: The headline, “Hrant Dink is Turkey” defines the unity in the upper identity, while the upper heading of “Bullet to Democracy, Fraternity, and Peace” describes a positive function of Dink in this unity. The news story is provided in the subheading where the expression, “Leading Name of Turkish Armenians”, is used to describe Dink. This expression constitutes a common subject with the headline and the banner. The construction of the positive identity is reinforced through the use of expression “Let Our Way Be Serenity and Peace” under the picture of Dink’s body lying in the street. On the bottom right of the page, under the title “Thousands of People Took to the Street”, appeared a photo taken during the protest marches of the incident. With the words, “We are all Hrant Dink”, this photograph, the construction of a common identity and familiarization in the discourse continued to produce a positive identity.

**Sabah**: With the expression, “Armenian Journalist Known with His Consciousness” in the subheading, two types of Armenian models were created. In this expression, Armenians who work against Turkey are placed in contrast to Armenians with a conscious and common identity is defined through being on the same side of this bilateral contrast. The title the “Biggest Treason” also refers to “one of us” as the murderer. It is concluded that the incident serves the purpose of the other side or Armenians working against Turkey.

**Bir Gün**: The news of the murder was presented with the headline, “They Shot Our Brother”. Emphasis on the word brother demonstrates both a common space between identities and also differences in identity. The headline, “Don’t Be Silent, Scream, People Are Brothers” in the news about those who protested the incident at the bottom of the front page strengthens this presentation. Bir Gün newspaper also devoted its entire front page to this news on January 20, 2007.

**Yeni Şafak**: The headline, “They Killed Our Hrant” includes a double structure of both an identity similarity and identity diversity. The headline, “An Armenian Son of Turkey” in the subheading strengthens this structure. The expression, “Those Bullets Were Fired to Turkey” reinforces identity. The presentation included more of a “different but from us” style of content. Positive identity expressions such as, “One of Turkey’s leading intellectuals” are also present. The “We Are All Hrant” sign that was carried by those who protested the incident is seen at the bottom of the front page. Yeni Şafak newspaper also devoted its entire front page to the murder of Dink on January 20, 2007.

**Radikal**: The headline, “Hrant Dink, the Target of Racists, was Slaughtered with Three Bullets” in the banner directly describes the negative identity within the incident. Through the expression, “Those who attacked and pointed fingers to Dink while he was suffering in court because of his ideas achieved their desires”, the incident is placed in a certain context. The incident is attached to racism and nationalist rhetoric related to sub-identities. Related news, reporting that 8 thousand people attended the protest march is presented with the headline, “We Are All Hrant”. The entire front page of the newspaper on January 20, 2007 was devoted to this subject.

**Takvim**: The foundation for a shared subject is provided by using the term “Turkish
Armenian” in the banner. With the expression, “They Shot the Dove” in the headline, a double meaning structure that both evokes peace and a sense of fragility is presented. The concept of the dove is associated with the final writing of Dink. The spot here expresses the dove’s emotionally anxious soul; the message of this act as not being a style of behavior for people living in the country is provided with the statement, “the people of my country don’t harm doves”, and was attached to the expression, “Condolences to all Turkey”. In this way, Dink is embodied as a positive identity in the rhetoric through his association with Turkey.

The Second Group of Newspapers

**Milli Gazete**: The incident is presented with the headline, “Forces of Evil that Want to Terrorize Our Country at Work”. In the headline, instead of what the incident is, the purpose and enemies with the purpose are described. Relationship between the event and the headline is established in the banner. The phrase, “Hrant Dink Was Murdered” was used in the banner. Event detail is provided on page 11, while there was a section on the front page that can be described only as a spot. There are three types of information that are provided in the spot. The first was the murder of Hrant Dink. No adjectives or definitions about Dink were used. In this way, the murder is reported without the identity of the murder victim. The second set of information is that the foreign agencies are interested in the issue. The third set of information was relayed through a thought leader. Mahir Kaynak reports the issue through statements on the provocative intent of the murder and blaming the deep state for the crime. Milli Gazete was evaluated in this group because of this reporting style.

**Ortadogu**: The event was presented third in rank within the news hierarchy. An emphasis of only 6.8% (percentage amount within page 1) among other news reveals that incident was reported with little significance. Brief information about the incident was reported and a small head shot photograph was attached to the corner of the image of the photo taken on the street after the murder. The news was reported in a police-court reporter news format. Other than the headline, “Hrant Dink Was Murdered”, sections that provide additional information such as a subheadings or a spot are not present. Three sentences describing the event were complemented by a fourth sentence stating that the incident would be used against Turkey. This sentence mentions that the incident will remain on the agenda for a significant period of time, at a time when there are more charges against Turkey.

**Türkiye**: In the newspaper, Türkiye, the news was presented as framed by two lower ranking pieces of news. The part on the newspaper’s logo was divided into two sections and the left side of the section was dedicated to the style of how the incident occurred and the details of the murder. In the section on the right side, statements of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan were placed. The banner of the news item read, “This Time Bloody Hands Emerged in Istanbul”. The headline of the news related to the statements of the Prime Minister was, “This was an Attack on Stability”. No identity definition or adjective was used other than that Dink was a journalist of Armenian origin.
When the two pieces of news were combined, the context of the incident as an attack against the good government practices in Turkey emerged. Türkiye newspaper is placed in the second group with this presentation.

**Gözcü:** The news in the publication, Gözcü, is presented with a headline of “Bullets Fired on Turkey!” In the banner, the incident was reported as, “Armenian-Origin Journalist Hrant Dink was Murdered”. Under the heading, information related to the murder was relayed through a section that resembles a cross between a spot and subheading; and in the spot, the incident was said to be a detriment to Turkey from reports from diplomatic circles. The spot concludes with a statement from opinion leaders, defined as diplomatic circles, “even though there is a provocation, what has been done is wrong and ugly”. “Even though there is a provocation” is an expression that negates Dink’s identity; the statement on the incident as being wrong and ugly is the expression that enables the decomposition of the identities of the perpetrators. Through this discussion, both victims of the incident and the perpetrators were placed in the other category.

**Cumhuriyet:** The headline of the newspaper Cumhuriyet was, “Bullet to Turkey”. In the banner, “Journalist Hrant Dink died as a result of an armed attack in a period in which Ankara’s statements on Kirkuk has toughened and the Armenian allegations are on the way to the U.S. Congress”. Such a banner insinuates that the incident was a type of provocation aimed at changing the agenda. Under the headline, two groups of spot articles were placed on both sides of Dink’s portrait. In the first of these, the article discussed the murder of Dink; in the other article, Dink’s standing trial for insulting Turkishness in Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code was reported. With this content, Cumhuriyet newspaper was placed in the second group because of its rhetoric in a different context.

**Vakit:** Vakit newspaper used the headline, “Dark Hands at Work”. No banners or subheadings were used; the incident was not described in a spot. Two expressions in the spot are important in the creation of the context. These were, “Bloody hands reaching out to Turkey’s peace and stability” and the “So-called Armenian genocide allegations reached to its peak”. These expressions define the target and possible outcomes of the event. Kemal Güler’s caricature is important in terms of framing of the news. In this cartoon, a bullet exiting a weapon divides the word “Kirkuk”. The text of the news describes the murder first, and then narrates the events following the incident. These include the senseless slogans of some groups to infuriate people and the attack of cartel media on the government through individuals that they bring to television screens.

**Zaman:** The expression, “This Bullet was Fired on Turkey was used in the headline of the newspaper, Zaman. In the spot, it was noted that the murder targets domestic peace, has left Turkey in a hardship, and is a provocation by forces that want to destroy peace and tranquility in Turkey. It was also noted that this incident would damage Turkey’s EU process through statements of civil society organizations and intellectuals. Within the text of the news, it was noted that the assassination would empower those who desire to keep the so-called genocide claims on the agenda.

**Yeni Çag:** The incident was reported in Yeni Çag newspaper with the expression of “Dark bullet in the middle of the day”. In the spot, the expression, “Centers that want
to disturb Turkey pressed the button” was used. In the text of news, it was noted that the murder was committed at a time when the United States’ proposal of the so-called genocide came to the agenda. The framing of the news included the headline of Arslan Bulut’s column on page 13. In his column with the headline, “The Timing of Hrant Dink’s Murder”, included the statement, “The timing of the murder comes as an advantage for those who want to start a process against Turkey”. Yeni Çağ newspaper was also evaluated in the second group.

It was noted that the entire first group devoted the entire front page to the incident on the first day, while the second group allocated only 39.17% to the incident. After the newspapers were classified into two groups, in order to test the first hypothesis, the weight of the topic was measured based on the percentage of area in the front pages of the newspapers devoted to the topic to the total newspaper front page and group averages were calculated. An independent samples t-test was used in order to test whether there was a statistically significant difference between the percentage averages of two groups’ devotion to the topic on their first pages. According to the independent t-test results, there was a significant difference between the two group of newspapers’ weight (percentage devoted to the story on the first page) given to the topic on the first day of Hrant Dink’s murder (Table 1). The first group allotted 60% more space on the newspaper’s front page than the second group.

### Table 1. First Day Comparison of the Two Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>T-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First page percentage</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>6.876</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The independent samples t-test that was applied on the first day was applied to test whether a there was a difference between the groups on the second day. The difference between the two groups on the first day disappeared in our test of the second day. Space allocated on the front page to the topic by the first group was 91.05%. This value was 71.37% in the second group. Compared to the first day the difference was observed to diminish. As seen in Table 2, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups.
Table 2. Second Day Comparison of the Two Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>T-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>1.775</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whether this change in the second group of newspapers is related to the central gravitation effect of the news agenda or not should be tested with a third test included in our research proposal.

From the two tests that were previously conducted, one can deduct a difference in the averages of the two groups. The basic assumption of our study was that the newspapers that were distant to the agenda because of their ideological or political identity allocated more space to the topic they stood distant on on the first day or raised it to the top positions in the news hierarchy due to the weight of the topic in the news agenda on the second day. A comparison of the two-day averages of the second group was planned in order to test this situation. As opposed to the independent two-sample t-test that was selected for the first test, a paired sample t-test was selected for the testing of the two separate data of the same group. The second group allocated 39.17% of the front page to the topic on the first day, while the second day this value increased to 71.37%. To demonstrate whether there is a difference between the second group’s arithmetic mean of the area allocated to the Hrant Dink murder on the first page on the first day story was published and the second day.

Table 3. Two-Sample Dependent T-Test for the Second Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The percentage of the incident in the front page (comparison of the first and second days)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-3.975</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

The central gravitation effect of the agenda setting process between mass media channels was investigated through the case of the Hrant Dink murder. Mass media channels’ agenda setting process is a process in which the differences cease to exist. A central tendency must develop in order to discuss the agenda of the mass media. Nonetheless, due to many different factors, such as mass media ownership and editorial policy, some may want to demonstrate an opposing stance to the central trend depending on the ideological and political stance. It was seen in this research that it is not feasible within this process. Therefore, the agenda hierarchy in mass media is both conciliatory and hegemonic at the same time.

The research design began with a classification of two dimensions that were related to each other. This was the grouping of newspapers for this topic based on their discussion of the topic, or their news rhetoric behind their ideological stances or political identities. The qualitative classification that corresponds to second-level agenda-setting research is very closely related to the attention given to the topic; in other words, the appeal attributed to first-level issues. The grouping consisted of the framing the news, and the framing of the news consisted of the distribution of the different elements of news discourse (headline, banner, subheading, spot, news photo, cartoon, etc…) within the page. Therefore, the space allocated to the story is related to frame of the story.

The news agenda constitutes a central hierarchy of topics. Even though every identity has their own priorities and topics that they want to feature as problems, a central tendency emerges within (or between) mass media. During periods of condensation and dispersion in the news agenda, this central tendency strengthens or weakens. As the central tendency in the news agenda strengthens, newspaper and televisions can also be drawn into this agenda. The continuity of a topic over time is one of the basic elements of this weight. On the first day the topic emerges, the ideological structures or political identities that stand distant to the subject allocate less space or time to the topic; however, they have to redistribute their weight on the topic when the weight of the topic is felt in the content of the agenda in the first day. This situation was also statistically tested and test results confirmed our hypothesis.

In summary, the news agenda is a central trend. The basic element of this trend consists of the weight of the subjects. Different ideological stances or identities struggle for the weight of the issues or resist the topics. Parallel to the increase of the area devoted to the topic, increased attention on the topic heightens the weight of the topic on the agenda and in this way it becomes difficult to pursue an alternative agenda or to resist the weight of the news. When a news topic emerges covering the entire news agenda, refraining from this agenda or offering news topics of alternative ranking in the news hierarchy becomes impossible.
References


