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**The Making of a State-Centered  
“Public Sphere” in Turkey:  
A Discourse Analysis**

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**Abstract**

Why is it that state-centered recognition of the public sphere has prevailed in Turkey during the last decade? The frame analysis of the “public sphere” discourse during the 2002-2009 period revealed that the contingency of the discourse on the Islamic headscarf issue discouraged an essential understanding of the authentic public sphere. Secularists framed the public sphere as a politically neutral arena that must be protected by the state. By contrast, pro-Islamists initially counter-framed the public sphere positively, in line with the Habermasian definition. Yet, in the face of stiff opposition from the secularists, the pro-Islamists came to adopt a negative counter-frame implying that the public sphere impinged on the freedom of wearing a headscarf. As a result, both the secularists’ and pro-Islamists’ frames entrenched the general recognition of the state-centered public sphere in Turkish society.

**Keywords:** public sphere, discourse analysis, Turkey

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## 1 Introduction

In Turkey, the expression *kamusal alan* (the Turkish phrase for public sphere) began to be used in academic circles after the early 1990s and among the public at large after 2002.<sup>1</sup> In Turkey's academic circles, *kamusal alan* is used as a Turkish translation of "public sphere"<sup>2</sup> (German: *Öffentlichkeit*) as conceptualized by Jürgen Habermas<sup>3</sup> whereas amongst the Turkish public generally, *kamusal alan* is generally interpreted as an area directly or indirectly related to the state, as is observed from statements or reports by politicians, bureaucrats, and the mass media. In 2009, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, for instance, stated that prior to the local elections of March 2009, a ballot station was not a public sphere since poll watchers are not public servants but political party representatives (*Cumhuriyet* 25/3/2009). A recent survey on discrimination in Turkey (Açık Toplum Vakfı-Boğaziçi Üniversitesi 2010) included alternative answers to the question "who discriminates in the *kamusal alan*: the police, the military, or public servants in state institutions?" While it is understandably unusual for academic terms to permeate into popular discourse, why did a state-centered definition of the public sphere prevail in Turkey society, in a form essentially different from its original meaning?

Behind the state-centered perception of the public sphere lies the fact that in Turkey a strong bureaucratic state (Heper 1985) has controlled the public sphere. During Turkey's modernization, an emerging civil society has been easily absorbed into the state apparatus as an ancillary organization (Özbek 2007). Also, the public sphere has been the symbolic arena for modernization and secularization, and the state strove for some time to expel religious elements from politics, education, and daily practices. After the 1980s, however, when the state gradually loosened its grip on society, pro-Islamists made their presence felt and expressed themselves in the public sphere by way of universities, the media, and the streets. The secularist elite perceived this as a serious intrusion into a public sphere that they saw as essentially secular (Göle 2000, 22-27). Political tension rose mostly because both secularists and pro-Islamists sought to control rather than share the public sphere

(Sarıbay 2000, 17-28).

Although the tradition of a strong bureaucratic state might have possibly invited some degree of perceptual confusion between the public and the state spheres, it was not the major cause of the recent recognition of the concept of *kamusal alan* within Turkish society. The fact that the Turkish legal code does not contain reference to the concept of *kamusal alan* (Akşit 2009, 15) indicates that the perception of a state-centered public sphere did not directly derive from the Turkish state system.<sup>4</sup> Also, it is not the case that the public sphere has been misunderstood as the state or state-related sphere because translation has somehow changed the original nuance of the term. First, although *kamu* in Turkish is often perceived to mean the state, it is also used with reference to public welfare. In this sense, there is no particular reason why the *kamusal alan* should mean the state sphere. Özbek argues that if the adjective *kamusal* (public) is added in front of the words for state activities or institutions, it is because such activities and institutions serve the people, and for no other reason (2004b, 30-33). Second, separate translations exist in Turkish for public sphere (*kamusal alan*) and public space (*kamusal mekan*). In practical usage, the two are often conflated but such conceptual overlaps are found even in the usage of the two original terms.<sup>5</sup>

The present paper contends that the major reason for the recent recognition of the concept of *kamusal alan* within Turkish society lies instead in the *kamusal alan* discourse triggered by President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's speech on Teachers' Day on November 24, 2002. President Sezer claimed that the areas where Islamic headscarves were banned included not only state institutions but also places where state ceremonies were carried out, and described this entire area as *kamusal alan*. It was an interpretation that in effect expanded the state sphere into the public sphere (Özbek 2004c, 515). His statement aroused fierce debates between pro-Islamists and secularists.<sup>6</sup> The ensuing processes of discourse provide evidence for elucidating the spread of the state-centered definition of public sphere in Turkish society and at the same time reveal that both the pro-Islamic and secularist elites and media were not very much interested in the genuine public sphere.

Several scholars have examined the *kamusal alan* discourse. Depeli's (2007) analysis of

newspaper columns during the autumn of 2003 regarding the headscarf<sup>7</sup> and the public sphere showed that so far as secularists and pro-Islamists were concerned, the press became a major arena of conflict, rather than a means of communication, with *Cumhuriyet* representing the secularists and *Yeni Şafak* and *Zaman* representing the pro-Islamists. Cindoğlu and Zencirci (2008) analyzed the political discourse concerning the headscarf and showed that after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002, the central issue shifted from women's rights to religion and education to political agents whose wives wear a headscarf, in so doing relegating women themselves to the backstage. Yet, none of these studies investigated why the state-centered definition of the public sphere had prevailed in Turkey. The present paper seeks to make good this deficiency by way of discourse analysis.

The *kamusal alan* discourse displays two key features that help to explain why the state-centered definition has prevailed. First, the concept of the public sphere, however distorted it might have been, suddenly became a subject of public discourse, but the discourse came to an abrupt end after only five years. Second, the Habermasian conception of the public sphere, which at first seemed to effectively challenge the state-centered definition, was later absorbed by it. These two features indicate that the concept of public sphere became distorted in Turkey because the *kamusal alan* discourse developed on the contingency of the Islamic headscarf controversy.

In short, secularists seeking to preserve the *status quo* used a discourse frame which implied that the state banned the headscarf in the *kamusal alan* in order to preserve the neutrality of the *kamusal alan*. The pro-Islamists, who challenged this dominant frame, initially resorted to an alternative counter-frame based on the Habermasian public sphere, describing it as open to everyone in society and tolerant of the expression of various ideas. Yet because they faced stiff opposition from the secularists, the pro-Islamists failed to persist in the use of the alternative counter-frame and came to use more frequently a negative counter-frame implying that the state-centered *kamusal alan* impinged on the freedom of the individual to wear a headscarf. Although valid as a means of criticizing the secularists, use of this negative counter-frame entrenched the perception and

recognition of the state-centered *kamusal alan* in Turkish society. Since the *kamusal alan* discourse dissipated after 2007 because of a lull in the headscarf issue, this state-centered understanding of the public sphere remained unchanged.

The outline of the paper is as follows. In the next section, the research design, based on discourse analysis, is elaborated. The third section draws on quantitative and qualitative analysis of the politics of discourse concerning the definition of the public sphere by secularists and pro-Islamists. The final section concludes the study by drawing together the points made in the main body of the paper.

## 2 Research Design

This section provides a detailed discussion of the analytical framework, the data sources, and the coding rules on which the research was based. In brief, critical discourse analysis has been applied to the debate on definitions of *kamusal alan* using a newspaper database compiled by the Turkish parliamentary library. The major focus of interest in the analysis consists of (1) the contingency of the discourse on a larger political context and (2) an evaluation of the ways in which and the extent to which the challengers (pro-Islamic politicians and media) were able to develop an effective counter-discourse against the defenders (the secularist state-elite and media) throughout the period of the controversy concerned.

### 2.1 Discourse and frames

The research applies critical discourse analysis that focuses on dialectic processes of discourse. Critical discourse analysis departs from Michel Foucault's deterministic understanding of power and instead highlights contingent strategies that often appear inconsistent and self-contradictory. This is because the discourse process involves competition, often of an unequal kind, among political actors

(Hardy and Phillips 2004, 304). In the case of Turkey, the contingency of the strategies and of political competition are also relevant. This is because the *kamusal alan* controversy was only secondary to a more general debate on secularism versus religious freedom. For these reasons, when the headscarf controversy calmed down, the elite's and the public's interest in *kamusal alan* subsided. Also, although the 2002 general elections brought about the first pro-Islamic single-party government in Turkey, the presidency and the judiciary were dominated by secularists. In other words, there was political competition between the secularists and pro-Islamists. The *status quo* oriented secularists employed legal arguments and insisted on strict application of the headscarf ban in state institutions and other vaguely defined non-private areas. The challengers, pro-Islamists, initially resorted to universalistic and pluralistic arguments and demanded the freedom of the individual to wear a headscarf. Although the pro-Islamists held the legislative majority, the implementation of the existing law was left to the judiciary, and the judiciary was dominated by secularists. Even if the government were to change the law, it was still possible for a secularist President to refer the newly approved law to a constitutional review. The political competition therefore favored the secularists over the pro-Islamists.

In the analysis of contingent strategies, particular attention is paid to what kinds of frames have been used to advance the assertions made by either side.<sup>8</sup> Frames “help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action...by simplifying and condensing” features of the real world (Benford and Snow 2000, 614).<sup>9</sup> On the assumption of contingent strategies, challengers have limited freedom to strategically create and manipulate frames. In reality, frames emerge and transform themselves through interactive discursive processes while the extent of framing also varies with the contentiousness of the assertions made by the actors. Under unequal competition,<sup>10</sup> dominant frames in society significantly affect the course of discourse by circumscribing, while not determining, the possible option for the establishment of counter-frames. Steinberg (1999a) demonstrated that working people (silk weavers and cotton spinners) in nineteenth century England adopted the language of bourgeois

discourse (capitalist and Christian) to contend that labor was the most important creator of wealth and that workers had a property right to labor. Steinberg (1999b, 751) also emphasized the dialogic and recursive nature of public discourse between power-holders and challengers and demonstrated that “challengers seek to de-legitimate hegemonic [speech] genres within a field while appropriating pieces to inflect it with their own subversive meanings.” The other side of the coin, however, is that “challengers generally remain captive within hegemonic genres” (Steinberg 1999b, 753).

The above analytical framework suggests that in the *kamusal alan* debate that was unleashed under unequal political competition, the pro-Islamist challengers were expected to adapt to their own advantage the dominant frame advocated by the secularists rather than to invent an alternative frame of their own. The current analysis is an attempt to test the validity of the conventional analytical framework for discourse politics under unequal competition. The following subsection gives details of the data sources and coding rules for this analysis.

## 2.2 Data Sources and Coding Rules

The author coded a newspaper database created by the Library of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The database covered a total of 66 national and local newspapers since 1997 and was coded according to topic. From this database the librarians extracted for the author articles whose topics included the *kamusal alan* and placed these articles into a text file.<sup>11</sup> The author deleted articles that did not refer to the *kamusal alan* or those that dealt with countries other than Turkey. The resultant text file, consisting of 533 articles, was coded by the author according to the following four items and edited as the Newspaper Dataset.

First, newspaper ideology was coded 1 for secularist (including socialist) newspapers such as *Birgün*, *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Vatan*, and *Yeniçağ*, 2 for centrist, liberal, or catch-all sources such as *Akşam*, *Radikal*, *Sabah*, and *Star*, and 3 for pro-Islamic or socially conservative newspapers such as *Anadolu'da Vakit*, *Bugün*, *Halka ve Olaylara Tercüman*, *Milli Gazete*, *Yeni Asır*, *Yeni Şafak*, and *Zaman*.

Second, article type was coded 1 for news articles (*haber*) and 2 for column articles (*köşe yazısı*) or other articles. (However, if a column or other non-news article quoted any remark containing the phrase *kamusal alan*, then that article was coded 1 instead of 2). News articles mainly report events and provide relatively little interpretation. Column articles are written by columnists who reveal their own views and interpretations of recent events. Other articles include interviews, conversations, and so forth that convey views of particular individuals. Regarding the citation style, the author of each column article is shown but not that of each news article, authors of which the newspaper database did not record.

Third, the implicit or explicit *definition* of *kamusal alan* presented in the article was coded 1 for state-centered definition, 2 for a definition based on Habermas's theory, and 3 for the rejection or criticism of the current definition without advancing an alternative to replace it. In the case of a news article, these definitions are either explicitly or implicitly used by "speakers" (persons quoted in the article) who consist largely of politicians or higher-ranking bureaucrats; or by the newspaper reporter who described what those politicians or bureaucrats did. If there is more than one speaker to which the news article refers, only the first speaker in the news article is considered as the speaker in the news item concerned. Some news articles did not contain quotes from persons referring to *kamusal alan* but were written by newspaper reporters who described events with reference to *kamusal alan*. These cases were also recorded in the dataset since they represented the participation of the media in the debate. While one might object to the idea of treating speakers' definitions on all fours with those of newspaper reporters, the decision to quote speakers reflects the judgment of the newspaper or its reporter. For instance, pro-Islamic newspapers tend to quote the statements of pro-Islamists rather than those of secularists and vice versa. It therefore makes a good deal of sense to combine speakers' and newspapers' (or their reporters') definitions of *kamusal alan*. A more pragmatic reason was the need to avoid further division of a sample that was of limited size. In the case of a newspaper column, these definitions are either explicitly or implicitly used by the columnist.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Fourth, newspaper articles that contained either explicit or implicit definitions of *kamusal alan* were coded according to their frames into 1 for the dominant frame, 2 for the alternative counter-frame, and 3 for the negative counter-frame (Table 1). For purposes of the research, the dominant frame was defined as a frame arguing that the *kamusal alan* consists of the state sphere and all of the non-private sphere of society and that the state legally exercises its authority to secure the neutrality of the *kamusal alan*. The alternative counter-frame was defined as one contending that the *kamusal alan*, which is open to all members of society, is where various ideas are expressed freely. The negative counter-frame, by contrast, claimed that in the *kamusal alan* the state prohibits religious expression and discriminates against believers. These three frames are essentially ideal types; not all references to the *kamusal alan* adopted these frames explicitly. When the frame of a given article was not sufficiently explicit, the article was coded according to which of the three frames it seemed closest to. As Table 1 shows, however, while the dominant frame and negative counter-frame assumed a state-centered definition, the alternative counter-frame assumed only the Habermasian definition. The coding work therefore required only to divide the articles that adopted the state-centered definition into those accommodating dominant frames and negative counter-frames. In identifying the frame used in news articles, the same rules applied as in identifying the definition of *kamusal alan*; the speaker's frame was primarily recorded and when there was no speaker, the frame adopted by the newspaper reporter was recorded.

[Insert Table 2 here]

In the main section, which follows, combined numbers of news and column articles are shown, except for the first introductory figure (Figure 1), because the shares of news and column articles vary according to newspaper ideology. The secularist newspapers that support the current headscarf

ban allocated more newspaper space to news articles that reported as facts President Sezer's statements and court decisions than did the contentious pro-Islamic and catch-all centrist newspapers, which were more intent than the secularist newspapers on interpreting events with more frequent use of column articles (Table 2). This observed tendency is consistent with the previous finding that the contentious media is more active in framing than the mainstream media (Clawson et al. 2003).<sup>12</sup> Although news articles were dominated by the statements of news-related events, the fact that the newspaper reported those statements and the frequency of such reports indicates that the newspaper did recognize the *kamusal alan* definition in the statements either positively, negatively, or naturally to varying degrees. Taking into consideration these conditions, graphs were drawn of aggregated, not separate, numbers of news and column articles.

### 3 Discursive Politics of the Public Sphere: Secularist versus. Pro-Islamic Elites and Newspapers

This section begins with summary statistics of the discourse processes and of the frames that highlight the two features of the discourse. A more elaborate qualitative analysis of discourse politics follows, and corroborates the statistical findings and deepens their interpretation. In brief, this section examines the *kamusal alan* debate between the secularist and pro-Islamic elites between 2002 and 2009 and the media's role in stimulating and in reflecting the debate.

#### 3.1 A statistical overview of discourse processes and frames

The two features of the *kamusal alan* discourse, to reiterate, are as follows. First, the discourse process suddenly erupted and came to an abrupt end. Figure 1 shows the number of news and column articles by year.<sup>13</sup> In the current Turkish case, the frequency of newspaper articles (news articles and column articles) suddenly rose after President Sezer's speech on 24th November 2002

but fell sharply toward the end of Sezer's presidential term, after which, in October 2007, the AKP's candidate, Abdullah Gül, was elected President. Presumably, the *kamusal alan* discourse for the first time significantly exposed the Turkish public to the expression of *kamusal alan*. The numbers of column and news articles are also closely associated, which suggests that the debate between the secularist and pro-Islamic elites stimulated arguments by columnists. Second, the state-centered definition of *kamusal alan* recaptured the discourse in its closing stages even though the Habermasian definition and criticism of the state-centered definition emerged in the middle of the debate. Figure 2 shows the percentage of newspaper articles by each definition of *kamusal alan* by year. The percentage of articles employing the state-centered definition, dropped in 2003 and 2004, but increased again afterwards.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

The above two features account for the spread of the state-centered definition of *kamusal alan* in Turkey. First, the public discourse of *kamusal alan* did raise public awareness of this hitherto unknown concept. Yet the discourse did not revolve around the essence of the public sphere but was contingent on the headscarf controversy. As the headscarf controversy subsided, the *kamusal alan* debate came to a close. Another reason is that, as the temporary nature of the discourse suggests, it was far from diverse in terms of issues and participants. The discourse took place between the secularist and pro-Islamic elites with little participation by civil society actors. Newspaper articles that referred to statements or actions primarily by civil society organizations were extremely rare. This was because the *kamusal alan* debate was remotely associated with arguments for discursive activities by various societal actors and specifically focused on the kind of places where women should be allowed to wear headscarves. The discourse thus failed to show its potential benefits of promoting freedom of thought and democratization among diverse social groups.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

Second, the *kamusal alan* controversy ended up with an overwhelming recognition of the state-centered definition because the pro-Islamists, who strongly opposed it, switched their counter-frame from an alternative one that proposed an ideal definition in positive terms, to a negative one that accused the state-centered definition of being oppressive. The pro-Islamists' shift of framing can be seen in Figure 3, which shows that there was an increase in the relative importance of the state-centered definition following the switch to the use by pro-Islamic newspapers of the negative frame. Figure 4 shows that even among pro-Islamic newspapers, after the introduction of negative framing, there was an increase in the proportion of articles that used the state-centered definition. The switch to the negative was marked by newspapers beginning to convey distorted interpretations in which news reports concerning the wearing of headscarves were presented as *kamusal alan* issues even though the individuals mentioned in the articles made no reference to *kamusal alan*. The remaining part of this section offers a qualitative analysis of the *kamusal alan* controversy in terms of the President's proclamation of the state-centered definition, the Prime Minister's advocacy of the "real" *kamusal alan*, the reversion to the state-centered definition, and the quick closure that followed.

[Insert Figure 3 here]

[Insert Figure 4 here]

### 3.2 The President's definition of a state-centered public sphere: the dominant frame

The AKP won the general elections on November 3, 2002 and went on to form Turkey's first single party pro-Islamic government. In the run-up to the election, the AKP had vaguely promised that it

would address the issue of religious freedom<sup>14</sup> including the headscarf ban in university.<sup>15</sup> The party leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, could not run for office due to his former conviction for inciting religious hatred among Turkish citizens. Only after the relevant constitutional change and following a by-election that had been arranged for him was he able to become Prime Minister, and he duly replaced the provisional Prime Minister, Abdullah Gül, in March 2003.

During the brief period of leadership vacancy, Parliamentary Speaker Bülent Arınç, more radical than Erdoğan and Gül in the “troika” of the AKP leadership, came forward to address the headscarf issue. On November 20, 2002 when Arınç saw off President Sezer and his wife at Ankara airport (Arınç acted as deputy President during Sezer’s absence), Arınç brought along his wife, who wore a headscarf. Secularist newspapers raised concerns that the headscarf had entered state protocol (*Hürriyet; Milliyet; Cumhuriyet* 21/11/2002) while *Hürriyet* cited a source from the constitutional court that the headscarf was forbidden in the *kamusal alan*, defined as “state offices, universities, public institutions and organizations, and official farewell ceremonies” (*Hürriyet* 21/11/2002).

Shortly after the incident, President Sezer in a speech on National Education Day on November 24 warned against the emergence of the headscarf controversy by saying that “the question of whether or not headscarves can be allowed in the *kamusal alan* has been solved by the decisions of the Constitutional Court. The Court found the wearing of headscarves unconstitutional the legal measure that liberalized headscarves in higher educational institutions and annulled it.” This statement formed a “critical discourse moment,” and opened the way for the development of the *kamusal alan* controversy in Turkey.<sup>16</sup> In response, Speaker Arınç argued on November 30 that in the *kamusal alan*, which he interpreted as the arena where public service was provided, headscarves could be banned for those who supplied public services but not for those who were the recipients of such services. Arınç thus initially assumed Sezer’s definition of *kamusal alan* and argued for at least a partial lifting of the headscarf ban, a cause that was supported by most of the pro-Islamic newspapers.

In other words, at the beginning of the debate, the pro-Islamic politicians and newspapers were

bent on supporting a limited struggle for students on the campus but conceded that public servants in office should not be allowed to wear a headscarf. This stance was adopted while using a negative counter-frame alleging that freedom of religion was being suppressed in the state-centered *kamusal alan*. Yet Arınc's assertion, apparently circumscribed though it may have been, met with a rebuke from the secularists. On April 23, 2003 President Sezer, the general chiefs of staff, and the secularist main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) boycotted a reception hosted by Speaker Arınc to mark the start of the new legislative year .

The *kamusal alan* controversy gained momentum in late 2003 through "the reception crisis" that was triggered by the decision of the President not to invite to the Republic Day reception any wives of politicians who wore headscarves. Prior to the reception for Republic Day (October 29), President Sezer's view was described on the understanding that the presidency formed part of the state sphere, that the Constitutional Court had banned headscarves in the *kamusal alan*, and that headscarves had also been banned within the presidency. On October 23 Parliamentary Speaker Arınc claimed that neither the constitution nor the law defined the *kamusal alan*. On October 30, the president of the Court of Accounts, Mehmet Damar, was asked by an opposition member in a parliamentary committee meeting why he had not attended the Republic Day reception. In reply, Damar, whose wife had not been invited because she wore a headscarf, asserted that he did not acknowledge the *kamusal alan*. In another incident, in the Supreme Court on November 6, one of the defendants was ordered by the head of the Fourth Chamber, Fadıl İnan, to leave the courtroom because she had worn a headscarf. On November 7, the president of the Supreme Court, Eraslan Özkaya, defended İnan's decision by claiming that courts were a primary example of the *kamusal alan*, within which the law must be applied.

### 3.3 Growing controversy in the media: unverified reporting and distorted interpretation

Although the Constitutional Court struck down a law to allow the wearing of headscarves in universities, it did not explicitly state that the headscarf was banned in the *kamusal alan*. It was

therefore President Sezer's own personal interpretation that headscarves were banned in the *kamusal alan*, and not a citation of a decision of the Court.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, secularist newspapers cited President Sezer's and other law professionals' remarks and took the lead in the *kamusal alan* debate. *Hürriyet* (21/11/2002) referred to an employee of the constitutional court who said that case laws showed that headscarves were forbidden in the *kamusal alan*, which included places where official ceremonies were held. The same newspaper introduced a remark by Süheyl Batum, the dean of the law faculty at Bahçeşehir University, who defined the *kamusal alan* as a situation and area in the state exercises its dominant authority (*Hürriyet* 26/11/2002). Soysal (2004), a prominent constitutional scholar and former parliamentarian, argued in his *Cumhuriyet* column that the whole of the sphere outside one's own home is the *kamusal alan*. Just like President Sezer, these "law experts" put forth their definitions without any reference to the exact sources on which their statements were based.

Media references to a state-centered *kamusal alan* began to appear more frequently. Not only the secularists but also centrist media adopted this definition without serious scrutiny and initiated the *kamusal alan* account of events surrounding the headscarf issue. Ayşen Zeybekçi, the wife of Denizli Mayor from the AKP, took part in the National Sovereignty and Children's Day celebrations on April 23, 2004 without wearing her headscarf, saying that she acted according to the law pertaining to public and official ceremonies. Despite the fact that she did not utter the words "*kamusal alan*," this act was interpreted by the secularist *Hürriyet* (24/11/2004), one of whose headlines described Zeybekçi's appearance without her headscarf as the first (positive) step in the *kamusal alan* (*Kamusal alanda ilk adım*), and the newspaper interpreted the event as acceptance of the official (secular) dress code appropriate for the *kamusal alan*. The decision by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR 2004) in June 2004 that rejected a Turkish female student's appeal against the headscarf ban was also misrepresented by the secularist and centrist media as being linked to the *kamusal alan*. Even though the court did not use the phrase "*kamusal alan*," *Cumhuriyet* (30/6/2004) reported that the court unanimously supported Turkey's ban on the

headscarf in the *kamusal alan*. The secularist or centrist newspapers thereafter repeatedly referred to the ECHR's ruling, though often without specifying the circumstances or the date, as though it were a ban on the wearing of headscarves in the *kamusal alan* (For instance, see Akşam (06/6/2005)).

On the other hand, pro-Islamic columnists and some centrist columnists initially objected to the state-centered definition of *kamusal alan* by using daily examples rather than arguing in support of the Habermasian or society-centered definition.<sup>18</sup> Göktürk (2003) and others pointed out that if the court was part of the *kamusal alan*, then so were tax offices, hospitals, and marriage chambers, yet headscarves were not banned in these public institutions. These writers argued that the headscarf ban in the *kamusal alan* was carried out by arbitrary definitions. Mehmet Yılmaz, a secularist columnist in the secularist newspaper *Milliyet*, changed his view from opposing headscarves outside the private sphere (Yılmaz 2002a) to accepting headscarves to be worn by the recipients of public services provided by the state, in line with what Arınç had proposed (Yılmaz 2002b).

There were a few columnists who adopted the Habermasian definition of *kamusal alan*.<sup>19</sup> Erdoğan (2002), a liberal scholar, argued that the *kamusal alan* was not a legal term but a term belonging to political philosophy. In Turkey, he argued, the state elite described something as public in order to expand the state sphere at their own discretion. Berzeg (2003) pointed out that the world order consists of three spheres: private, social or public, and state, and claimed that President Sezer's usage of the *kamusal alan* wrongly merged the spheres of state and society. Kahraman (2003) defined public space (used by him interchangeably with *kamusal alan*) as where people get together and engage in interaction, and considered it wrong to justify the confinement of religious symbols to the private sphere by reference to the *kamusal alan*. Kahraman (2004) also expressed the view that the *kamusal alan* controversy was internally deadlocked due to poor understanding of the nature of liberalism and republicanism. What was important, according to him, was not to debate the headscarf and the *kamusal alan* based on one's own ideas, but to draw lessons so as to reorganize the relationship between state and society.

### 3.4 Prime Minister's advocacy of the "real" public sphere: an alternative counter-frame

Prime Minister Erdoğan initially kept a low profile with regard to the *kamusal alan* controversy in order to minimize friction with the secularist elite at an early stage in the existence of the new government.<sup>20</sup> Although party supporters and some of the AKP parliamentarians were disgruntled over the government's seeming reluctance to solve the headscarf issue despite the fact that the government controlled a two-thirds parliamentary majority that would have enabled constitutional amendment without resort to a referendum, Erdoğan and the party leadership believed that any legal or constitutional change for narrowing down the definition of *kamusal alan* or for allowing headscarf wearing would raise political tensions in society and in government institutions. The leadership thus hoped to "settle this controversy without looking as if they were giving concessions" (Çetin 2003). In fact, Erdoğan did try to fulfill one of his electoral promises by introducing a bill to lift the disadvantages for students of vocational high schools, including imam-hatip schools, who sought to enter university, but President Sezer vetoed the proposal. Erdoğan's legislative majority was such that he could have easily overridden the veto. His refusal to use his majority to overturn the veto was criticized at a meeting organized by the Unity Foundation (*Birlik Vakfı*), a powerful interest group of the graduates and parents supporting imam-hatip schools, but Erdoğan defended his decision by saying that his "government was not ready to pay the price [of legislation against staunch secularist opposition]" nor can he "have the students pay the same price" (*Cumhuriyet* 4/7/2004).

On June 27, 2004, President Sezer invited Prime Minister Erdoğan and other Ministers for the dinner at the Dolmabahçe Palace museum during the NATO summit in Istanbul but made it clear that Ministers whose wives insisted on wearing headscarves would not be asked to attend. This incident humiliated the Prime Minister in front of world leaders and forced him to take a position on the *kamusal alan* issue, if not on the headscarf issue directly. Erdoğan declared on July 9 that the Dolmabahçe Palace was outside the *kamusal alan* and claimed that there was no analogy of the interpretation of the *kamusal alan* among the developed countries. In response, the president of the Higher Education Council and a professor of law, Erdoğan Teziç, argued that the *kamusal alan* was

not a geographical definition but a functional one. He asserted that in a private sphere such as a park, if a policeman asks a person to show identification, then the park would become part of the *kamusal alan* (*Akşam, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet* 11/7/2004). Erdoğan went further, and claimed at a parliamentary group meeting that the *kamusal alan* was “a sphere that enables different individuals, different social groups, and different ideas to coexist and compete in a civilized and democratic way.... The mistake made in Turkey is to define the *kamusal alan* only in spatial terms. However, this sphere is not the state sphere, as some have imagined. Neither does it mean spaces that belong to the state or where public servants are found.” (*Hürriyet* 14/7/2004).<sup>21</sup> Parliamentary Speaker Arınc taking a similar stance, said on July 15 that neither the constitution nor the law gave a definition of the *kamusal alan*, which he characterized in terms of “a free reflection of differences on a common ground (farklılıkların bir arada özgürce yansımasıdır).”

While almost all the pro-Islamic and liberal newspapers praised Erdoğan’s advocacy of the Habermasian definition, secularist newspapers sneered at the “180 degree change” (*Cumhuriyet* 15/7/2004) relative to his previous remark, made in 2002, that if he came into government, he would ban alcohol in the *kamusal alan* but let restaurants and pubs serve it in the usual way (*Akşam* 14/2/2002). In this statement Erdoğan presumably meant by the *kamusal alan* official or state-owned space.<sup>22</sup> His about-face was a product of his party’s attempts to find an appropriate definition of the *kamusal alan*, launched after the disappointing verdict of the ECHR as well as in the aftermath of the Dolmabahçe incident. After the ECHR’s decision on the wearing of headscarves, the AKP’s central decision and administrative council decided to examine ways to narrow the scope of the *kamusal alan* (*Cumhuriyet* 4/7/2004) The party apparently could not find such a restrictive definition of the *kamusal alan* but instead came up with the society-centered Habermasian definition, which was the most widely accepted version of the public sphere.

### 3.5 Reversion to the state-centered definition: a negative counter-frame

While Erdoğan tried to redefine the *kamusal alan*, the secularist state elite remained stubborn.

President Sezer repeated the previous year's practice of refusing to invite to the Republic Day reception the wives of parliamentarians and state officials who wore headscarves. The president of the Constitutional Court, Mustafa Bumin, speaking on the court's 43rd anniversary on April 25, 2005, said that any law that allowed headscarves for university students and public servants would be judged unconstitutional.<sup>23</sup> In fact, in Erzurum Atatürk University on June 14, the mother of a graduate was not admitted to the diploma ceremony because she wore a headscarf. These incidents were reported without any specific reference to the *kamusal alan* but newspaper columns presented accounts on the basis of the *kamusal alan* controversy. These included statements such as "Today, the majority regard the *kamusal alan* as the area where various forms of state authority are exercised and President Sezer probably thinks that way (Mangırcı 2004);" "Bumin's statement reduced the possibility of [women] being able to wear headscarves in the *kamusal alan* (Sarıkaya 2005);" and "the graduation ceremony hall is not (a part of) the *kamusal alan* (Kakinç 2005)."

At the same time, in June 2005 the media turned to the discussion of who would be likely to be elected President in May 2007. The Turkish constitution at that time allowed a President elected by parliament to serve for only one term of seven years. The major concern was what would happen to an AKP-backed candidate if his wife wore a headscarf because according to President Sezer's claim, the presidential residence was widely regarded as part of the "*kamusal alan*". The discussion was triggered by a remark of the former President, Süleyman Demirel, who said in a newspaper interview that the current law did not ban the President's wife from wearing a headscarf but that a new law regulating clothing would be necessary (*Akşam* 6/6/2005).

Prime Minister Erdoğan confessed to foreigners his distress over what he regarded as secularist obstinacy and in this connection, he admitted the prevalence of the state-centered definition of the *kamusal alan* rather than advocating a society-centered definition. Erdoğan argued at his meeting with foreign ambassadors that even though the Prime Minister's Residence formed part of the *kamusal alan*, his wife, who wore a headscarf, stayed there and also participated in all electoral campaigns (*Sabah* 6/6/2005). He also told at a meeting of philosophical organizations in the United

States on July 8 that “when it comes to the issue of *kamusal alan*, there is no definition yet” and that “as a matter of fact, [i]t has not been a practice until now to let women wearing headscarves to work in the *kamusal alan*. But our problem is that in universities there is no place for girls with headscarves” (*Sabah; Radikal* 9/7/2005).

In 2005, the increasing diffusion of the state-centered definition throughout the media and the statements of the Prime Minister seemed gradually to settle the controversy. But the *kamusal alan* debate flared up again in early 2006 over a judicial decision concerning the wearing of headscarves. The major new aspect of the discourse was the fact that the media widely interpreted the decision in *kamusal alan* terms when in fact the decision did not refer to that concept at all. On February 8, 2006, the Council of State (Danıştay) overturned the lower court’s acceptance of a school teacher’s claim that her promotion to the directorship of a kindergarten had been cancelled because the photograph on her identification card showed her wearing a headscarf. Moreover among the evidence cited was that she had been seen going to and from the school with her headscarf on. After the Council of State’s decision, accounts of the the *kamusal alan* spread and intensified in newspapers of every kind.

Many newspapers and columnists described the Council of State’s decision as an expansion of the *kamusal alan* (“even streets have been taken into the *kamusal alan*”, said one source) despite the fact that the Council did not make any reference to the *kamusal alan* (Danıştay Başkanlığı 2005).<sup>24</sup> In particular, pro-Islamic newspapers intensified their criticisms of the *kamusal alan* to the effect that it infringed the freedom of religion. Pro-Islamic newspapers and columnists, in other words, leaned toward *kamusal alan* criticism on the assumption of its state-centered definition rather than insisting on the authentic definition and correct interpretation of it (*Yeni Şafak* 9/2/2006; Abay 2006; Altınyelek 2006). This tendency was further reinforced by reports that gave distorted interpretations of the reaction of politicians to the Council of State’s decision. For instance, the conservative *Halka ve Olaylara Tercüman* newspaper (2006) reported that the Council of State’s decision “brought about the argument that ‘the *kamusal alan* is expanding’” while the vice presidents (Emin Şirin and Akif

Gülle) and a parliamentarian of the Motherland Party or ANAP (İbrahim Özdoğan, from Erzurum) quoted in the same article did not in fact mention the *kamusal alan*. Korkut (2006) drew attention to the spreading misperception, observing that “[in] general, the *kamusal alan* is not the state authorities’ own sphere but society’s sphere.... When the *kamusal alan* becomes an issue, the recognition that identifies the *kamusal alan* with the state forms the basic problem.”

While the media actively framed the Council of State decision with the “*kamusal alan*” account, Prime Minister Erdoğan and the AKP did not involve themselves to any great extent in the debate. Meanwhile, they employed a negative counter-frame that emphasized the restriction of freedom in the *kamusal alan*, thus dropping their earlier alternative counter-frame of the *kamusal alan*. In a speech given on February 11 to a local congress of the AKP in Mersin, Erdoğan said, “For people, there are the private sphere, the *kamusal alan*, and the state sphere. Nobody has the right to push people into any of them”, he said, and while not naming it, he criticized the Council of State for trying to intervene in people’s homes (*Hürriyet; Türkiye* 12/2/2006).<sup>25</sup> The government spokesman and Justice Minister, Cemil Çiçek, in response to the reminder by the press of interpretations of an expanded *kamusal alan*, said on February 13 that “[t]he *kamusal alan* term is not a legal term” but “more of a concept that is discussed in sociological, ideological, and political science terms” (*Cumhuriyet; Bugün* 14/2/2006). Çiçek’s reference to ideology reflected his distance from even the Habermasian, or society-centered, concept of the *kamusal alan*.<sup>26</sup> Only Parliamentary Speaker Arınc, institutionally more independent of the government and essentially more radical, persisted with the society-centered definition. Thus at the opening of the new legislative year, he said that “the *kamusal alan* is the sphere where citizens discuss their common problems equally and freely” (*Anadolu’da Vakit; Bugün, Hürriyet* 24/4/2006).<sup>27</sup>

Even after the outburst of public fury over the Council of State decision, pro-Islamic newspapers were more intent than AKP politicians on sustaining the *kamusal alan* debate and continued to report daily events as though they were *kamusal alan* issues. For instance, the pro-Islamic *Yeni Şafak* (24/05/2006), in an article that described the change toward stricter headscarf regulation on the

campus of Gazi University, reported that “the first results of the meeting between President Sezer and the 53 state university rectors emerged as a case of ‘more prohibition and more *kamusal alan*’”. While the university did not refer to the *kamusal alan*, the newspaper framed the news in terms of a *kamusal alan* account. Gönültaş (2006), writing in the conservative *Bugün* newspaper described as a *kamusal alan* event an incident in which military officers had withdrawn from an official ceremony attended by headscarf-wearing women and asked “What name is given to the political regime of a country in which everywhere military officers go ... is recognized as a ‘*kamusal alan*’?” In this way, with both the defenders and opponents of the headscarf ban referring to the *kamusal alan*, the counter-framing of public discourse by the pro-Islamic media and (to a lesser extent) by politicians increasingly shifted the emphasis from an alternative to a negative frame (Coşkun 2007) .

### 3.6 The closure: legalization of headscarf wearing and secularist counter-offensive

In 2007, the presidential election, scheduled for May, led to confrontation between the secularists and the AKP government over the latter’s candidate, Gül, whose wife wore a headscarf.<sup>28</sup> The crisis led to early general elections in July, and these returned the incumbent with a landslide victory. In August, Gül was elected President. It is perhaps the case that during this turbulent period the *kamusal alan* debate was given a lower priority in public discourse. Be that as it may, after that period, the *kamusal alan* debate remained stagnant and came to a virtual end by 2009. There are two major reasons for its abrupt termination. First, for both the proponents and opponents of the headscarf, the meaning of the *kamusal alan* lost its significance. After Gül was elected President, Mrs. Gül began to reside in the presidential palace, which the secularists regarded as an important part of the *kamusal alan*. This accomplished fact invalidated the secularist discourse that headscarves should not be allowed in the *kamusal alan*. Also, the AKP government, as well as its supporters including the pro-Islamic media, was encouraged by the massive growth of its vote percentage, from 34.3 percent in 2002 to 46.7 percent in 2007. Now that it enjoyed a commanding majority, the AKP tried to introduce a constitutional amendment that would allow university students

to wear headscarves. More radical members of the AKP and the media even advocated the wearing of headscarves in the institutions of the state (*kamu*).<sup>29</sup> For pro-Islamic forces, it became less necessary than before to condemn the state-centered definition of the *kamusal alan* or to try to change its definition into a society-centered one. The AKP government thus in February 2008 resorted to amendment of the constitution that was purported to liberalize the wearing of headscarves in state universities.

On the other hand, a more aggressive and explicit desire for headscarf freedom expressed by the AKP aroused significant concerns among the secularists and even some liberals over what they feared was the increasing Islamization of society, at a time when assertions were being made that communal pressure (*mahalle baskısı*) was on the rise. *Milliyet*, illustrating its article with photographs, alleged that in certain state institutions including hospitals, headscarves were being worn by public servants (25/2/2008). This article opened a new controversy as to whether or not the headscarf was already being allowed in *de facto* terms for public servants. Alkan (2008), a liberal columnist who had supported headscarf freedom in the universities, expressed his concern that more recently, pro-Islamic newspapers as well as an AKP politician were explicitly demanding that headscarves should be allowed not only for university students but also for primary and secondary school students as well as public servants, a development that would threaten the neutrality principle of the state and public services. Thus for both the secularists and pro-Islamists, the focus of the headscarf and secular-religious issues moved from the *kamusal alan* to the state sphere.

Second, less significantly, the secularist judiciary opened a counter-attack on the AKP government thereby temporarily deterring reference to the *kamusal alan*. On March 14, 2008, soon after the constitutional amendment that aimed at lifting the headscarf ban in universities, the Supreme Prosecutors' Office referred to the Constitutional Court for the disbandment of the AKP on various charges. The evidence on which the referral was based included a total of 19 statements concerning the *kamusal alan* made by Erdoğan, Arınç and other AKP cadres and parliamentarians (Anayasa Mahkemesi 2008). Pending the Court decision on this party closure case, the Constitutional Court

annulled the above constitutional amendment which had been referred to the Court by the CHP, on June 3, 2008. This decision sounded an alarm to the AKP as regards possible future trends. The Court, however, decided in July 29 to penalize the AKP with less severe sanctions than party closure. It did find the AKP a focus of anti-secularism but its only response was to suspend half of the annual treasury subsidy to the party. Among AKP members' statements on the *kamusal alan* that the prosecution listed as evidence in support of its charges, the Court regarded two statements of Erdoğan, one of Arınç, and one of Kilis parliamentarian Hasan Kara as violating the provisions for party closure (Article 68) of the constitution (Anayasa Mahkemesi 2008, 848-869). Thus, the *kamusal alan* references by AKP party members may not have imposed a heavy cost on the party but they did provide sufficient evidence to allow the Court to describe the AKP as anti-secular.

Overall, the *kamusal alan* controversy failed to generate in Turkey a widespread awareness of a society-centered *kamusal alan*. This is evident even from a recent speech of Prime Minister Erdoğan, who earlier advocated a Habermasian *kamusal alan*. On March 20, 2009, the Higher Election Council circulated a note stating that the ballot box area was a *kamusal alan* element, and that voting witnesses must abide by the dress code specified by the law and by judicial decisions. The response of Prime Minister Erdoğan, on March 24, was that the ballot box area was not part of the *kamusal alan* and that those who went there were not public servants but political party representatives (*Cumhuriyet* 25/3/2009). Thus, state institutions still clung to the state-centered definition while Erdoğan, who once had opposed it, no longer used the alternative society-centered definition. Since the *kamusal alan* discourse in Turkey was so contingent and dependent on the headscarf controversy, it came to a sudden end when the latter controversy lost steam.

#### 4 Conclusions

It is one thing to say that the state in *de facto* terms controls the public sphere but quite another to

say that the state controls the public sphere *de jure*. The latter point is more precise and therefore easier to deny than the former. What is puzzling for Turkey is that the latter argument has become accepted as a fact by both the supporters and opponents of the state-controlled public sphere. It is true that headscarves have been banned in universities by judicial and administrative decisions but none of those decisions stipulated that headscarves could not be worn in the public sphere. The public sphere discourse that was inadvertently started by the President's self-styled definition of the term *kamusal alan* suddenly aroused exchanges between pro-Islamists and liberals on the one hand and secularists on the other. But curiously enough, the initial claim by the President that established court decisions banned the wearing of headscarves in the public sphere has not met with serious scrutiny from the media. Although pro-Islamists condemned such a definition and the decisions based upon it, they assumed that such court decisions remained legally valid, although unjustifiable according to the constitution and the law. As a result, any event related to headscarves came to be described in terms of the public sphere, even when the court did not refer to the public sphere in its decision. It was thus overreaction of the media that reinforced the state-centered definition of the public sphere, which the President first presented but later refrained from uttering.

The *kamusal alan* discourse in Turkey was thus contingent and dependent on the headscarf controversy and contributed to the permeation of the state-centered definition of the *kamusal alan* into Turkish society in two ways. First, the discourse helped to create a new public awareness of the public sphere by placing the concept on the public agenda for the first time. Yet the concept of the public sphere became a subject of public discourse primarily because the discourse assumed that the freedom or otherwise of the individual to wear a headscarf hinged on how the *kamusal alan* was defined. Thus, when the headscarf issue dropped off the discourse agenda due to a change in political circumstances, the *kamusal alan* discourse also lost momentum. Second, secularists seeking to maintain the *status quo* used a discourse frame implying that the state banned the headscarf in the *kamusal alan* in order to preserve the neutrality of the *kamusal alan*. The pro-Islamists, who challenged this dominant frame, initially resorted to an alternative counter-frame that adopted the

Habermasian public sphere, describing it as open to everyone in society and tolerant of the expression of various ideas. Yet when they faced stiff opposition from the secularists, the pro-Islamists failed to persist in the use of the alternative counter-frame and came to use with increasing frequency a negative counter-frame that suggested that the state-centered *kamusal alan* impinged on the freedom to wear a headscarf. Whatever its validity as a criticism of the secularists, this negative counter-frame entrenched the perception and recognition of the state-centered public sphere in Turkish society. When the *kamusal alan* discourse petered out around 2009, the state-centered understanding of the public sphere was left unchanged.

The alternative (Habermasian) counter-frame of the *kamusal alan* discourse put forth by the pro-Islamists seems to have lacked resonance primarily due to weak credibility and salience.<sup>30</sup> Erdoğan introduced the Habermasian definition of *kamusal alan* in July 2004 and in so doing turned out to contradict his earlier definition. His statements thereafter implicitly accepted the state-centered definition and shifted to the negative counter-frame. Arıncı initially assumed the state-centered definition and in a kind of limited struggle, asserted that the recipients of public services should be allowed to wear headscarves. Yet, when Erdoğan proposed the society-centered (Habermasian) definition, he adopted it and clung to it afterwards. Çiçek understood the *kamusal alan* as a social scientific term but stood aloof by describing it as an ideological concept. These pieces of evidence indicate that the alternative counter-frame was not persistently supported by the AKP's leading politicians. The salience (of the alternative counter-frame) so far as targets of mobilization (the discourse audience) was concerned was low because it lacked centrality. The pro-Islamic discourse revealed that the aim of supporting the Habermasian *kamusal alan* was to solve the headscarf issue; it was not really associated with arguments that the Habermasian *kamusal alan* would contribute to the development of civil society, a greater voice for minority groups, or democratization. The discourse thus largely failed to demonstrate to diverse social groups the potential benefits of the genuine (Habermasian) *kamusal alan*.

The current paper carries two main implications. First, the research, using Turkey as an example,

supports the assertion held by contributors to critical discourse analysis that public discourse revolves around contingent strategies. The *kamusal alan* discourse originated from political conflict over religious visibility (or headscarf wearing). The accomplished fact of the wearing of headscarves in the presidential palace shifted the focal point, or front line, of the visibility issue to the state sphere thus removing the relevance of how to define the *kamusal alan*, for both pro-Islamists and secularists. Second, the research confirms the observation that challengers' counter-frames tend to be pragmatically formed by utilizing the dominant frame in one way or another (Steinberg 1999b, 751-753) with the negative counter-frame (in the case discussed by the paper, "The state-centered *kamusal alan* is repressive") providing an example. At the same time, in Turkey, the negative counter-frame also inherently assumed the state-centered definition of *kamusal alan* and thus fell captive to the dominant frame, very much as Steinberg has suggested.

#### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Despite its theoretical and practical importance, there has been little research on the public sphere in Turkey. Previous empirical studies on the public sphere in Turkey have been inexorably linked to secularism or have been subservient to it (Göle 1996; Göle 2000; Özdalga 1998; Arat 2005; Çınar 2005; Azak 2000; Borovalı and Turan 2007; Kuru 2006; Kuru 2007; Kuru 2009; Turam 2007). For other discussions of the public sphere in Turkey, see İlyasoğlu (1996), Üstel (1997), Mahçupyan (1998), Keyman (1998), Çaha (1998), Türköne (1998), Aktaş (2000), Dağtaş and Dağtaş (2007), and Taş (2007). The first Turkish translation of Habermas (1991) was published in 1997 (Habermas 1997).

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, the public sphere is regarded as existing in the private *realm* (apart from the sphere of public authority) but is distinct from the private *sphere*, according to Habermas's schema (1991, 30). By Habermas's definition, "the bourgeois public sphere was to be a discursive arena in which

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'private persons' deliberated about 'public matters,' with the word public meaning either state-related, accessible to everyone, of concern to everyone, and pertaining to a common good, or share interests" (Fraser 1992, 128).

<sup>3</sup> In Turkey, the academic literature on the public sphere relies most extensively on Habermas (Özbek 2004a, 9).

<sup>4</sup> Özbudun (2006), Turkey's most cited constitutional scholar, also attested that he had never come across the term *kamusal alan* in the Turkish legal code during the previous fifty years of his career.

<sup>5</sup> Smith and Low (2006, 5) distinguish these two concepts by saying that "[t]he public sphere remains essentially ungrounded while public space discussions insufficiently connect to mediations on the public sphere"

<sup>6</sup> In newspapers, the controversy involved secularists on the one hand and pro-Islamists and liberals on the other. Yet, among major political leaders no liberals were found. This is why the research presented the controversy in a more simplified way. Pro-Islamic rather than Islamist was used to indicate the generally pragmatic and pro-systemic nature of Islamic groups/movements in Turkey while not denying that they harbor a limited number of extremist or fundamentalist groups. Liberalism is used here in the sense that it "assumes individuals are for the most part motivated by self-interest, and regards them as the best judges of what this interest requires" and on the assumption that it limits the role of politics to solving differences among individual interests "under a supposedly neutral set of constitutional rules" (Dryzek et al 2006, 14-15). In Turkey, liberalism has had a close affinity with Islamic thought (Yılmaz 2005; Erdoğan 2005a; Erdoğan 2005b). The secularists include the military and the judiciary, as well as secularist political parties and media.

<sup>7</sup> The original Turkish word for headscarf is either *başörtüsü* or *türban*. The usage of these two Turkish words varies across newspapers. This is mostly because more religiously oriented newspapers tend not to use *türban* but to use *başörtüsü* for any style of head-garment wearing. Other newspapers more often distinguish between *başörtüsü* as an Anatolian-traditional loose head garment and *türban* as a politically-expressive tight head covering. For these reasons, this paper uses headscarf to refer to both *başörtüsü* and *türban*. In general, women who cover their heads with a *türban* call it a *başörtüsü* instead (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2009, 163, n 10).

<sup>8</sup> Johnston (2002, 72) points to two differences between frame and discourse analysis applied to social movement research. "First, ... [f]raming studies mostly describe collective action frames and their role in movement development whereas discourse studies treat cultural processes and their effect on what gets talked about. Second,... framing studies offer less reference to the actual texts on which the frames are based, while discourse studies tend to analyze texts more closely." In this regard, the current research is primarily based on discourse analysis; frame analysis is used in a complementary way to demonstrate discourse dynamics with evidence of frame transformation.

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<sup>9</sup> The relatively few systematic studies of public discourse with frames include Gamson (1992), Ferree et al. (2002), and Fiss and Hirsch (2005). Of these, Gamson's (1992, 215-257) systematic analysis of the impact of media discourse on working-class opinion revealed several frames for each of the four major collective action issues in the United States in the 1980s as follows: (1) troubled industry: free enterprise, partnership, capital flight, and foreign invasion; (2) affirmative action: remedial action, delicate balance, and no preferential treatment; (3) nuclear power: progress, energy independence, soft paths, no public accountability, not cost effective, runaway, and Devil's bargain. (4) Arab-Israeli conflict: feuding neighbors, strategic interest, Arab intransigence, Israeli expansionism, dual liberalism. These frames were extracted by a three-digit coding of media sources.

<sup>10</sup> For more equally competitive situations, Miceli (2005) showed that debate between two groups with mutually opposing framings such as morality and identity exacerbated polarization rather than encouraged mutual understanding.

<sup>11</sup> The topic of *kamusal alan* was defined by the library as the issue or sphere where the state uses its dominant authority. In fact, however, the database included newspaper articles that referred not only to the *kamusal alan* by this state-centered definition but also articles that contained the society-centered definition of *kamusal alan*. Also, the major focus of this research is on change in the relative weight of state-centered and liberal conceptions of *kamusal alan* in the course of controversy rather than their absolute shares.

<sup>12</sup> Clawson and others' (2003) case study of the media framing of U. S. Supreme Court rulings regarding affirmative action showed that the mainstream press reported Court rulings and their implications evenhandedly whereas the Black press more on the implications than on the rulings themselves. Framing has thus been more restrained in mainstream newspapers than in contentious newspapers (Clawson et al. 2003).

<sup>13</sup> The opening of discourse can be indicated by a "critical discourse moment" that refers to "events that stimulate news articles and commentary in various public forms" (Ferree et al. 2002, 24). Closure is a discursive norm inherent in representative liberal theory that refers to "a time at which all concerned can agree that the matter has been decided and the system moves on" (Ferree et al. 2002, 210). Ferree et al. (2002, 248) described the latter in operational terms as "a sharp drop in the volume of public discourse following authoritative action by state actors.

<sup>14</sup> Most of the literature regarding the AKP characterizes the party as a grouping of conservative democrats or Muslim democrats and emphasizes its pragmatic and moderate inclination (Yavuz 2006; Hale and Özbudun 2010). The AKP in its party program for 2002 revealed its preference for the Anglo-Saxon model of secularism over the French model (Tepe 2008, 206). Kuru (2006) and Yavuz (2009) are careful to point out, however, that even the AKP's reformist vision of secularism is

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less pluralistic than American secularism since it favors Sunni-hanafi teaching and espouses state supervision of Islam by the General Directorate of Religious Affairs. In this sense, the AKP's general assertion that it seeks freedom of religion in the public sphere needs scrutiny on an empirical basis.

<sup>15</sup> During the 2002 general election campaign, the AKP initially did not give high priority to the headscarf issue. The most that Erdoğan, the AKP leader, could say was that the AKP would "lift the obstacles for education." Yet, faced with the decision of the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi, SP) to take issue with the headscarf ban, the AKP became more forthright. On October 18 in *Kahramanmaraş*, in response to a voter's question about what would happen to the headscarf problem, Erdoğan said, "We would become the country of freedoms" while the AKP Parliamentary Group leader, Bülent Arınç, more directly said, "It is our moral debt to solve this problem [of the headscarf ban]. We will go on until the end" (Yılmaz 2002).

<sup>16</sup> In fact, the use of the *kamusal alan* terminology by Turkish officials was recorded for the first time in the warning suit (*ihhtar davası*) opened by the Supreme Public Prosecutors' Office in 2001 against the AKP (See endnote 20) but this reference to the *kamusal alan* did not attract much attention probably because the concept was not central to the later decision by the Constitutional Court to give a warning to the AKP.

<sup>17</sup> Erdoğan (2003) persuasively makes the point that the Constitutional Court has not explicitly banned headscarves in the *kamusal alan* and points out that it was President Sezer who interpreted previous Court decisions that banned headscarves in university (March 7, 1989) as a prohibition of headscarves in the *kamusal alan* in general. The Court's decision that was a warning to the AKP included the statement that "[when] members of political parties have been elected to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, or to the government, or to elective offices of local governments, there will be no doubt that they will carry out their public duties in the *kamusal alan*. In the *kamusal alan*, those who begin their duty will undoubtedly be bound by the costume rules applied there" (Translated by the author, *Anayasa Mahkemesi* (2002), cited in Hasdemir (2006, 193)). But this statement was made in a decision of the Court that rejected the Supreme Public Prosecutors' Office's request for a Court warning to the AKP, for the reason that even though some of the AKP's founding members wore headscarves, once they became elected officials, they would comply with the costume rules. In this sense, there was little ground for arguing that previous court decisions established the ban of headscarves in the public sphere, as President Sezer claimed.

<sup>18</sup> The *kamusal alan* definition found in these articles was coded as 3, standing for the rejection or criticism of the current definition without an alternative to replace it.

<sup>19</sup> The *kamusal alan* definition found in these articles was coded as 2, standing for a definition based on Habermas's theory.

<sup>20</sup> Prime Minister Erdoğan had the bitter experience of having been imprisoned for half a year

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during the 1998-99 period. Also in 2001, the Supreme Prosecutors' Office requested the Constitutional Court to issue a prior warning of closure against his party. The Court subsequently rejected the request.

<sup>21</sup> Özbek (2004c, 520) criticizes Erdoğan, who in his speech on July 13, 2004 equated the *kamusal alan* with civil society, the latter being broader and structurally more diverse than the former.

<sup>22</sup> It can only be speculated that Erdoğan's state-centered definition of the *kamusal alan* might have drawn on the Public Prosecutors' Office's definition, as expressed in its request for a Court warning against the AKP (See endnote 16).

<sup>23</sup> Bumin, who was to retire in two months, explained that his statement was a response to appeals submitted to the Constitutional Court by headscarf-wearing female students who asked for the Court's view (Sarikaya 2005).

<sup>24</sup> The decision date refers to when the decision was promulgated, not when the decision was made.

<sup>25</sup> Prime Minister Erdoğan later became more emphatic concerning the exclusionary and thus negative effect of the state-centered *kamusal alan*. In a speech given on July 9, at the AKP's Tokat provincial congress, he warned not to discriminate among the people by saying such things as "here is public and there is not" (*Radikal* 09/07/2006).

<sup>26</sup> The president of the nationalist and pro-Islamic Nationalist Action Party (MHP), Devlet Bahçeli, also assumed the state-centered definition of *kamusal alan* when he said on February 14, "the Prime Minister's reaction to the Council of State's decision that has brought the headscarf ban for the public servants beyond the *kamusal alan* is in essence [his] confession of impotence" (*Cumhuriyet; Tercüman* 15/2/2006)."

<sup>27</sup> At the same time, Arınç revealed his statist interpretation of the society-centered definition in the statement that he made immediately following the above quotation, that "it is the state's duty to protect this sphere and to secure rights to its equal use for all citizens."

<sup>28</sup> In April and May 2007, the secularists mounted an opposition campaign to his election, including mass demonstrations and references to warning messages by the military. This triggered an early general election in July.

<sup>29</sup> A parliamentary constitutional committee member and Konya parliamentarian, Hüsnü Tuna, said that he hoped that the headscarf ban relating to public servants would be lifted too. Isparta Mayor Hasan Balaman from the AKP also said that a mayor with a headscarf must also be allowed to hold office (*Milliyet* 28/01/2008). Tuna was later given a warning penalty by his party (*Radikal* 15/2/2008).

<sup>30</sup> The effectiveness of frames is in general referred to as resonance. The resonance, or "mobilizing potency" (Benford and Snow 2000, 619), of frames/ framing is first examined with reference to the credibility and salience of frames. Credibility depends on frame consistency, empirical credibility,

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and credibility of the frame articulators. The salience of framing to targets of mobilization impinges on centrality, experiential commensurability, and narrative fidelity (Benford and Snow 2000, 619-622). The small number of empirical studies on resonance include Zuo and Benford (1995) and Koopmans and Ozlak (2004).

Tables and Figures

**Table 1. The Three Frames of the *Kamusal Alan* Discourse**

		Public sphere definition	
		State-centered	Society-centered
Public sphere perception	Positive	----	Alternative counter-frame
	Neutral	Dominant frame	----
	Negative	Negative counter- frame	----

Source: Compiled by the author from the Newspaper Dataset.

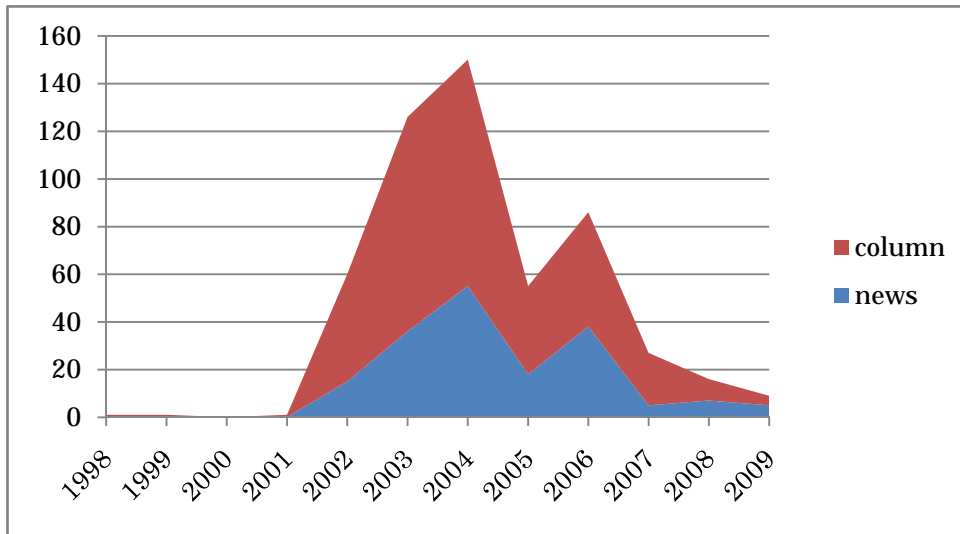
**Table 2. Ideology of Newspapers and Article Types**

	Pro-Islamic	Liberal, catch-all	Secularist	Total
News	53 (25.9)	54 (28.9)	73 (51.8)	180 (33.8)
Column	152 (74.2)	133 (71.1)	68 (48.2)	353 (66.2)
Total	205 (100.0)	187 (100.0)	141 (100.0)	533 (100.0)

Source: Compiled by the author from the Newspaper Dataset.

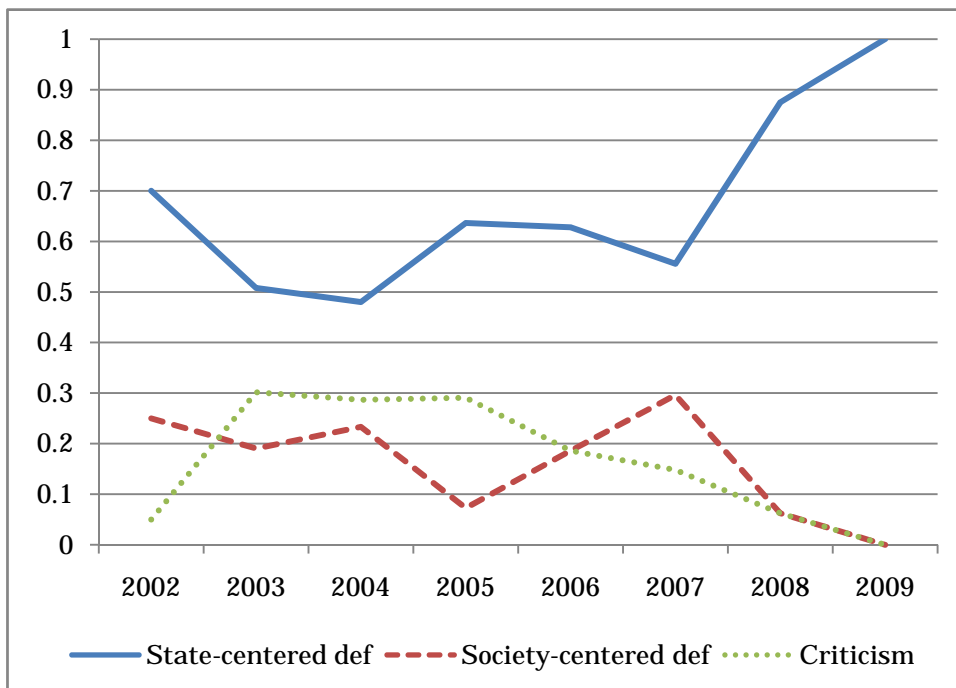
Note: The association between newspaper ideology and article type is statistically significant (Person's chi-square =28.178,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Figure 1. Number of Articles covering the *Kamusal Alan* Topic, 1998-2009**



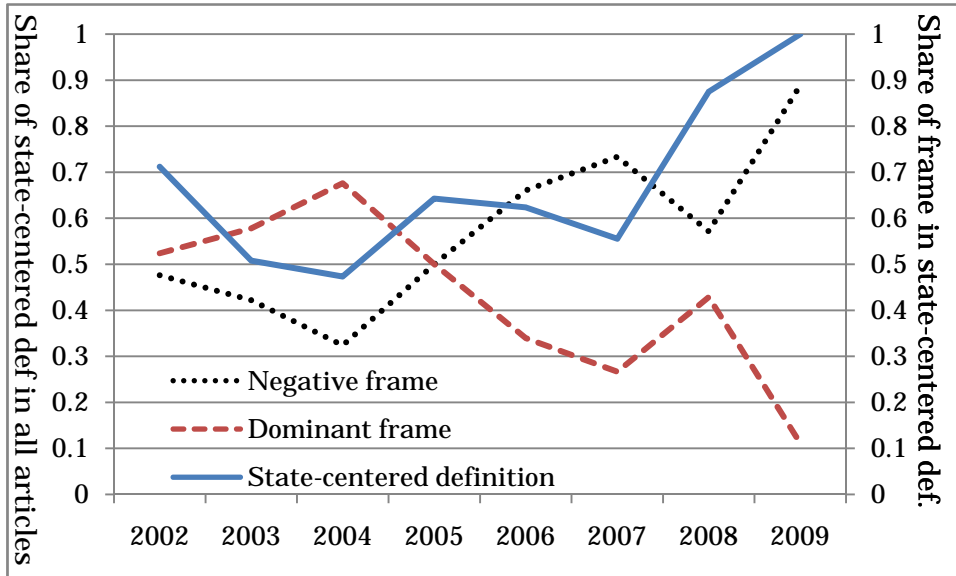
Source: Compiled by the author from the Newspaper Dataset described in the article.

**Figure 2. Shares of *Kamusal Alan* Definitions in Newspaper Articles**



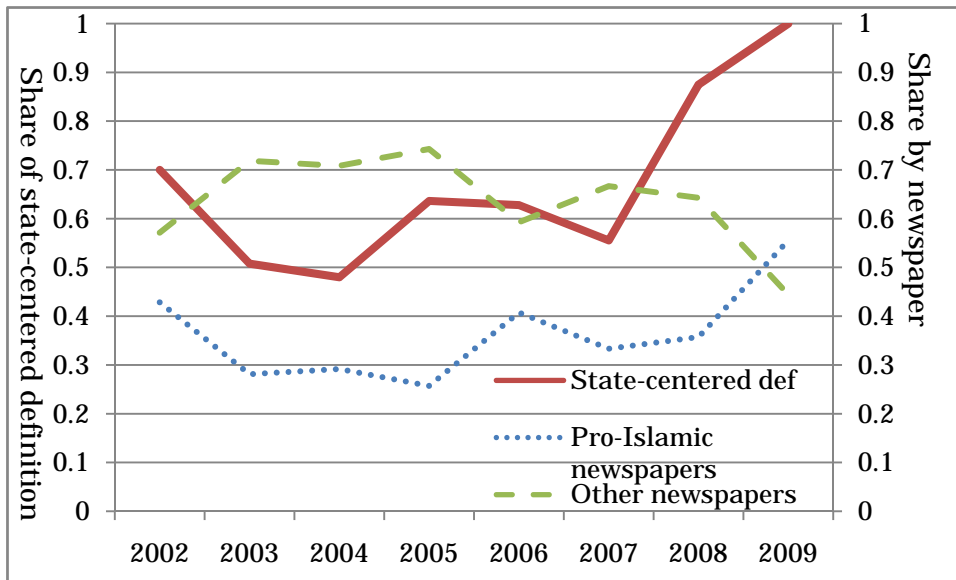
Source: Compiled by the author from the Newspaper Dataset.

**Figure 3. Association of the Negative Frame with the State-centered Definition**



Source: Compiled by the author from the Newspaper Dataset.

**Figure 4. Association between the State-centered Definition and Pro-Islamic Newspapers**



Source: Compiled by the author from the Newspaper Dataset.

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