

Chapter 11

The Integration of the Media With the Power in Turkey (2002–2019): Native, National Media Conception

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ABSTRACT

Between 2002 to 2008, the media space and its capital structure have changed considerably. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) government has taken steps to dominate the media field in a short time. The mainstream central media that dominated a significant portion of the media area had a wide experience in power relations. As the AKP started building a new Turkey, privileged media groups, organized to effectively support Prime Minister Erdogan and reshape the media sphere, established a totalitarian language as a mechanism of social control and became a tool for material and discursive practices. The media began to act as a force following the condition of being native, national, and conservative, which becomes an essential part of the political discourse of power. In this process, the media established sharp pressure on the most indirect, the most limited individual or organized opposition and critical views.

INTRODUCTION

The pluralist approaches, which are the precursors of the liberal approach, have defined the media in a sphere of freedom from state interference and advocated that the media fulfills an important task as an autonomous power in the construction of a democratic and participatory society. On the other hand, the conditions of the media are shaped away from expectations of liberal approaches. It is crucial to address the transformations in the economic organization of the media, working practices and the way in which the contents are produced within historical, political, economic and cultural conditions. It is obvious that the media's relations with the actors and institutions that have the existing social power/authority within the social structure need to be analyzed within their historical periods. The media, which exists

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as a business under the conditions of the market and which is expected to be positioned as the fourth power, is being observed far from this position while it is working in the relation of dependency with the political, economic, military and symbolic elite. On the other hand, the emergence of the need to have an internal discussion of institutions to emphasize democratic, libertarian values and to defend the liberal media understanding is determined by historical and current periodical conditions. While analyzing the structural bias in the media, the importance of making explanations within both the historical and social conditions, and the current cross-sectional context appears.

It cannot be claimed that media organizations which focus on filling out daily life with all their forms and contents and which gain privileged positions with the function of journalism that is inevitable for the public interest, have autonomous status. Nor does it function as a spokesman or a device that serves directly for the interests of the ruling classes and elite groups. It has been acknowledged that the media organizations operate within the conditions that surround and limit their own daily practices and have an only relatively autonomous position. On the other hand, especially after the 1980s, when the New Right rose with its populist discourse all over the world, the transformation of the media into businesses that operate with the pure market logic has been advocated as a kind of road to more autonomy. Along with the monopolization caused by the policies of privatization and deregulation, the principles of public broadcasting were abandoned (Kaya, 1999, p. 637). Thus, while the change and transformation of the media system in Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s were consistent with the criticism of the monopoly of one voice public broadcasting, it was met with concern by media professionals and journalism organizations. On the other hand, despite the lack of political liberalization, this process has been presented as an expectation of deregulation and liberalization in the field of communication that is compatible with the globalization process. However, the media, within its political economy and certain operating patterns, while moved away from the emphasis on democratic values such as rights and freedoms and reached out to the plane of power and authority relationships. And in this plane, media professionals as symbolic elites, “translate the discourses of political, military, economic and symbolic elites into the public language and play an important role in the formation of harmony towards the social structure and the status quo” (İnal, 1996). The role of the media in achieving convergence has been taken further, and the fact that the media works in the direction of the expectations of the market and those who hold the power and authority is now considered a difficult problem to solve.

Turkish media, in the climate of the 1980s, within the rapidly globalized consumer-oriented market focused on strategies and practices which were profit-oriented. Later on, it has usually established close relations with the political powers, which control and distribute public resources. It became normalized, even ignored, that the public service role weakening, while the weight of the media in the daily life of the society increased. Especially it can be seen in the case of Turkey, where the weight of the media in the political sphere has increased during periods such as crisis, coup or election and has become an important partner of the processes, has been often observed. When we look at the media from this point of view, it has observed that they have economically and politically worked closely with the owners of power and authority that those have a determining role in the narrowing political sphere, since the 1980s. Newspapers, which succeeded to be statist without appearing as a statist and militarist without appearing as a militarist, will be considered to have done journalism relatively well in the future. Because there will also be worse periods when the media was clearly willing to represent the oppressive practices and discourses of political power in the highest tone. This chapter deals with the power elites, the military, civil bureaucracy, and capital forces throughout the 1980s and 90s, and the context of the relations of the media as a part of it. This process is important because it laid the groundwork for the following 2000s.

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