



## Turkish Media History from the Perspective of Cyclical History: Ibn Khaldûn's Ideas and Communication Studies

*Döngüsel Tarih Perspektifinden Türk Medya Tarihi: İbn Haldun'un Fikirleri ve İletişim Çalışmaları*

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyzes Turkish media history through the framework of Ibn Khaldûn's cyclical theory of history, focusing on the recurrent oscillation between media liberalization and repression under shifting political regimes. The study addresses the central question: How has press freedom in Türkiye been shaped by cyclical dynamics of consent, control, and coercion in relation to political power? Using a historical-comparative and interpretive methodology, the research systematically investigates three critical periods—the Armistice era (1918–1923), the Democrat Party era (1950–1960), and the aftermath of the 1971 military memorandum. Both primary sources (such as period newspapers and legislative texts) and secondary sources (scholarly works) are analyzed thematically to identify the underlying mechanisms and recurring patterns in the expansion and contraction of press freedoms. The findings demonstrate that each political regime, regardless of ideology, initially tolerates or promotes pluralism in the media to generate public consent and strengthen legitimacy. As power becomes consolidated, mechanisms of control—including legal constraints, economic patronage, and administrative pressure—begin to restrict journalistic autonomy. In the face of growing dissent or perceived threats, regimes ultimately turn to overt coercion, such as censorship, legal prosecution, or direct violence against journalists. This cyclical pattern—consent production, control, and coercion—repeats throughout Turkish media history and is interpreted through the Khaldûnian lens of dynastic cycles. By proposing and applying the media cycle model, the article presents an original analytical framework that links historical theory with the political economy of communication, concluding that press freedom in Türkiye remains contingent and vulnerable, shaped by recurring cycles that continue in the digital era.

**Keywords:** Cyclical history, press freedom, political economy of communication, Ibn Khaldûn, Turkish media, authoritarianism

### ÖZ

Bu makale, Türk medya tarihini İbn Haldûn'un döngüsel tarih teorisi çerçevesinde analiz etmekte, değişen siyasi rejimler altında medya özgürlüğü ile baskı arasındaki tekrar eden dalgalanmalara odaklanmaktadır. Çalışmanın temel sorusu şudur: Türkiye'de basın özgürlüğü, siyasal iktidarlara ilişkili olarak rıza üretimi, kontrol ve baskı döngüleriyle nasıl şekillenmiştir? Tarihsel-karşılaştırmalı ve yorumsamacı bir yöntemle yürütülen çalışmada, üç kritik dönem—Mütareke dönemi (1918–1923), Demokrat Parti dönemi (1950–1960) ve 1971 askeri muhtırası sonrası—sistematiğin biçiminde incelenmiştir. Dönemin gazeteleri ve yasal belgeler gibi birincil, akademik çalışmalar gibi ikincil kaynaklar tematik olarak analiz edilerek basın özgürlüklerinin genişlemesi ve daralmasındaki temel mekanizmalar ve tekrar eden örüntüler belirlenmiştir. Bulgular, her siyasi rejimin ideolojisinden bağımsız olarak başlangıçta medya çoğulculuğunu rıza ve meşruiyet üretmek için teşvik ettiğini; ancak iktidarın konsolide olmasıyla birlikte, yasal kısıtlamalar, ekonomik patronaj ve idari baskı yoluyla gazetecilik özerkliğinin sınırlandığını göstermektedir. Muhalefetin güçlenmesi veya tehdit algısının artmasıyla, rejimler en sonunda sansür, yasal kovuşturma ya da gazetecilere doğrudan şiddet gibi açık baskı yöntemlerine yönelmektedir. Rıza üretimi, kontrol ve baskı aşamalarından oluşan bu döngüsel örüntü, Türk medya tarihinde sürekli tekrarlanmakta ve Halduncu hanedan döngüleriyle yorumlanmaktadır. Makale, medya döngüsü modelini önerip uygulayarak, tarihsel kuram ile iletişimin politik ekonomisi arasında yeni bir analitik çerçeve sunmakta ve Türkiye'de basın özgürlüğünün hala rejim ihtiyaçlarına bağlı ve kırılgan olduğunu, bu döngülerin dijital çağda da sürdüğünü göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Döngüsel tarih, basın özgürlüğü, iletişimin politik ekonomisi, İbn Haldun, Türk medyası, otoriterlik

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## Introduction

This study was initially inspired by recent discussions surrounding Ibn Khaldūn's contributions to the Political Economy of Communication, particularly his early theorization of communication as a productive, socially embedded activity. As highlighted by Christian Fuchs (2024, pp. 742-743), Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah* offers a foundational understanding of communication as a craft tied to labour, ideology, and social organization—elements that remain crucial in the analysis of digital capitalism. His differentiation between face-to-face and mediated communication, his proto-labour theory of value, and his recognition of class-based exploitation continue to resonate in contemporary critiques of media systems. These insights shaped the conceptual underpinnings of this study, especially in its attempt to frame video games not only as cultural products but also as ideological environments where class, identity, and symbolic power are negotiated through ludic and visual structures.

This article aims to examine how the cyclical dynamics theorized by Ibn Khaldūn can be applied to the history of press freedom in Türkiye, highlighting the recurring oscillation between liberalization and repression across different political regimes. The central problem addressed is the lack of a historical framework that explains why periods of media pluralism and suppression tend to recur rather than progress linearly, particularly in the context of Turkish media. By situating the analysis within Khaldūn's cyclical model, this study seeks to illuminate the structural and ideological factors that underlie these persistent cycles. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question: How has press freedom in Turkish media history been shaped through cyclical relations with political power?

In Türkiye, these temporal rhythms are not random but embedded in the structural transformations of political regimes. Periods of media freedom often emerge during transitions, when new governments seek to legitimize their authority by granting expressive liberties. However, as institutional power consolidates and opposition voices become more organized, regimes tend to revert to censorship, coercion, and surveillance. These alternating "seasons" of openness and repression form a patterned continuity across different historical moments, echoing Khaldūn's notion of rise, maturity, and decline in dynastic cycles.

This article focuses on three critical junctures to analyse how these cycles unfold in Turkish media history. The first is the Armistice period (1918–1923) when the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and Allied occupation created a pluralistic yet precarious press landscape. Leftist, Islamist, liberal, and nationalist newspapers coexisted in a fragmented public sphere. However, with the consolidation of Republican authority, especially after the 1925 Sheikh Said Rebellion, the state redefined the boundaries of press freedom through the Law on the Maintenance of Order. Socialist publications like *Kurtuluş* and *Aydınlık*, once tolerated, were swiftly suppressed—signaling the end of a short-lived season of pluralism.

The second episode examines the Democrat Party era (1950–1960), initially celebrated for its break with single-party rule and its promises of democratization. Early on, the DP's approach to media reflected a liberal orientation, supporting pluralism and journalistic autonomy. Yet, as political opposition mounted and economic instability grew, the government adopted restrictive press laws, criminalized dissent, and institutionalized patronage systems favouring pro-government media. These developments culminated in a clientelist media order, paving the way for military intervention in 1960. Ironically, the National Unity Committee, which initially promised a new democratic order, gradually reverted to practices of selective press control—repeating the familiar pattern of permission followed by punishment.

The third case is the period surrounding the 1971 military memorandum, which reveals the structural entrenchment of media suppression within the apparatus of national security. The attempted coup of March 9, led by left-Kemalist officers, and the subsequent crackdown on journalists and intellectuals—including the torture of İlhan Selçuk at Ziverbey Mansion—marked a new phase of authoritarian control under the guise of technocratic governance. Here, media freedom was no longer merely constrained by formal censorship; it became subject to extra-legal violence and surveillance, expanding the repertoire of state power over communication. This period exemplifies how the seasonal logic of repression intensifies over time, with each cycle narrowing the scope for oppositional media and normalizing the intertwining of ideology and coercion.

Taken together, these episodes illustrate that media history in Türkiye does not follow a linear trajectory of liberalization or decline, but rather a cyclical pattern shaped by both structural change and ideological contestation. The Khaldûnian model allows us to see the press not only as a reflection of political power but as an active terrain where legitimacy is constructed, challenged, and reconstituted. In tracing these cycles, the article emphasizes that the historical fate of media in Türkiye remains bound to shifting “seasons” of rule—periods of consent followed by phases of consolidation and repression.

### Approach: Khaldûn's Cyclical History

In the study, Ibn Khaldûn's cyclical history approach is used as a method. Ibn Khaldûn's historical epistemology offers a foundational perspective for understanding ideological formations in digital media. His distinction between sensory-cognitive and intuitive-intellectual knowledge highlights a critical stance toward established historical narratives. According to Khaldûn, sensory perception forms the basis of cognition, providing raw material for general ideas, which must constantly be verified through experience and compared with reality. This emphasis on empirical scrutiny over dogmatic acceptance laid the groundwork for a form

of historical realism. Khaldûn divided history into two phases—nomadic and sedentary—framing a structural tension between society and the state. In the nomadic phase, social organization is based on spontaneous cohesion and the voluntary acceptance of authority. In the sedentary phase, governance operates through institutionalized power and coercion. Despite working with a limited historical dataset, primarily drawn from Berber tribes and Arab dynasties in North Africa, Khaldûn formulated sharp theoretical insights. His observations suggested that political authority is grounded in economic capacity and that the dynamic interaction between these forces determines the trajectory of history. This framework reveals parallels with modern critiques of ideology, particularly in how digital platforms mediate power relations. Khaldûn's recognition of the symbolic and material foundations of political order resonates with contemporary concerns about cultural production, ideological reproduction, and the commodification of communication. His thought thus remains relevant for interpreting how digital media, including video games, become sites of ideological negotiation where history, identity, and power are gamified and contested (Seidler, 2020, pp. 259–267).

Ibn Khaldûn completed his three-volume work *Muqaddimah* in 1375 as the introductory section of his larger historiographical project, *Kitāb al- Ibar*. In this foundational text, he proposed a layered understanding of history. For Ibn Khaldûn, the outer or apparent meaning of history pertains to recording the changes in human conditions, territorial expansion, and the rise and fall of power. However, the inner meaning lies in the analytical inquiry into causality—the underlying reasons for events and the structural dynamics of civilizations. He criticized previous Muslim historians, such as al-Waqidi and al-Masudi, for reproducing unverifiable accounts without critical scrutiny, emphasizing that history must be grounded in rational analysis and empirical plausibility. Ibn Khaldûn's approach marked a significant departure by treating history as a knowledge domain governed by specific principles, including social laws, climate conditions, and the dynamics of belief systems. He proposed a cyclical theory of political development, where states pass through five stages: foundation, consolidation, expansion, stagnation, and decline. These cycles are driven by the strength of *asabiyyah*—a form of social cohesion that gradually weakens as societies move from nomadic to sedentary life. His analysis of geographical determinism, tribal dynamics, and the sociopolitical consequences of luxury and overcentralisation provided a proto-sociological perspective that

would influence thinkers such as Vico, Michelet, and Comte. Thus, Ibn Khaldûn's cyclical theory of history and his rigorous epistemological method continue to offer a profound lens for analysing the evolution and decline of political and cultural systems (Karaca, 2022, pp. 91-94).

Ibn Khaldûn's cyclical theory of history outlines five distinct stages in the rise and fall of states. The initial phase, often referred to as the "victory" stage, begins when a group defeats its rivals and gains dominance, although formal state structures have not yet been fully established. This is followed by the "authoritarianism" phase, in which the ruler consolidates power and governs unilaterally, marking the formation of a fully institutionalized state. The third stage, called the "prosperity" phase, is characterized by political stability, luxury, and cultural flourishing. Intellectual and artistic advancements thrive, and the population enjoys comfort and peace. The fourth phase, the "tranquillity" stage, is marked by a conservative effort to preserve the status quo established by previous rulers, with a sense of complacency and overreliance on inherited governance. Finally, the "extravagance" stage signals the onset of decline. Resources are squandered, unqualified individuals are placed in positions of power, and the military weakens. As indulgence increases and expenses exceed revenues, internal decay sets in and external threats grow. This decadence paves the way for the resurgence of a more austere and disciplined tribal group, which overthrows the decaying state, initiating the cycle anew. The model reflects Ibn Khaldûn's belief that civilizational cycles are shaped by patterns of solidarity, power, decline, and renewal (Çiftçi & Yılmaz, 2013, p. 87).

Ibn Khaldûn's classification of sciences reflects a complex and evolving understanding of intellectual inquiry, particularly about his conception of history (tārīkh) and the science of human civilization (ilm al- umrān). Although some scholars argue that he did not explicitly place history and umrān within the realm of rational or philosophical sciences, a closer reading of his statements reveals that he considered them part of the domain of intellectual investigation. While adopting an Aristotelian framework for the classification of sciences, Ibn Khaldûn deviates from it by omitting practical philosophy, which creates ambiguity in situating umrān and history. However, if umrān is seen as empirical and investigative, and history as theoretical, then both can be understood as forming a dual structure that bridges theory and practice. This perspective implies the need for a reorganization of the traditional taxonomy of sciences to accommodate these

fields. Furthermore, since Ibn Khaldūn sharply criticizes earlier historians for lacking methodological rigor and promotes critical scrutiny based on social laws and contextual causality, his approach signals the emergence of a new scientific method in historiography. Consequently, some scholars propose a third category in the classification of sciences, distinct from both rational and religious sciences, which they call "civil sciences," encompassing history, politics, sociology, and economics. This reclassification highlights Ibn Khaldūn's contribution not only to Islamic intellectual tradition but also to the foundational thinking of the modern social sciences (Akyol, 2011, p. 53).

In the words of Ibn Khaldūn, cyclical history can be put forward as follows: "The life of a dynasty is like the life of a person: it grows up to a certain age, then stagnates, and then enters a phase of decline" (Khalidun, 2022, p. 259). This historical approach can be read as a method as follows: An event (in this study, the history of media in Türkiye) can be read in the stages of birth, development, and extinction. However, when this event is interpreted from the perspective of oppression, it can be seen oppositely, that is, in the dialectics of freedom granted to media outlets by political powers.

## Methodology

This study adopts a historical-comparative analysis to investigate the cyclical patterns of press freedom in Türkiye. The research is based on qualitative content analysis of primary sources (such as period newspapers, legislative texts, and official decrees) and secondary sources (scholarly articles, historical monographs). Three major historical periods (Armistice Period, Democrat Party era, and the post-1971 military memorandum period) are purposefully selected due to their significance in reflecting shifts in media-state relations. Data are coded thematically to identify recurring patterns of liberalization and repression. The analytical framework draws upon Ibn Khaldūn's cyclical model, interpreting historical episodes through the lens of stages such as foundation, consolidation, and decline. This methodological approach enables the integration of historiographical theory with the political economy of communication.

Although the article is primarily theoretical and interpretive in character, its methodological underpinnings are made explicit in order to provide transparency and analytical rigor. The selection of periods is based on their exemplary nature in illustrating cyclical transformations in media-state relations, while the range of

sources—combining both secondary literature and primary historical documents—ensures the empirical robustness of the analysis. The study employs a purposive sampling strategy to focus on the most relevant historical episodes and systematically codes these periods for indicators of consent production, control, and coercion. The interpretive approach is justified given the aim to understand not only the surface events but also the underlying structural logics, institutional mechanisms, and ideological dynamics that drive the recurring cycles of press freedom and repression in Turkish media history.

Despite significant research on press freedom and political transitions, there is a lack of a cyclical, process-oriented framework that systematically explains how media institutions oscillate between phases of openness and repression in response to shifts in regime power. Drawing inspiration from Ibn Khaldûn’s cyclical theory of history, this study proposes the Media Cycle Model, a dynamic framework for understanding the repeated transitions between media liberalization and restriction.

The rationale for adopting Ibn Khaldûn’s approach is that it provides a non-linear, process-based lens for interpreting the persistent oscillations between pluralism and repression, moving beyond linear modernization narratives. The cyclical framework makes it possible to conceptualize and compare historical episodes as patterned cycles—each involving stages of initial liberalization, increasing control, and eventual coercion—rather than as isolated or exceptional cases. This model thus addresses an important gap in the literature and provides a transferable analytical tool for the study of media and regime dynamics in comparable settings.

In this study, each of the selected historical periods is examined as a distinct cycle in which Ibn Khaldûn’s five-stage model—victory, authoritarianism, prosperity, stagnation, and decline—can be identified. Rather than assigning a single historical period to a single Khaldûnian stage, the analysis demonstrates that each period contains its own internal cycle that mirrors these five stages. This comparative approach allows for the identification of recurring patterns in the evolution of press freedom across different political contexts in Türkiye. By applying the full Khaldûnian cycle to each episode—the Armistice Period, the Democrat Party era, and the post-1971 military memorandum period—the study highlights how phases of pluralism and liberalization are regularly succeeded by increasing control, con-



solidation, and ultimately repression and decline, before the emergence of a new cycle. This perspective not only strengthens the theoretical foundation of the article but also demonstrates the explanatory value of cyclical analysis in understanding the shifting relationship between media and political power in Turkish history.

The model consists of three interrelated phases that together constitute the cyclical dynamics of media–state relations. The first phase, consent production, emerges during the early or transitional periods of a regime, when governments allow and even encourage pluralism in the media sphere. During this stage, press freedom is instrumentalized to legitimize authority and generate public consent, fostering an environment of apparent liberalization and openness. As the regime moves into the phase of control, it gradually imposes restrictions on the press, often through regulatory measures, economic patronage, or administrative limitations. These mechanisms serve to subtly curb oppositional voices while maintaining the outward appearance of media freedom. Finally, in the phase of coercion, when dissent intensifies or the stability of the regime is perceived to be under threat, more overt forms of repression are deployed. This stage is characterized by direct censorship, the implementation of legal sanctions, the imprisonment of journalists, or even the use of physical violence against media actors. Together, these phases form a recurring cycle in which each new period or regime tends to repeat the trajectory from initial liberalization, through increasing control, to outright coercion. Each new regime or power shift tends to reset the process, moving from initial liberalization (consent) toward eventual repression (coercion). Throughout, economic, and legal instruments function as the main levers for transitioning between stages. This cyclical model addresses a significant gap in the literature, which often treats media liberalization or repression as linear or exceptional. By conceptualizing media history as a series of patterned cycles, the model illuminates the structural logic that underpins both recurring moments of press freedom and their subsequent curtailment. It also provides a transferable analytical tool for comparative studies in other contexts marked by authoritarian tendencies or unstable democratization.

## **Media History and Pressures in Türkiye**

The historical trajectory of media in Türkiye is marked by recurring cycles of liberalization and repression, reflecting the shifting dynamics between power and public discourse. This section examines three pivotal periods to explore how successive regimes have instrumentalized media freedom as a tool for political legiti-



macy, only to curtail it when dissent grew threatening. The first episode concerns the Armistice years (1918–1922) and the early Republican period, during which diverse ideological voices—including the socialist press—briefly flourished before being suppressed under the consolidation of the Kemalist state. The second focus-es on the early 1960s, when the 1960 military coup opened a window for media liberalization in the lead-up to the Justice Party's political rise. The final episode centres on the 1971 military memorandum, a moment when the illusion of press freedom collapsed into overt authoritarianism. In each case, initial expansions of media liberty served to generate public consent, but this was swiftly followed by increasing control as ruling powers sought to monopolize political narratives and suppress alternative voices. Each section was examined within the context of the three stages determined in the context of the media cycle.

## Armistice Period (1918–1922)

**Consent Production:** The Armistice period marked a phase of intense pluralism in the media landscape. Istanbul became a center for diverse political and ideological publications. Newspapers supporting the National Struggle, such as *İleri*, *Yeni Gün*, *Akşam*, and *Vakit*, coexisted with anti-resistance outlets like *Peyam-ı Sabah* and *Alemdar*. Other periodicals, including *Tasvir-i Efkâr* and *Tevhid-i Efkâr*, took more nuanced positions. Radical voices also found space, with *Sebilürreşad* representing hardline Islamism and *Aydınlık* giving voice to the communist left (Topuz, 2003, p. 98). The emergence of *Kurtuluş* and the foundation of the Turkish Socialist Party of Workers and Peasants illustrate the left's organizational and intellectual momentum during this period (Çavdar, 2004, p. 235). This pluralism was facilitated by the absence of strong central authority and the ongoing contest for political power, creating an open—if precarious—media environment.

**Control:** As the National Resistance movement consolidated power, the environment began to change. The republican government and Ankara authorities gradually implemented legal and economic controls on the press. Support was extended to pro-Kuvayi Milliye newspapers through material aid, exemptions from military service, and privileged access to resources. At the same time, opposition and leftist publications faced increasing scrutiny and bureaucratic obstacles (Tamer, 2010, p. 25). In Anatolia, technical limitations and financial hardship further restricted the press, even as it was mobilized in support of the national cause.

**Coercion:** The turning point came with the Sheikh Said Rebellion and the subsequent enactment of the Law on the Maintenance of Order (*Takrir-i Sükûn*) in 1925. This legislation gave the government sweeping powers to suppress dissent and directly target the press. Article 1, in particular, allowed broad and discretionary intervention. Publications sympathetic to opposition movements, especially those in Istanbul and from the socialist left, were banned and their editors prosecuted (Özgen, 2000, p. 20). The law marked the transition from relative openness to sys-

tematic repression, as the new regime prioritized consolidation and ideological control over media pluralism.

## Democrat Party

**Consent Production:** The shift to multi-party politics after 1946 created new opportunities for press freedom in Türkiye. The amendment of the 1931 Press Law's notorious Article 50 limited the government's power to shut down newspapers and transferred some authority to the judiciary. This resulted in a surge of new publications and increased journalistic pluralism. The early Democrat Party (DP) years raised hopes for liberal reforms. Prime Minister Adnan Menderes publicly promised to protect press freedom, framing it as central to democracy and political rights (Cakir & Yavalar, 2017, pp. 258-260). Opposition figures such as Celal Bayar and Menderes himself positioned press freedom as essential for democratic progress.

**Control:** However, these reforms were soon limited. After the DP took power in 1950, the government began to set clearer boundaries for media autonomy. Criticism against the new press law emerged, especially from the opposition newspaper *Ulus* and the Turkish Journalists' Association, who argued that the proposed bill retained illiberal features (Emre Kaya, 2010, p. 94). In practice, the DP government increased state intervention in media through amendments and new regulations. The Second Menderes Government made clear that certain activities were not protected as freedom of thought. In 1953 and 1954, the government introduced laws that allowed prosecution for insulting ministers and criminalized defamation and "false news," often without granting journalists the right to prove their claims (Yıldız, 1996, pp. 491-492). Economic instruments also became tools of control: the state monopolized newsprint imports and advertisement distribution, creating a dependency among newspapers.

**Coercion:** By the mid-1950s, tensions between the government and the press escalated. Laws passed in 1954 and 1956 sharply restricted journalistic freedom. The DP increasingly differentiated between pro-government and opposition newspapers in the allocation of resources and access to state funds. Journalists critical of the regime faced legal persecution, imprisonment, and the closure of their publications (Arik, 2010, pp. 301-302). After the 1960 military coup, investigations revealed systematic favoritism: government-aligned newspapers received disproportionate official advertisement revenue, while critics were excluded and pressured (Ökte, 2023, p. 272). The DP era ended with the press under heavy legal and economic pressure, its pluralism stifled by both subtle and overt repression.

## The Process Leading to the 1971 Coup

**Consent Production:** After the May 27, 1960, military intervention, the National Unity Committee (NUC) adopted an initially liberal approach to the media. Drawing on the rhetoric that "the remedy for the problems caused by press freedom is more

press freedom,” the Committee took visible steps to expand media liberty. Previously banned newspapers were reopened, and journalists imprisoned under anti-democratic laws were released. These measures were welcomed by international observers and reinforced by new constitutional articles, which established press freedom as a fundamental right. The NUC’s policies initially encouraged the press to function as an independent actor in the process of democratic reconstruction, and the liberal atmosphere inspired demands for further reforms (Şahin, 2023, pp. 728-730).

**Control:** However, this liberal phase was short-lived. The 1961 Constitution’s protections began to erode as the decade progressed. Although the number of press-related lawsuits dropped in the early 1960s, by the end of the decade prosecutions surged dramatically, signalling the re-emergence of repressive tendencies. Economic pressures also shaped the media landscape. Newspapers, often financially unsustainable, became increasingly dependent on state subsidies and commercial advertisements. As a result, large capital groups and business interests gained more influence over the press. This corporate concentration blurred the boundaries between press autonomy and political patronage, leading to the consolidation of a “third sector” in the economy—where the Hürriyet press empire and others dominated (Koloğlu, 2006, pp. 133-135).

**Coercion:** The cycle culminated in a return to overt repression during and after the March 12, 1971, military memorandum. The military, reacting to perceived threats from the left and to failed coup attempts, imposed widespread restrictions on rights and dissolved or banned numerous progressive organizations and publications. Journalists, intellectuals, and dissidents were arrested, tortured, and in some cases executed, as seen in the fates of Deniz Gezmiş, Mahir Çayan, and their comrades (Özsever, 2025). The Ziverbey Mansion became a notorious symbol of state violence against the press: Cumhuriyet columnist İlhan Selçuk, among many others, was detained and tortured as part of the regime’s broader campaign to silence oppositional voices. These events marked a decisive turn toward authoritarian consolidation and demonstrated the fragility of press freedom in times of political crisis (Özsever, 2024).

**Table 1:** Cyclical Mechanisms in Three Historical Periods

Period	Consent Production	Control Mechanisms	Economic Instruments	Legal Regulations
Armistice Period	Pluralism, tolerance for diverse voices, support for nationalist press	Suppression of opposition after consolidation, censorship	Material support for pro-government press	Law on the Maintenance of Order (1925)
Democrat Party Era (1950–60)	Democrat Party Era (1950–60)	Democrat Party Era (1950–60)	Democrat Party Era (1950–60)	Democrat Party Era (1950–60)
Post-1971 Military Period	Post-1971 Military Period	Post-1971 Military Period	Post-1971 Military Period	Post-1971 Military Period

## Discussion

The trajectory of press freedom in modern Turkish history reveals a recurrent pattern: political regimes initially extend liberties to cultivate public consent and legitimacy but gradually resort to coercive control when faced with dissent. This dialectic between freedom and repression underscores the instrumental role of the press in regime consolidation and the precariousness of journalistic autonomy under shifting political orders.

The Armistice period clearly illustrates this cyclical dynamic. During the collapse of the empire and foreign occupation, Istanbul became home to a vibrant press scene. Nationalist, liberal, Islamist, and socialist publications all found space to operate. The lack of a strong central authority enabled this diversity, but it also reflected deep political uncertainty. When the Republican government consolidated its power and confronted threats such as the Sheikh Said Rebellion, it responded by passing the Law on the Maintenance of Order (1925). This law sharply limited press freedom, using national security as justification. A similar pattern occurred during the Democrat Party era. The DP initially promoted press freedom as part of its democratic agenda. However, over time, the government imposed restrictive laws and targeted oppositional media. This led to the rise of a clientelist media system. Newspapers supportive of the regime received state benefits, while critical outlets faced censorship, legal action, and economic pressure.

The 1960 military intervention also reveals the unstable nature of press free-

dom. Although the National Unity Committee promoted liberal reforms and constitutional guarantees for the media, these promises proved fragile. As media became more politicized and ideological divisions deepened, press laws were applied selectively. Economic pressure and targeted repression increased. By the late 1960s, legal protections for the press often failed in practice. Courts and the bureaucracy worked together to suppress dissent. At the same time, wealthy business groups took control of major newspapers. This shift blurred the distinction between an independent press and politically dependent media.

The 1971 military memorandum marks a turning point where the repression of the press became both systematic and symbolic. The torture of İlhan Selçuk at Ziverbey Mansion represents more than an isolated case of state violence—it reflects the extent to which regimes perceive independent journalism as a threat to ideological hegemony. Under the guise of restoring order, the state targeted journalists, intellectuals, and political activists, using extra-legal mechanisms to reshape public discourse. The military's indirect rule through technocratic governance underscored a central paradox: even as constitutional norms remained formally intact, authoritarian practices flourished beneath the surface.

This historical sequence aligns with Ibn Khaldûn's cyclical theory of political development, in which regimes evolve through stages of foundation, consolidation, prosperity, stagnation, and decline. In Khaldûnian terms, the initial extension of press freedom may be understood as a strategy of producing public consent to strengthen legitimacy in the foundational or transitional phases of power. Yet as states move into the consolidation and stagnation phases, they increasingly perceive dissenting voices as threats to the established order. This triggers mechanisms of control, whether through legal reforms, economic marginalization, or outright coercion. The Turkish case exemplifies how press freedom becomes an index of political maturity and fragility alike—offered generously in times of regime formation and withdrawn harshly under pressures of dissent and instability.

Thus, across multiple regimes—monarchical, parliamentary, and military—a consistent logic emerges: press freedom is tolerated only as far as it aligns with dominant political interests. Once dissent threatens to mobilize alternative narratives or challenge institutional authority, repression ensues. The Turkish experience therefore illustrates how media freedoms are not merely legal entitlements but are deeply embedded in the political economy of power, ideological production, and social control. Each historical phase studied here reaffirms that regimes, regardless of their ideological orientation, tend to oscillate between liberalization and restriction, using the press as both a vehicle for legitimacy and an object of suppression. In this regard, the history of press-state relations in Türkiye is less a linear progression toward freedom than a cyclical pattern of consent, consolidation, and coercion.

This cyclical pattern, first observed in early Republican and multiparty periods, continues to resonate in the contemporary era. The 2000s and beyond—particularly under the AKP government—have witnessed both liberalizing legal reforms and intensified mechanisms of control and coercion over the media. While EU harmonization laws in the early 2000s led to partial expansions of press freedom, subsequent years have been marked by renewed cycles of economic patronage, regulatory restrictions, criminal prosecutions of journalists, state intervention in media ownership (Topuz & Yaşar, 2020, pp. 117–132). The rise of digital platforms and social media initially opened new spaces for pluralism and dissent; however, government responses have included new forms of censorship, expanded legal sanctions, mass layoffs, and pervasive self-censorship. As a result, contemporary Turkish media demonstrates that the Khaldūnian cycle of consent, control, and coercion remains highly relevant, with each new phase of liberalization followed by increasingly sophisticated methods of repression and consolidation of power—now also extending into the digital sphere. This enduring pattern underscores the persistent structural and ideological dynamics that continue to shape press freedom in Türkiye.

## Conclusion

This study has examined the history of press-state relations in Türkiye through the lens of Ibn Khaldūn's cyclical theory of history, proposing that media freedom operates not as a linear progression toward democratic idealism, but as a patterned oscillation between liberty and repression. Drawing from Khaldūn's historiographical method and his model of dynastic rise and decline, the article has demonstrated how each political regime in Türkiye—from the late Ottoman Armistice years to the military-dominated 1970s—has followed a recurring logic: freedom is extended to produce consent during formative or transitional phases, only to be gradually withdrawn as political authority stabilizes and dissent threatens the existing order.

These findings reveal that media institutions in Türkiye have long been situated within a precarious terrain shaped by ideological reproduction and political consolidation. Press freedom functions less as a stable entitlement and more as a contingent privilege, granted and revoked according to the needs of hegemonic governance. While periods such as the early 1960s or post-1950 elections initially created opportunities for vibrant journalistic pluralism, they gave way to mechanisms of censorship, patronage, and even state-sanctioned violence—as starkly illustrated by the torture of journalists like İlhan Selçuk in the aftermath of the 12 March intervention.

By integrating Khaldūn's cyclical insights with the political economy of communication, this article argues that Turkish media history is best understood as a

temporally recursive structure, marked by the dialectic of consent and coercion. The implications extend beyond Türkiye: in an age of digital capitalism, algorithmic governance, and platformized propaganda, understanding the cyclical nature of media freedoms—how they emerge, flourish, and recede—remains vital to safeguarding communicative democracy. Just as Khaldûn emphasized the importance of empirical scrutiny in the writing of history, contemporary media studies must remain attentive to the structural conditions that underlie both the promises and the betrayals of press freedom.



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