

## Turkish Media and the Root Of the Problems

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### Abstract

The media produces news, information and cultural content as a professional business. These products, which affect every aspect of people's daily life practices, are produced depending on the historically organized form of media operating as a commercial company. The media not only transmits information but also has the function of producing and disseminating symbols that can be called symbolic production. The significance of media is undeniable. Therefore, both the structure of the market system and the analysis of the policies that affect the content production of the media are the central problem of academic studies on the subject.

Government interventions have a significant impact on the way the media industries operate within the free market system. There is no doubt that the state affects the media market as a nonmarket entity. Political interventions and regulations in the media show a significant deviation from the free market system. These controls, which vary from country to country and often driven by historical backgrounds, produce results in the form of concentration/monopolization /polarization of ownership in the market system. There is a close relationship between the structure of the media ownership and the way the media system is organized and the extent to which the media institutions can fulfil their social functions.

Authoritarian capitalism, which is used to understand the economic, political, ideological and environmental crisis of capitalism, is based on the social consent and repression created by rapid economic growth. Restriction of freedom in almost every field is seen as a prerequisite for political stability. Despite the liberalization of market forces, neo-liberal policies are still state-guided.

The media industry in Turkey is organized according to the structure and activities of the free market. However, the media industries are directly involved in the control of political powers due to both political arrangements and concentration in ownership of property structure. In this study, laws for the media industry in Turkey and political arrangements will be analysed. The concentration/polarization of media ownership will be revealed with both of their economic and political reasons. The problems of media regulations on the work of the media will be discussed within the framework of the political economy approach.

**Key words:** Authoritarian capitalism, media regulation, polarization, political economy, Turkey.

## Türkiye’de Medya Ve Sorunların Kökeni

### Özet

Medyanın profesyonel iş olarak haber, enformasyon ve kültürel içerik üretmektedir. İnsanların günlük yaşam pratiklerinin her alanını etkileyen bu ürünler, ticari bir şirket olarak faaliyet gösteren medyanın tarihsel olarak örgütlenme biçimine bağlı olarak üretilmektedir. Medya yalnızca enformasyon aktarımı yapmaz aynı zamanda sembolik üretim olarak adlandırılabilir semboller üretmek ve yayma işlevine de sahiptir. Toplumlar da medyanı önemli yadsınamaz. Bu nedenle medyanın içerik üretimini etkileyen gerek piyasa sisteminin yapısı gerekse onu da etkileyen politikaların analizi akademik çalışmaların merkezi sorunudur.

Devlet müdahaleleri serbest piyasa sistemi içinde faaliyette bulunan medya endüstrilerinin iş yapış biçimini önemli oranda etkilemekte ve belirlemektedir. Devletin “piyasa dışı” bir aktör olarak medya piyasalarına etki ettiği görülmektedir. Medyaya yapılan politik müdahaleler ve düzenlemeler serbest piyasa sisteminden önemli bir sapma gösterir. Ülkeden ülkeye ve tarihsel olarak değişiklik gösteren bu kontroller, piyasa sisteminde mülkiyette yoğunlaşma/tekelleşme/kutuplaşma şeklinde sonuçlar ortaya çıkarır. Medyanın mülkiyet yapısı ve medya sisteminin düzenleniş biçimi ile medya kurumlarının toplumsal işlevlerini ne ölçüde yerine getirebildikleri arasında yakın bir ilişki bulunmaktadır.

Kapitalizmin ekonomik, siyasi, ideolojik ve çevresel krizini tanımak için kullanılan otoriter kapitalizm, hızlı iktisadi büyümenin yarattığı toplumsal rızaya ve baskıya dayanıyor. Hemen her alanda özgürlüklerin kısıtlanması siyasal istikrarın önkoşulu olarak görülüyor. Piyasa güçlerinin serbestleşmesine karşın yine de neo-liberal politikalar devlet güdümlü uygulanıyor. Merkeziyetçi siyasi sistemleri piyasa güçleri aracılığıyla liberalleştirme projesi hemen her yerde otoriter kapitalizmi güçlendiriyor.

Türkiye’de medya endüstrileri serbest piyasa yapısına göre örgütlenmekte ve faaliyet göstermektedir. Fakat medya endüstrileri gerek politik düzenlemeler ve gerekse mülkiyet yapısındaki yoğunlaşmalar dolayı politik iktidarların doğrudan kontrol alanına dahil olmaktadır. Bu çalışmada Türkiye’de medya endüstrilerine yönelik yasalar ve politik düzenlemelerin analiz edilecektir. Medya mülkiyetin yoğunlaşması/kutuplaşmasını hem ekonomik hem de siyasal nedenleri ortaya konulacaktır. Medya düzenlemelerinin medyanın iş yapışı üzerinde nasıl sorunlar meydana getirdiği ekonomi politik yaklaşım çerçevesinde ele alınacaktır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Otoriter kapitalizm, medya düzenlemesi, kutuplaşma, ekonomi politik, Türkiye

### Introduction: Inversion into Authoritarian Capitalism

Poulantzas points out that after the events that followed the crisis of the 1970s, the new era of capitalism saw the rise of an authoritarian style. Verbalized as the authoritarian state form or authoritarian neoliberalism, it is defined as the breaches of normal guarantees related to constitutional state which includes moving away from democracy and legality, bypassing the parliamentary authority and debate systems, and not protecting the social rights of the people (Wilkinson 2019).

Hereunder, capitalism has a permanent structural feature that has brought the dissolution of democratic diplomacy in a way. The most prominent characteristic of this change is how the up to date dynamics of capitalism cancelled out the active democratic

means of the past and reformed accordingly. Executive organs getting overpowered and therefore the separation of powers getting blurred, arbitrary policies limiting the freedoms of the citizens, inactivation of the political parties and transferring their responsibilities to the bureaucracy, power transferred from a transparent and legal government to a „core" group of executive power holders and therefore the state secrets replacing the public informing, turning the constitutional state upside down to actualize all of these and the inconsistent, incursory way of these changes being implemented just to make an impression that these are going blindly (Karahanoğulları and Türk 2018: 405-406, citing Poulantzas 2008).

Jessop, categorizing the prominent decisive features of the authoritarian state, concentrate on four main headlines: power transfer from the legislation to the executive organ and power being concentrated on it, separation of power getting greyed and the fall of the constitutional state functions, decline in the roles of the political parties, and the parallel structures of power rising beside the formal organization of the state and their effectiveness growing by day. With these incursions, in the authoritarian state the role and theme of the state is reshaped. So, structural changes occur in the state organ and the most concrete way of these changes can be seen in the relationship between the legislative and executive organs. The great change is how the executive power takes the responsibilities and reach of the legislative organ (Karahanoğulları and Türk 2018: 408-409). As the role of the parliament declines, political parties lose their effectiveness in the power bloc. The empty grounds created by these effects are filled up by the state bureaucracy. So, one can say that there is an ever-growing bureaucracy.

Bruff indicates that the state intervened in the market as a „nonmarket“ entity in the 2007 economical crisis in the free market system. Therefore, neoliberal reform doesn't reject the „nonmarket“ establishments ( like privatizing ) but on the contrary, these establishments are set in motion to further new social agendas and this means that figuratively nonmarket social life spaces are of special importance to the neoliberal ideology. It is the general characteristics of authoritarian neoliberalism that the state is unable to resort to material conditions more indirectly while making it incapable of reversing socioeconomic inequalities, making arrangements for non-market institutions to find a place, and re-conceptualizing a non-democratic state. (Bruff 2018).

Poulantzas discusses that the state is of utmost importance for any social group vying to rule and the state is the most important factor to establish power in the capitalist societies (cited by Bruff 2018). So the authoritarian state resembles a renewed form of the bourgeoisie republic on today's capitalism. Insel, however, indicates that the authoritarian capitalism

which is the economical, political, ideological and environmental crisis state of capitalism, is derived from the public consent of the rapid economic growth and the repression. The following decline of the freedoms in every aspect of life is seen as the bone structural feature of the political stability in the aforementioned definitions. In addition, despite the liberalization of market forces, the state-driven implementation of neo-liberal policies is still the main feature of authoritarian capitalism. (Insel, July 3, 201). Zizek (2009) also stated that what emerged in the Far East after the 2008 financial crisis was authoritarian capitalism. "I think this will be something new: It is a much more dynamic capitalism than ours, but it does not need democracy in the long run " (Zizek, 2009). Insel (July 14, 2018) states that the complete commodification of social relations in authoritarian capitalism is fed by the insecurities, anti-unionization, future anxiety and social polarizations caused by taking steps not only to create a market economy but also to establish a market society. Putin's glorious "vertical power", the gathering of all state powers and the loss of all autonomy of institutions constitute the ideal management model of this authoritarian capitalism. The strict control of the media forms the basis of this new structure (Insel, 14 July 2018).

The path followed in neoliberal authoritarianization of the political regime in capitalism manifests itself in the form of the restructuring of the state both structurally and in determining and implementing public policies. In Turkey, from a historical standpoint, neoliberal authoritarianization and the evolution of the political regime into the authoritarian statism can be seen far before the AKP's rise to power, in the 1980s. What is new is the capital accumulation of the building industries rise to prominence, shaping with large investments of public sector procurement of capital accumulation since the 2000s in Turkey. An economic mechanism has been established not only with the creation of new commodity fields such as the construction and real estate sectors, but also by the commodification of nature and public goods that had no economic value, or by creating political/legal interventions on the market - tax incentives, subsidies, privatizations, etc. (Karahanoğulları and Türk 2018: 421).

As with the Presidential system since 2018, the new state system saw the power of execution residing only with the president. In addition, the Presidential system within the state apparatus became autonomous and centralized and came to the forefront against the legislature. (Güzelsarı, *Ayrıntı*, January 15, 2019)

AKP era also caused the central government to increase its power, intensify and centralize the public administration. This new centralization means that the power only belongs to one center. (Fedai 2015: 163-164) In this new system, power being centralized and

gather on the executive organ is the prime characteristic of the Presidential government system. This new centralized way of government can be seen as an important step towards an authoritarian state. With this new structure, the media market has been reshaped. For this, it is seen that indirect intervention in the free market operation of the state leads to concentration and polarization in the media market.

### **Structure of the Media Market: “Off Market” Institutions and Regulations Affecting the Media**

In line with the neoliberal policies, privatization and the commercialization process in Turkey began in the 1980s. This period led to the beginning of significant changes in the media markets. With the investments of the business people who get their capital accumulation from non-media areas, a concentration in the media market occurred. This new structure continues today.

After the implementation of neoliberal policies since 1980, institutional and legal regulations related to media markets have also been put into effect. The 1980s were a period in which radio and television broadcasting was reorganized and restructured all over the world. Radio and television broadcasting were state-performed till the 1980s in Turkey, but afterward, the state-owned telecommunication and public broadcasting institutions were deregulated and privatized, while new private owned commercial broadcasting companies were started to be found. Public service broadcasting, supported and defended by political governments for many years, has slowly begun to lose its former position. As a result, pressures have been made to partially or fully privatize these institutions, particularly within the framework of neoliberal economic policies aimed at withdrawing from and downsizing most of the state's production areas. (Çaplı 2001: 46). In the new period, with the deregulation policies, broadcasting in the state's monopoly and legal obstacles to private investment in broadcasting (radio and television) have been eliminated.

In Turkey with 1990, with the start of the private radio and television broadcasting, the media market experienced vertical and horizontal mergers and media oligopolies emerged as a result. Thus, property concentration started to appear in the media market. Due to the relations of interest between political governments and media owners, it caused the emergence of new conglomerates that dominated the media market in the historical process and some of them pulled from the market. These displacements have taken place as a result of various "non-market" interventions of political powers themselves, beyond the market's own functioning. Keten (T24, 2019) says that the media strategies of the AKP after the rise to

power can be categorized into 4 sections: instrumentalization of TMSF, fattening of the Islamist media, taming the mainstream media and suppressing the opposition media.

The property concentration that emerged in the media market gradually led to polarization in media discourse. Political power indirectly influenced media ownership to change hands using a variety of tools. How political power can intervene in the media market through subsidies such as public tenders, tax regulations, official announcements, and advertisements, as well as legal and institutional arrangements, is detailed below:

### ***Public Tenders***

In Turkey, the media has historically been able to survive thanks to support given by the state in various economic fields. For example, it is possible to say that the Doğan Group, one of the most powerful companies in the media market between 1980 and 2009, as well as other major actors were subsidized groups.

In the AKP period, which came to power in 2002, only the names of companies that will make subsidies have changed with the ownership of the media. In order to support the regime, various public tenders and privatizations, especially state subsidies, were used for the subsidies to be made by companies and groups that undertake media activities. (Sönmez, January 8, 2017).

Media companies were legalized to enter public tenders in 2002. According to World Bank data, Limak Holding, Cengiz Holding, Kolin, Kalyon (Medya Holding) and MNG Holding are among the top 10 companies that have received the most public tenders in infrastructure investments (electricity, natural gas, airport, road, water, and sewage). (Samar, Euronews, 31/12/2018). The government, as Esen and Gümüşçü (2018) also indicates, directs the capital through the public tenders to the institutions (Kolin, Limak, Çalık, Kazancı, Kalyon, MNG and Cengiz Holding) known to be in close relationship with AKP. 150 amendments were made to the Public Procurement Law between 2003 and 2015, and the legislative activity expanded its political discretion. Thus, transparency becomes controversial, while discrimination and basic principles of competitiveness are worn out.

Most of the company partners, which have the largest 40 media outlets, are business people. In terms of media ownership, Doğuş, Demirören, Albayrak, Ciner, Kalyon, and İhlas dominate the holding media market. These companies also carry on business in construction, energy, mining, and tourism fields. MMT Holding which grew with the government is also a part of the Turksat 6A cooperation (Sözeri 2019).

Doğuş Group is one of the three largest players in the banking, construction and tourism sectors. The economic activities of Doğuş include the construction of various dams,

roads and power plants, as well as Marmaray construction. The group also has a commercial interest in the banking, tourism and automotive industries. (Tunç, t.y).

Tax auditing, which political power uses as a favoritist policy tool, has also been politicized. There is a direct relationship between the relations of business people with tax authorities and their proximity to the government. Tax institutions tend to tolerate commercial actors affiliated with the ruling party, while punishing circles criticizing the AKP government. For example, in 2010, the government canceled out nearly \$ 1 billion of tax debt owed mostly by pro-AKP business people. Cengiz Holding, controlling the ATV and Sabah newspaper ruled by Mehmet Cengiz received a 300 million USD tax cutback, and the Albayrak Holding, owner of the Islamist Yeni Şafak received over %97 of tax discount. (Esen and Gümüşçü, 2018)

On the contrary, Doğan Group, one of the largest conglomerates in the media market since the 1980s, paid a \$ 1 billion tax penalty as a result of a series of developments since 2009. Then, as a result of various pressures of political power, Doğan group had to sell its media organizations (Hürriyet, Milliyet and Vatan and others) to Demirören Group, which has close ties with the ruling party.

#### ***Debt collection and TMSF(SDIF)***

With the economic crisis in 2001, a large part of the media companies operating in the banking sector (Bulut 2002) experienced great difficulties. Mainstream media owners, who invested in non-media fields such as construction, energy, and banking in the 1990s and used the media to support these fields, had to transfer their ownership to the SDIF with the crisis. 2001-Sabah and ATV owned by Dinç Bilgin; 2004-Star and Star TV belonging to the Uzan group; 2013- Akşam, Show TV and SkyTürk of Çukurova Group owned by Mehmet Emin Karamehmet. These media outlets are then sold to business people close to the ruling party. According to Esen and Gümüşçü (2018), by the Saving Deposit Insurance Fund (Tasarruf Mevduatı Sigorta Fonu, TMSF ) capital transfer to the companies closely tied to the ruling party happened on the pretext of a debt collection. Media companies seized since 2002 (Uzan Holding, Dinç Bilgin's Media Holding, Mehmet Emin Karamehmet's Çukurova Holding, and Aksoy Holding), ownership of newspapers, television and radio and other broadcasting institutions belonging to media holdings changed hands through the SDIF. Ethem Sancak became the owner of the Star Media group in 2008. Ethem Sancak explains his entry to the media industry as „ To defend Tayyip Erdogan and his movement in the monophonic Turkey" (T24, 26 February 2012). Sancak then buys media institutions that formerly belong to Mehmet Emin Karamehmet, which again came under the control of the SDIF. Thus, as well

as Star and Channel 24, Akşam and Güneş, he owns Skytürk 360 and 5 magazines also owns 2 radio channels. Thus, in the new period, Albayrak, Ethem Sancak, Kalyon, Ciner, and Kuwait owned capital began to quickly turn to the media sector. So, according to Keten (T24, 2019) ownership of media became a ground of media expenses taken over and over by the tenders which were not taken, but given.

### ***Distribution of Public Ads***

In the distribution/publication of company advertisements belonging to public institutions; It can be said that political tendencies/publication policies of newspapers are decisive. Public institutions such as THY, Halkbank, and PTTcell often advertise to media organizations that have liberal, right or conservative publishing policies (Karlıdağ and Bulut, 2019). For example, from 7th of May to 14th of June, Sabah, Akit, Akşam, Güneş, Star, Yenişafak and Takvim newspapers published advertisements of Vakıfbank, Halk Bank and THY every day. (Ertürk, *Sözcü*, June 16, 2019). In short, public advertisements are given to media groups that support political power. (Table, 2) Islamist media, which had a limited area and strength in the 1990s, grew with the advertisement of government banks and government support. In addition, Islamist journalists both appeared on television programs with high copyrights and undertook the control of the mainstream newspapers that were taken over by the government. This group mostly showed that they have grown by exaggerating their ratings and circulations. (Keten, T24, 2019)

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) and its affiliates distributed 57 million liras of advertising excluding sponsorships between 2017-2019. 40 million if this were given to companies close to AKP (TürkMedya –Star and Güneş-, Turkuaz Medya –Sabah, ATV, and A Haber-, İhlas Group, Demirören Group –Milliyet, CNN Türk, Hürriyet- and others). (*Bianet*, January 1, 2020) In a sense, advertisements and notices given by the government or pro-government institutions deepen the polarization in the media. According to the data of the Media Monitoring Center, BİM stores close to the government are the most advertised companies on televisions between 24-30 September and build villas by buying land from Urla for the president to rest (Sözeri 2019). However, many journalists have been dismissed. Some of these journalists try to continue their work in digital newspapers, blogs, and social media. A few opposing television channels are also struggling. Supervisory institutions and regulations do not work.

### ***Institutions and Legal Regulations***

Since 2004, the restrictions imposed on media ownership in the first Radio and Television Law of 1994, the barrier to enter public tenders for private radio and television

owners were removed and the 20 percent limit on foreign investments was raised to 50 percent. Another law regulating the media field is the Press Law No. 5187, which was renewed in 2004. The press law also does not contain a regulation to prevent condensation in the media. In 2011, frequency allocation is given to RTÜK with the Radio and Television Law No. 6112. Political power limited the market shares of media institutions to 30 percent with the law passed in 2011 to shape the ownership structure of the media. Doğan Group had to shrink its market share by selling *Star TV* to Doğuş Group in 2011 due to this legal enforcement.

With the new article added to the Law on the Establishment and Broadcasting Services of Radio and Television No. 6112 in 2018, all radio and television broadcasts reaching the audience using the internet (*Netflix, Blue TV, Puhu TV*), except for individual communication services such as Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook videos was obliged to obtain a license from RTÜK. This regulation was published in the Official Gazette on August 1, 2019, and entered into force.

On the other hand, the *AKP* regime, which uses TRT and *AA* owned by the state, financed by taxes and raises of charges on the electricity bill, has also controlled a significant amount of media power, especially in parallel with its increasing political power after 2010. (Sönmez, January 8, 2017). Doğan, Ciner and Doğuş groups, which were not seized through the SDIF, were also repressed and then annexed. After the Doğan group left the media due to tax and other pressure methods, the other two groups couldn't show any resistance. Finally, all kinds of arrangements have been made to silence the opposing media. Arrangements on press cards' obtainability on analog, regulations such as announcement cuts of Press Announcement Institution, defamation lawsuits are made. The press cards of the employees of *Evrensel* and *Birgün* newspapers were canceled lately. (Keten, *T24*, 2019) Then, upon the reactions of journalism organizations and many journalists, the yellow press cards of many media workers were reactivated.

### ***Concentration Indices***

Concentration Ratio (CR) and Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) are used to measure whether there is a concentration in the media market. In calculating of condensation ratio / CR 4, one or more firms in the sector are measured to control what percentage of the market. The largest two, four or eight companies in the industry are taken into consideration to calculate this ratio. After calculating the total market shares of these companies in the total production amount in the sector, it is tried to calculate to what extent they can control the market. (Söylemez 1998: 92). Concentration levels; CR4 <30 is a low degree of concentration

and calculation of  $30 \leq CR4$  ratios. In calculating the CR 4 ratio, the market shares of the four enterprises with the highest market share in the industry are taken into consideration and compared this ratio to the whole industry.

There are 8 media groups in 2019. These are: Albayrak Group (Yeni Şafak, TVNET and Tempo Türk TV), Ciner Group (Haber Türk, Show TV, Haber Türk TV, Bloomberg HT), Demirören Group (Milliyet, Hürriyet, Posta, Hürriyet Daily News, Fanatik, Kanal D TV, CNN Türk TV, TV 2, Dream TV, Demirören News Agency and YAYSAT Distribution), Doğuş Group (NTV, Star TV, Kral TV), İhlas Group (Türkiye, TGRT TV), Kalyon Group (Sabah, Takvim, Daily Sabah, Fotomaç, Yeni Asır, ATV, A Haber TV, Turkuvaz Distribution, D&R), Sözcü Group (Sözcü, Korkusuz , AMK), Türk Medya Group (Akşam, Güneş, Star, Kanal 24 TV and 360 TV).

Accordingly, as shown in Table I, five media groups control about 80 percent of the media market.

Table 1: Post-Sales (Latest) Concentration Levels in Print Media (January 2020)

<b>Media Group</b>	<b>Daily Average Circulation</b>	<b>CR %</b>
<b>Demirören Group</b>	76.684,87	30,2
<b>Kalyon Group</b>	62.312,37	24,6
<b>Estetik Publishing</b>	32.497,87	12,8
<b>Albayrak</b>	13.625,07	5,4
<b>Türk Medya</b>	14.803,90	5,8
<b>Total</b>	<b>199.924,07</b>	<b>78,8</b>
<b>Industrial Total</b>	<b>253,620</b>	

Table 2. The Share of the Groups Operating in Print Media from Official Announcements and Advertisement Spending (2017)

<b>Media Group</b>	<b>Official Announcem</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Official Advertiseme</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
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	ent Income		nt Income			
<b>Albayrak</b>	6.326.423	5,49	5.569.166	9,54	11.895.589	6,85
<b>Demirören</b>	20.408.150	17,72	19.587.188	33,57	39.995.338	23,05
<b>Estetik Publishing Ltd.</b>	6.455.620	5,60	1.933.319	3,31	8.388.939	4,83
<b>İhlas Holding</b>	6.206.228	5,39	2.171.110	3,72	8.377.338	4,83
<b>Kalyon</b>	13.459.952	11,68	15.616.971	26,77	29.076.923	16,76
<b>Türk Medya</b>	12.689.516	11,02	4.850.083	8,31	17.539.599	10,11
<b>Others</b>	49.647.259	43,10	8.619.356	14,77	58.266.615	33,58
<b>Total</b>	<b>115.193.148</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>58.347.193</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>173.540.341</b>	<b>100,00</b>

Source: Cited from BİK 2017 Action Report by Independent Turkish ( January 9, 2020)

According to the Press Announcement Institution 2017 data, six media groups obtain about 67 percent of official advertisement and announcement distribution. Demirören Group, which has a large share in the media market in terms of ownership and newspaper circulation among these groups, has 23 percent of official advertisement revenue.

### **Polarization in Media**

According to the research conducted by Bilgi University in 2018, media is both the cause and the result of the polarization in society. Because the viewers watch the media appropriate for their opinions and ignore the perception of other viewers. It was noted that CHP and IYI Party supporters watched CNN Türk, FOX TV and Halk TV more than other party fans and more than they watch other channels, while AK Party supporters watched A Haber, ATV ANews, TRT News and Kanal 24. MHP members also prefer to watch Habertürk and Star News. Likewise, there is a political decomposition in the newspapers that are followed. While AK Party and MHP supporters read Milliyet, Sabah, Yeni Şafak, and Karar newspapers, CHP voters prefer Sözcü and Cumhuriyet newspapers. IYI Party supporters prefer Hürriyet and Yeniçağ newspapers. All these media followers think that their choice of agencies are objective. According to this, while Fox TV, Halk TV, and Sözcü are

neutral for CHP and İYİ Party supporters, Sabah, A Haber, and TRT1 for AK Party supporters; Yeniçağ and Sabah are neutral news sources for MHP voters.

According to the Reuters Institute 2019 Digital Journalism Report, online sources rank first with 87 percent in terms of mass media used to access the news, followed by TV and social media with 74 percent. The ability to follow social media in terms of news tracking has been decreasing since 2016 and ranks third in 2019 with 59 percent. Printed press usage is halted by 46 percent. There was a decline of 33 percent in the newspapers and journals between 2013 - 2017 according to the report. The reason for this decrease is the increase in paper costs and increasing expenditures in parallel with the increase in foreign exchange that had drastic effects on the press organizations that operate in Turkish Lira. These increasing expenditures and the advertisements being shifted onto the digital areas made the printing press somewhat unsustainable and obsolete. So the Habertürk and Vatan newspapers announced that they will continue their business via the internet. Most newspapers still printed are now prepared with fewer pages. According to the same report, when looking at the main news sources according to political preferences, the first choice of those who call themselves leftists is online media with 45 percent, while the main news source of the center is TV with 50 percent, and TV with 59 percent of right-wingers. As for the device used in accessing the news, mobile phones rank first with 71 percent, followed by computers with 52 percent and tablets with 27 percent.

One of the reasons that increase polarization in the country is pro-government „trolls" that actively work on social media. After the Gezi movement, the troll army created by the government to suppress the opposition tried different strategies to achieve their goals. One of these strategies is to choose an opposing account and bring it to light, only to be attacked by thousands of trolls with the most popular hashtag to get the account owner arrested (Sözeri 2015 cited by Bulut and Yörük 2017: 4104). Another strategy is to watch trend topics about AKP and then spam a designated opposing journalist, hack the account to make him apologize (Shearlaw 2016 cited by Bulut and Yörük 2017: 4104). Likewise, mutlakaoku.com (2019) stated that trolls have closed their accounts by complaining their Facebook and Instagram profiles as "counterfeit" accounts, and they have also made intensive spam on their Twitter profiles. Trolls that are managed from the center in Ankara and have a hierarchy are divided into teams and groups. Some groups attack artists, lawmakers or actors, while others target internet celebrities. Payment is made according to the hierarchy. The highest-ranking one ( head of the White team) is paid more than 5000 TL while the basic spammer is not paid. But when investigated, it becomes clear that some of these non-paid trolls are members of youth

and women branches which are often „ATM'ers" of some municipalities. Other team/group members are paid a little more than the minimum wage (mutlakaoku.com) The language that these trolls employ also influences the pro-government journalists and academists, artists and journalists that criticize the government are lynched with offensive wording, put into trial or targeted.

### **Conclusion**

Turkey is one of the main countries where there is a polarization in each area. There is an ongoing rebuilding process of politics, economics and societal status in Turkey, especially after the Presidential system change occurred. This process is also a fact for the media system. While new media owners entered the media market during the AKP rule, many of the old ones had to withdraw from this market. Media ownership has changed hands towards circles close to political power. While media ownership was reorganized, the central media was designed as a political tool that did not go beyond the discourse of the government. Some media groups have been disempowered, discredited, passivized by threats to come into terms with the government. Non-media investments in Turkish media are one of the most important reasons for media polarization. Media bosses are involved in many large infrastructure investments in accordance with the government's policy and operate in many different sectors such as construction, energy, mining, banking, and communications. As a result, they use the media as means of government and their own interests. In a sense, these private organizations that carry out propaganda activities are rewarded by the government. These customer-based relationships between media companies and the government prevent the media from fulfilling its duties while increasing the monopolization in the media. Of course, media bosses who deal in the energy and mining industries are not expected to support environmental issues. Ethics, responsibility, and accountability of the media remain only in textbooks.

New communication technologies and the growing economy have increased the polarization. While polarization manifests itself as hate speech in the virtual environment, the new rich supported by the government take over the ownership of the mainstream media and spread the ideology and discourse of the government. For this reason, Turkish media, which are called pro-government or pool media, argue that they are independent and impartial journalists while deciding what the audience/readers will see. The polarization of the private owned media reflects the polarization of the society.

This polarization shakes the confidence in the news first. While everyone is watching the media on their side, the youth are meeting their needs intensely on social media. The mainstream is now obsolete. All these developments have led to the weakening of democratic

institutions and caused the loss of trust and value judgments in the society. The fact that polarization is a result of the struggle for ownership and control over resources requires the political analysis of the issue.

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