# EVERYDAY PRACTICES OF DOMINATION AND RESISTANCE IN THE TURKISH MAINSTREAM MEDIA

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# EVERYDAY PRACTICES OF DOMINATION AND RESISTANCE IN THE TURKISH MAINSTREAM MEDIA

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Everyday Practices of Domination and Resistance

in the Turkish Mainstream Media

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# DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Elif Ünal, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

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Date.....03.11.2020.....

ABSTRACT

Everyday Practices of Domination and Resistance

in the Turkish Mainstream Media

This thesis aims to find an answer to the following question: How does domination work inside Turkish mainstream media outlets? Although the neoliberal transformation and the establishment of a competitive authoritarian regime under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule provide us a macro-level understanding, they do not explain the functioning of domination on a daily basis. The thesis uses the 'everyday resistance' theory to capture the dynamic and dialectical relationship between micro-level everyday practices of domination and resistance in the media space. The thesis claims that the neoliberal media structure leads to the precarization of the journalists which makes them more vulnerable to the domination of government. In order for the domination to work in the media arena, the government does not need total control of the minds of the journalists as long as it forces journalists to seek covert forms of resistance rather than open confrontation. Since these covert forms are not adequate to challenge the system, even journalists' resistance strategies can become tools for strengthening the domination of media arena.

# ÖZET

## Türkiye Ana Akım Medyasında
## Gündelik Tahakküm ve Direniş Pratikleri

Bu tez şu soruya bir cevap bulmaya çalışmaktadır: Türkiye ana akım medya organlarında tahakküm nasıl işliyor? Neoliberal dönüşüm ile Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) iktidarı altında kurulan rekabetçi otoriter rejim her ne kadar bize makro düzeyde bir anlayış sağlasa da tahakkümün günlük olarak işleyişini açıklamamaktadır. Tez, medya alanında mikro düzeyde gerçekleşen günlük tahakküm ve direniş pratikleri arasındaki dinamik ve diyalektik ilişkiyi yakalamak için "günlük direniş" teorisini kullanmaktadır. Tez, neoliberal medya yapısının gazetecilerin güvencesizleştirilmesine yol açtığını ve bunun da onları hükümetin tahakkümüne karşı daha savunmasız hale getirdiğini iddia etmektedir. Hükümet gazetecileri açık direniş biçimleri yerine örtülü direniş biçimleri aramaya zorladığı sürece, tahakkümün medya alanında işlemesi için hükümetin gazetecilerin zihnini tamamen kontrol etmeye ihtiyacı yoktur. Bu örtülü biçimler sisteme meydan okumak için yeterli olmadığından gazetecilerin direniş stratejileri dahi medya alanındaki tahakkümü güçlendirmek için araçlar haline gelebilmektedir.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AKP | Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) |
| CHP | Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) |
| DBP | Democratic Regions Party (*Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi*) |
| DTP | Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*) |
| EU | European Union (*Avrupa Birliği*) |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product (*Gayri Safi Yurtiçi Hasıla*) |
| HDP | Peoples' Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*) |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund (*Uluslararası Para Fonu*) |
| NSC | National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Konseyi*) |
| PKK | Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*) |
| PTT | Organization of Post and Telegraph (*Posta ve Telgraf Teşkilatı*) |
| TGS | Journalist Union of Turkey (*Türkiye Gazeteciler Sendikası*) |
| TMSF | The Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (*Tasarruf Mevduatı Sigorta Fonu*) |

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

As with many people living in Turkey, the year 2013 left a deep mark on me, too. In the first year that I came to Istanbul for university, the Gezi Park protests broke out. It was the first time in my life that I had witnessed how social anger could turn into a mass protest. However, the principal turning point that led me to write this thesis was the change in my view of the mainstream media outlets in Turkey. At a time when millions of people were on the streets, the demonstrations did not appear on the news. At first, I thought it was not acceptable to broadcast penguin documentaries during an event that echoed all over the world[1]. Then, I convinced myself that people and institutions may have had certain ideological and political views and may have preferred to act accordingly.

My second breaking point happened after I had started to work in one of the internet-based newspapers that fall under the heading 'alternative media outlet'. In those years I met with journalists including those who worked in mainstream media outlets. As I listened to their stories and learned about their perspectives on politics and journalism ethics, my thoughts about the mainstream media outlets once again were upended. I saw that those journalists who produced propaganda news did not actually approve of the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) policies and some of them were very much opposed to them. The more I listened to them the greater was my confusion in relation to the issue. If there were dissident journalists

[1] When a small-scale protest to protect a park in the center of Taksim turned into a huge riot on May 31, 2013, mainstream media outlets such as CNN Türk, NTV and Habertürk did not give space to these demonstrations. While CNN International channel broadcasted protests live, CNN Türk broadcasted a penguin documentary, instead. After that incident, penguins became a symbol of censorship on media in Turkey.

inside these media outlets, how the news that contradicts their journalism ethics and their political stance were being written? Could coercion be to blame for making people do things they didn't want to do? After discussions with these journalists, I started to read the news more carefully. It was at that point that I started to become aware of hidden sentences inside the news that were critical of the government. Maybe I was to blame for expecting an uprising like the Gezi Park protests within the mainstream media outlets and my answers to the questions were very simplistic, considering the long transformation period of the media sector in Turkey.

After coming to power, the AKP has exerted strong control over the media through direct and indirect interventions. In the process of establishing a competitive authoritarian regime, the ruling party created an AKP-friendly media environment by punishing dissidents and rewarding supporters (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016). Even though the authoritarian interventions in the media have increased gradually during the 20 years of AKP rule, it was the neoliberal transformation in the previous periods that made all of these possible in the first place. During the 1980s, which is considered a milestone with respect to neoliberal transformation, three major things that have shaped today's media sector occurred: The rise of the conglomerates, the concentration of media ownership and digitalization of the press.

With the entrance of non-media entrepreneurs into the sector, newspapers became more vulnerable to government pressure since they needed government licenses, privatization deals, and subsidies for their other businesses (Yeşil, 2016). One of the significant handovers happened in the first years of the AKP, when the 2001 economic crisis affected the owners of the media groups, especially those who had investments in the financial sector. In this period, the Saving Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF) played an important role in transferring capital to pro-AKP businesses

(Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017). The businesspeople that had a good relationship with the government were able to take over the media outlets that were seized by the TMSF via nontransparent tenders. For example, the owner of the Doğan Group, Aydın Doğan, who enjoyed a good relationship with the government at that time, was able to strengthen his domination in the media sector by purchasing Star TV through a TMSF auction. Another method for rewarding pro-AKP media owners was through the provision of government licenses, privatization deals, and subsidies for their business. For instance, one of the strongest conglomerates that currently dominates the media sector, the Kalyon Group, had been awarded major public tenders such as the construction of the third airport at İstanbul, subway lines, and the Turkey-Cyprus drinking water pipeline, among others. While the supporters of AKP were rewarded generously, opponents were punished through media blackouts, tax inspections, and cuts in advertisement revenues, which were all facilitated by the use of state resources. Even though the rise of conglomerates and the concentration of the media owners eased the intervention of the government, it is important to emphasize that understanding the process of government control over the media cannot be possible through solely focusing on neoliberal transformation. In addition to economic sanctions, many media outlets were shut down because of their affiliation with the Gülenist movement or "terrorist organizations." This was particularly the case during the state of emergency declared after the 15 July coup attempt, when these shutdowns reached a peak. During this period, 179 media organizations were closed. (Media Ownership Monitor, 2019).

Journalists have been targeted individually by the government for a long time. Lots of dissident journalists were arrested, detained, and charged with "insulting the president", and "making propaganda for terrorist organizations", etc. The target

groups of these interventions had changed according to the policies of AKP, in that period. While the secularist journalists were targeted during the Ergenekon investigations, between 2009 and 2011, many Kurdish journalists were detained or arrested during the investigation of KCK (Union of Kurdistan Communities). After the coup attempt in 2016, the main target became those journalists who were affiliated with the Gülenist movement. Of course, all of these waves of accusations quickly turned into a witch hunt in which the oppositional journalists that were not included in the target groups, started to be put on trial. Journalists were subject to not only judicial charges, but also verbal and physical attacks. And lastly, the news came under the scrutiny of the government. The AKP censored specific news stories or outlets by blocking their respective URLs or applying general broadcast bans on specific issues. As a result of all these direct and indirect interventions some of which were enabled by neoliberal transformation, the Turkish mainstream media gave evidence of very marked domination by the AKP

This thesis tries to find an answer to the question: How does domination work inside Turkish mainstream media outlets? I argue that although the neoliberal transformation of Turkish media outlets and the establishment of a competitive authoritarian regime under the AKP rule provide us with a macro-level understanding, they do not explain the functioning of that domination on a daily basis even with respect to the existence of dissident journalists. I claim that focusing on domination and resistance practices at the same time gives us a more concrete story about domination since they have a dynamic and dialectical relationship (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013). By looking at the daily experiences of the dissident journalists working at partisan media outlets in Turkey, I will attempt to come up with an explanation to the following questions: which strategies are used to effect

domination? To what degree do journalists accept this domination, internalize it, and obey its demands? How does resistance emerge in the presence of such domination? What strategies do journalists use to undermine the domination of the boss and the government? To what extent can these strategies be accepted as resistance? And finally, what is the relationship between this resistance and the domination in general?

This study presents a microlevel analysis that focuses on the experiences of the journalists working in mainstream media outlets in Turkey. The thesis shows that not only by looking at the mechanisms of domination but also by looking at how journalists perceive them and how they come up with a response is crucial to understanding how domination works. Throughout the study, I claim that the media structure which is shaped by the neoliberal transformation leads to the precarization of these journalists. The journalists who experience heavy workloads, time pressure, and censorship start to abandon their journalism ethics and begin to see themselves as workers, whose main motivation is generating profit for the company, they work for. of the absence of effective unions and the hierarchical structure present within the newsrooms ease the functioning of domination. The journalists who lose control of what they produce and how they produce it become more open to the domination of the government.

Secondly, I claim that the government does not need total control of the minds of the journalists for the survival of its domination. Indeed, the government empowers itself through creating the illusion of a separate mind and behavior. This separation results in determining the limits of journalists' resistance practices. It forces journalists to seek covert forms of resistance rather than open confrontation.

Since these covert forms are not adequate to challenge the system, even their resistance strategies can become tools for strengthening domination.

## 1.1 Domination and resistance inside the newsroom

Many studies show how the neoliberal transformation in the media leads to the control of the media by the AKP. Scholars explore how the emergence of new media conglomerates became dependent on government licenses, and privatization deals for their businesses in other sectors (Yeşil, 2016; Sözeri, 2014; Erdem, 2015; Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016) and how this dependency resulted in the creation of an AKP-friendly media environment through the rewarding of supporters and the punishing of opponents (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017; Sözeri & Güney, 2011). However, the same attention is not paid to an examination of the impact of this transformation on journalists' daily lives. I suggest that looking at how journalists experienced it, gives us an important insight into how this control took place.

The journalists working in the mainstream media outlets are not only confronted by the domination of the government, but also the institutions they work for. Even in the absence of any government control, the ownership of media outlets by the conglomerates, increasing media ownership concentration, and the digitalization of the newspapers have a direct effect on the working conditions of journalists. They face time pressures, heavy workloads and are forced to cover sensational issues and headlines for click-baiting, all of which normalize the process through which journalism ethics are abandoned on a daily practice. Furthermore, journalists are not allowed to cover news that criticizes the owner of their media conglomerate or any other business partner. While the working conditions of the

journalists worsened day by day, they could not protect their rights because of the inefficiency or absence of relevant unions.

Among all these pressures journalists who lost control over what they produced and how they produced it started to see themselves as workers whose main motivation was generating more profit for the company. Brown (2015) claims that neoliberalism makes people produce rationality where they start to degrade their existence into economic relations. In keeping with Brown's argument, journalists started to establish a bond with their profession by thinking of themselves as market agents. Yesil (2016) describes this change as the prioritization of corporate logic rather than journalism ethics. She claims that the appointment of businesspeople to the board of executives and moving the newspaper offices from Babiali, to modern buildings outside of the city contributed to the prevalence of corporate logic in media outlets.

The hierarchical structure within the newsrooms eased the functioning of all these pressures. The journalists may be both the subject and applier of the domination at the same time, which shows that there is no clear distinction between the dominator and resister. The chain of command facilitates journalists passing of responsibility while applying censorship to the news. It can also facilitate turning censorship into self-censorship because the ones who know their news will be intervened do not try to break the bans.

To sum up, the media structure that is shaped by the neoliberal transformation has two important implications for the control of the government. First of all, these circumstances increase the vulnerability of the journalists to the AKP's authoritarian rule because journalists turn into someone who constantly gets poorer, who lose their control over the news they produce. Secondly, the mechanisms of the media outlets

such as the hierarchical structure and abandonment of journalism ethics help the government to more easily apply its control.

During the AKP period, we see wide-scale interventions in the news before and after it is published (Yeşil, 2014). The bans on the news align with its competitive authoritarian stance in which oppositional parties are excluded from coverage or given little space, especially during election time. As Esen and Gümüşçü (2016) point out, this shows the effort undertaken to skew the field of competition by shaping how the oppositional groups are represented and how much coverage they will get. In addition to this, government targets any news that questions its position such as news related to the economy, Syrian policy, and mega projects. When the owners of media outlets become pro-AKP businesspeople, we can no longer talk about two different sources of domination; rather they merge into one and becomes inseparable for the journalists.

Fernandez and Huey (2009) claim that while looking at how domination functions as a daily practice, one should not only focus on repression mechanisms but also resistance. To explore the functioning of domination and resistance inside the newsrooms, this thesis borrows from 'everyday resistance' literature, which was first introduced by James Scott (1985). After its introduction, the theory was not only used in peasant studies but also in management (Huzell, 2005), women (Holmberg & Ehnander, 2007), queer (Campbell, 2004), and refugee studies (Hall, 2015). All of these works contributed to an understanding of how domination works through the introduction of new resistance strategies that are used in different contexts. By focusing on Turkish media outlets as a case study, this study introduces new repertoires of domination practices and new resistance strategies to the literature.

Interestingly, there are few studies which analyze the resistance strategies within the media outlets where we see a constant struggle between the journalist and the government. Those who look at the resistance practices in the media outlets focus only on alternative media outlets (Ataman & Çoban, 2017; Doğu, 2017; Lievrouw, 2011) or they ignore the intertwined relationship of resistance and domination, and fail to determine how domination works despite resistance (Hem, 2014; Lauk & Kreegipuu, 2010). So, this thesis contributes to this literature by introducing the "everyday resistance" theory, and in doing so highlights the complex nature of resistance and repression.

The resistance strategies developed by the journalists can be divided into two forms of resistance: overt and covert. In the first form, open confrontation methods are evident and include a refusal to cover news, an insistence on the topic to be covered, and the organization of large- and small-scale protests. However, when open confrontation is too risky for journalists, they start to seek more covert forms of resistance, such as lying when they do not want to cover news, playing with words by softening the language or employing irony, providing indirect accounts, hiding problematic sentence or footage within larger content or using visuals which show what they want to say.

In his famous work entitled *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*, Scott (1985) claims that looking at overt forms of resistance such as riots, demonstrations, and revolutions is not adequate to an understanding of how resistance occurs He looks at the oppositional daily activities of Malaysian peasants in depth and argues that analyzing the covert forms of resistance, which he calls everyday forms of resistance, is as important as overt forms of resistance. However, as opposed to what Scott claims, both overt and covert forms of resistance took place

on a daily basis and were interchangeable (Simi & Futurell, 2009; Lilja et al., 2017). In addition, contrary to Scott (1989), resistance and domination have an intertwined relationship that feeds each other. The strategies are developed as a result of a learning process in which a constant exchange between domination and resistance occurs. If a certain type of news is censored multiple times, journalists try to find a way to make it acceptable. For example, instead of placing the problematic sentence in the headline, they hide it in the main text. Similarly, dominators become attuned to existing resistance strategies and develop counter measures over time.

The resistance of journalists reveals two important findings with regard to how domination works. First of all, it shows that the government does not need total control of the minds of the journalists for the survival of its domination. Scott (1989) interprets the existence of everyday resistance as proof of lack of hegemony since they are not persuaded by domination. However, as Mitchell (1990) puts it domination does not work through coercion or persuasion but through the construction of a duality between them. The journalists who think that their minds cannot be controlled come up with what they consider as resistance strategies. However, for journalists stuck with covert forms of resistance instead of open forms of resistance, it means that these strategies are available only to the most avid, careful readers and do not appeal to the general audience. Apart from not constituting any threat to domination, these kinds of resistance practices may strengthen domination because they empower the argument “there is still room for criticism”.

## 1.2 Methodology

This thesis is built upon a qualitative case analysis, which is based on interviews with 12 journalists. Since the study focuses on understanding everyday forms of resistance

and repression mechanisms, providing first-hand information was a vital part of the study. The analysis of the interviews is supported by the news and reports that shed light on censorship and media freedom in Turkey.

As a result of snowball sampling, I had reached journalists from eight different media outlets that are owned by the Demirören Media Group, the Kalyon Group, the Ciner Group, and the state. Diversification was also to be found in the position and the experience of the journalists in question. In order to capture a range of experience, four reporters, six editors, and two news managers were reached. The journalists' respective experience spanned 18 months to 21 years. Of the 12 respondents, six of them are still working in a mainstream media outlet, three of them had resigned, and three had been dismissed. The list of the journalists that were interviewed can be seen in the table presented in Appendix A.

Interviews took place between March 24, 2020, and April 20, 2020. The semi-structured interviews were designed to understand journalists' daily practices of reporting, their relationship with the institution they worked for, whether they faced any repression in the newsroom, and what strategies, if any, they had developed against that repression (for the interview questions see Appendix B). To avoid the risk of being exposed to any kind of sanction because they had participated in the study and in order to provide a degree of security, the names of the participants are not provided. For each interview, several nicknames were given to the journalists to ensure their anonymity.

### 1.3 Turkey's authoritarian transformation as a crucial case

AKP came to power in 2002 after an economic stagnation and years of pressure by the tutelary regime in which the state institutions such as the military and the

judiciary were acting as the guardians of the secular Turkish Republic. While the party's political Islamist stance raised reactions from the secular side, the promise of democratization and economic prosperity were optimistically welcomed by some national and international actors (Yeşil, 2016). AKP increased its vote share considerably from 34.28% in the general election of 2002 to 46.66% in that of 2007 (YSK, 2020).

In its first years in office, AKP implemented the reforms of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which had been prepared by the previous coalition government to control public spending. In those years, wages had been controlled, state subsidies had diminished, and the privatization of state-owned enterprises had increased. Besides inflation reduction and GDP growth, these reforms resulted in an inflow of capital from the West, and the neoliberal steps saw Turkey tightly bound to the global political economy (Grigoriadis & Kamaras, 2008). Besides these economic advancements, AKP's pro-Western position was another reason for its attractiveness. Compared to its predecessor, the Welfare Party, AKP signaled collaboration with the European Union from the start. In order to satisfy the Copenhagen Criteria, which determine whether a country is eligible to join the Union, several harmonization packages were introduced. These criteria required many reforms in the economic, legislative, and political fields in terms of economic stability, improved market access, the establishment of a consolidated democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights and minorities. Öniş (2010) defines the adoption of neoliberal economic ideas and a pro-Western perspective as a successful merging of Islamism, democracy, and neoliberalism (p. 284).

In its second term in office, AKP reduced the extent of its EU reforms, and opposition towards the government increased (Saatçioğlu, 2016). Its third term in

particular is associated with increasing authoritarian practices in terms of diminishing civil rights, increasing bans, a weakened checks and balances system, and the prosecution of journalists and union members (Akça, 2014; Benhabib, 2013; Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016; Kaygusuz, 2018; Öniş, 2016; Saatçioğlu, 2016; Somer, 2016; Yeşil, 2016; Tansel, 2018). In that period one important indicator of the increasing dissatisfaction with the government was the Gezi Park protests that took place in 79 provinces and which resulted in brutal police violence. To describe the regime type under AKP rule, scholars have used the terms illiberal democracy (Bechev, 2014; Türkmen-Dervişoğlu, 2015), delegative democracy (Özbudun, 2014; Taş, 2015), electoral authoritarianism (Konak & Özgür Dönmez, 2015; White & Herzog, 2016; Arbatlı, 2014), competitive authoritarianism (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016; Özbudun, 2015; Arslanalp & Erkmen, 2020), Islamic authoritarianism (Arısan, 2018), and neoliberal authoritarianism (Tansel, 2018; Yeşil, 2018), etc.

What I claim in this paper is that the regime type under AKP rule shows characteristics of competitive authoritarianism. Levitsky and Way (2010) define competitive authoritarian regimes as "civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents' abuse of state places them at a significant advantage vis-a-vis their opponents" (p.5). Normally democracy is associated with the existence of elections or institutions that preserve checks and balances. However, Levitsky and Way claim that the main attribute of countries such as Cambodia, Mexico, Russia, Serbia, and Nigeria is the presence of democratic institutions but where these are heavily in favor of the incumbent through "electoral manipulation, unfair media access, abuse of state resources and varying degrees of harassment and violence" (p.3). With this classification, Levitsky adds the fourth characteristic to the definition

of democracy as “the existence of a reasonably level playing field between incumbents and opposition” (p.6). So, the countries that lack the fundamental components of democracy cannot be analyzed within the ranks of democracy.

Similarly, Esen and Gümüşçü (2016) claim that in Turkey what we have witnessed during AKP rule is competitive authoritarianism. They claim that “1) politicized state institutions; 2) uneven access to media; 3) uneven access to resources” in Turkey are indicators of the uneven playing field in favor of the government (p. 1587). They claim that Turkey has transitioned from a tutelary democracy to one of competitive authoritarianism since 2010. They interpret 2010 as a milestone that reflects the “authoritarian turn” of AKP. Of course, they admit that there were authoritarian tendencies before 2010, but they focus on the period after which competitive authoritarian features are more in evidence. In a recent article,which was published after the local elections of 31 March 2019 in which the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), won the elections in Istanbul, Esen and Gümüşçü (2019) claim that the competitive authoritarian nature of the regime was confirmed. After this highly critical election, which was repeated twice, the result of the election ended the 25 years of control of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). They assert that “the election and its aftermath reaffirmed the competitive authoritarian nature of the regime, as the governing bloc enjoyed an uneven playing field, while the opposition had to meet a higher electoral bar than the incumbents to win” (p.1581).

According to Tansel (2018), who describes the regime under the AKP as neoliberal authoritarianism, while analyzing a country’s regime, economic and political spheres should not be considered separately. For him, political-economic policies gave given way to the authoritarian practices of AKP. He claims that making

this separation between the two spheres has resulted in scholars searching for an 'authoritarian turn' but AKP's authoritarian signals were present from the beginning. Here, he reminds us of the time when AKP came to power with an economic stabilization package introduced by the IMF which aimed to accelerate the neoliberal transition of Turkey, which had started during the 1980s. Praising the first years of the AKP by looking at parameters such as inflation reduction, trade liberalization, and foreign investment rates means underscoring the flaws of neoliberalism such as dependency on foreign capital and decreasing workers' rights and collective power (p. 202).

By admitting that economic policies played an important role in the rise of the authoritarian regime and the AKP showed the signals of increasing authoritarianism from the beginning, I claim the developments during the AKP cannot be understood by only focusing on the neoliberal transformation. During its 20 years of rule, AKP formed a loyal business class through a system of rewards and punishments. It used public procurement, privatization, taxation, debt collection, bankruptcy trusteeship, and libel laws to punish its opponents and reward its supporters (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2019). In the end, the loyal business class returned the favor by keeping the AKP in power and the AKP could establish and strengthen its competitive authoritarian regime.

## 1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the concept of "everyday resistance", which was first introduced in the literature by James Scott (1985, 1989). After setting out the arguments raised by Scott, I discuss relevant omissions. Here, the contributions of Mitchell (1990), Adan (2007), and Vinthagen and Johansson

(2013) are to the fore. Later, I try to formulate what can be regarded as resistance through introducing its core elements. In the end, I discuss how "everyday resistance" literature may contribute to an understanding of the functioning of domination within media outlets.

Chapter 3 starts with a discussion of the literature on media freedom. At the beginning of this chapter, I presented one of the major discussions on media freedom in liberal democracies between the liberal pluralist approach (Entman, 1989; Schramm,1964; Bennett, 1982) and critical political economy approach (Herman & Chomsky 2010; Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990; O'Neill, 2006). Then, by drawing on the research provided by Stier (2015) I opened a discussion on the effects of regime type on media freedom. Here, I tried to present the literature in relation to the reasons why government wants to control the media (Geddes & Zaller, 1989; Mesquita & Downs, 2005; Larreguy & Marshall, 2019; Little 2017). In the last part of this chapter, I consider the literature that focuses on the journalists' side of the story while analyzing media freedom (Breed, 1955; Ataman & Çoban, 2017; Doğu, 2017; Lauk & Kreegipuu, 2010; Hem, 2014).

Chapter 4 tries to portray the transformation of Turkish media in a historical context. I start with the early days of the Republic and discuss the relationship between the government and the media during the process of nation-building. Then, I focus on the changes in the media sector during the 1980s as a result of neoliberal policies. Here, I discuss how neoliberal policies gave way to the emergence of media conglomerates and increasing media ownership. I also try to analyze how these structural changes had a role in shaping today's media. In the last part of this Chapter, I focus on the AKP period and introduce the policies that the AKP has used to strengthen its competitive authoritarian regime.

Chapter 5 is designed as a methodology chapter in which I provide information about the data collection procedure, sampling method, data analysis as well as ethical considerations. In addition to these, I discuss the challenges of studying a sensitive issue in an authoritarian setting and how I position myself in this research because these elements had an effect on all aspects of this study.

Chapter 6 focuses on the practices of domination within the media outlets based on the experiences of the journalists that are interviewed. Here, I analyze the domination practices of the media outlets and the government separately. Then, by drawing parallels I show how these two sources of domination affect each other and how they merged into one after the media outlets were sold to pro-AKP businesspeople. At the end of this chapter, I discuss how newsrooms were turned into spaces where the characteristics of the current regime were evident.

Chapter 7 looks at the resistance strategies that have been developed as a result of the domination faced by journalists. I divide the strategies into two forms - covert and overt forms of resistance. After introducing the strategies that are used in these forms, I discuss how the increasing domination forced journalists to seek for more covert ways of resistance. Here, I not only focus on the strategies, but also try to portray resistance in relation to domination.

And finally, Chapter 8 aims to combine the experiences of journalists and the literature on media freedom to shed light on everyday resistance, authoritarianism in Turkey, and the transformation of Turkish media. Here, I attempt to articulate resistance and domination strategies together to find an answer to the question of how domination occurs in Turkish mainstream media outlets.

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE ON EVERYDAY RESISTANCE

The concept of "everyday resistance" is firstly introduced by James Scott (1985) in his work *Weapons of the Weak* where he analyzes the oppositional daily activities of peasant society in Malaysia. In this pioneering work, he introduces to the literature a new understanding of the term 'resistance' and by doing that, he gives a political meaning to the daily activities of the ordinary citizens. According to this, not only visible forms of action such as rebellions, riots, demonstrations, petitions, revolutions, and civil wars but also hidden forms of action can be considered as resistance. However, it is a different kind of resistance which he calls as everyday forms of resistance, and they are also worth examining because the conglomeration of these kinds of actions paves the way for bigger mobilizations. He gives examples of some of the peasant activities, such as foot-dragging, escape, sarcasm, disloyalty, slander, passivity, misunderstandings, and theft, and claims that when rebellion is too risky, people develop these kinds of disguised tactics both to be able to survive and to undermine the domination.

To understand his usage of the term, key points should be explained. First of all, he sets a dichotomy between public forms of resistance which can be called overt resistance and the everyday forms of resistance which can be called covert resistance. The difference between them is the central point in the book. In the former one, people try to undermine the domination openly such as street protests or boycotts. In the latter one, there is still opposition to domination, but it is less obvious especially from the perspective of the dominator. These two forms differ in their aims and methods. In overt resistance, the main aim of the people is gaining a formal, de jure

recognition of rights and demands (Scott, 1989, p.34). To do that, they raise their concerns through planned and organized confrontation with the elites/power holders directly. In the disguised form the main aim is seeking de facto, tacit gains and it is more about survival rather than an open confrontation (Scott, 1989, p.34) Also, they do not have to be organized as in the classical understanding of resistance because it does not require planning and coordination in the activities or confrontation with the elites/power holders directly. He explains this difference through the example of resisting the acceptance of religious marriage as the only legitimate basis for the family. He says people may openly resist it through a social movement, or covertly by living together without getting married (Scott, 1989, p.62).

After clarifying the difference between the overt and covert resistance, the other important point is the establishment of key characteristics of 'everyday' forms of resistance that he describes. First of all, it is an oppositional act performed by the resister against the dominator. Here, he presents a duality between the resister and the dominator. In this case, dominators are the landlords and the resisters are the villagers. Villagers tend to undermine the domination of the landlords and their activities are interpreted according to that.

Second of them is being a disguised form of action. This can occur through "the anonymity of the resister" or through "the concealment of the act" (Scott, 1989, p.54). He gives the example of folk culture. Tales and songs that involve criticism against the dominator are inherited from generation to generation and widely known by the public but the authors of them are not obvious. Concealment of the act can work through euphemism in which the sentences have double meaning so the criticisms cannot be figured out and it does not reflect an open challenge (p.54). Both of them are done to feel secure, otherwise, it will be too costly for the resister.

According to Scott, one of the importance of this book is his introduction of a different approach to Gramsci's understanding of the term, hegemony. He defines hegemony as the domination of the ruling class on subordinate groups by taking their consent. To do that, the dominator introduces his/her interest as the interest of all and the subordinated groups take them as their values through everyday practices and the social, cultural, and political institutions. So, it creates a "manufactured consent". Even though Gramsci accepts the role of counterhegemonies, consent is vital for the existence of hegemony. However, for Scott, "Most of the political life of subordinate groups is to be found neither in the overt collective defiance of power holders nor incomplete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast territory between these two polar opposites" (Scott, 1985, p.136). This argument is important in terms of evaluating the villagers as agents rather than subjects. Throughout the book he tries to convince that instead of looking at the actions of villagers and trying to understand the hegemony in relation with the consent of people, looking at the deeper meanings of the activities of the villagers which shows non-consensual parts of hegemony would be more fruitful in understanding what is actually going on.

The other importance of the book is being a pioneer work. After the introduction of the term everyday resistance by James Scott (1985) the concept is not only used in peasant studies but also in management (Huzell, 2005), women (Holmberg & Ehnander, 2007), queer (Campbell, 2004), refugee studies (Hall, 2015), etc. Although Scott is respected in the resistance literature, this expansion of the research area resulted in criticisms and changes in the usage of the term.

## 2.1 Scott's world of distinctions

One of the most criticized points in Scott is the clear division between public and hidden forms of resistance. Simi and Futurell (2009) claim that there are everyday forms of resistance where established social movements engage as a part of their daily activism. According to them within such social movements, carrying the stigma of being an activist is an "identity-based resistance that occurs across many everyday contexts" (p.91). Similarly, Lilja et al. (2017) in their article *How Resistance Encourages Resistance* look at the shifting forms of resistance in a Cambodian case where they analyze the issue of gender-based violence. They try to portray the interlinkage between everyday resistance and organized collective resistance strategies and claim that they change from one form to the other. They look at the organizations' work against gender-based violence through the programs which focus on men and claim that these forms of organized and public resistance go together with daily forms of resistance and also, there is a switch between them. They conclude that what Scott offers in his argument for the dichotomy between public and hidden forms is not adequate for a full understanding of this case.

The second highly criticized point is the strict differentiation between the dominator and the subaltern group. Scott proposes a one-dimensional relationship between the dominator and the dominated where the former applies power and the latter responses to it with resistance. According to Lilje and Vinthagen (2009), the relation between the two is more complicated and interrelated. First of all, they note that identification of the resister and dominator is very much contextually based. One Palestinian man can resist against Israeli occupation and at the same time he can be a patriarch who dominates his wife, and at the same time can be a subordinate of Allah/God. Secondly, even in the same context, the subaltern groups can also

reproduce and strengthen the domination and the hierarchy. Similarly, Vinthagen and Johansson (2013) claim that the relationship between the two is more intertwined and complicated than Scott's understanding. They say, "Agents of resistance often simultaneously promote power-loaded discourses, being the bearers of hierarchies and stereotypes as well as of change" (p.13). They proffer the study of Johansson (2009) as an example in which he focuses on the everyday resistance practices of Nicaraguan women living in a lower-class neighborhood. These women use humor as an everyday resistance practice against patriarchy because in their jokes, men are portrayed as irresponsible, irrational, and egoistic whereas women are portrayed as responsible, rational, and altruistic. So, through their jokes they challenge the dominant position of men. However, through these jokes they also continue to reproduce the stereotypic differentiation of women and men, which in turn reproduces the hegemonic discourse (as cited in Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013, p.35).

When we look at the media environment in Turkey, we see that this distinction between the dominator and the resister is not clear either. Mustafa Alp Dağıstanlı, who is a former journalist who worked in NTV between 2006 and 2011 explains this situation in the book he wrote on censorship and self-censorship practices inside NTV. He describes how one of his managers in the media outlet (does not give a specific name) was the dominator and the resister at the same time. He claims that his manager was complaining about the pressure that he was exposed to, but = he was also "producing the media he complained about" (Dağıstanlı, 2014, p.35). So, according to the context, one person can be both a resister and dominator at the same time and creating a dichotomy could prevent finding out this interchange between the two.

This dichotomy between dominator and resister is similar to the dichotomy between power and resistance according to Scott. He argues that the form of resistance stems from the domination, and the categorization of resistance is directly related to the forms of power used upon the subaltern groups. It is unidimensional as if they are two separate phenomena. He includes power in his study but regards them as being independent of each other. According to this logic, there is domination applied to the everyday lives of villagers and it produces everyday resistance against that suppression.

However, any analysis of the relation between power and resistance should be underpinned by a comprehensive examination of all aspects of the issue. Here the analysis of Vinthagen and Johansson (2013) is of value. They accept that "power and resistance are interdependent and constitute/affect each other and, as a result, become entangled" (p.26). Resistance shapes itself according to the opportunities and repressions of power. Emerging resistance also contributes to new forms of power. For example, when the protestors take to the street and shout slogans, police can use tear gas. After a while, protestors start to use gas masks with the police then employing alternative forms of repression and so it continues. However, this order is subject to some degree of variation: sometimes resistance can constitute power. Adnan (2007) also tries to show a dynamic relation between power and resistance. He adopts a similar approach to that of Scott and looks at peasant resistance in Bangladesh. However, as an addition, he analyzes how poor peasants' everyday practices evolved into open contestation with power-holders and how the strategies of these people feed the various forms of repression. He claims that "there were sequential shifts in the respective strategies of domination and resistance" and "the

dialectical interplay between domination and resistance imposed reciprocal constraints on each other" (p.222).

Timothy Mitchell (1990) reveals another dichotomy (related to the other dichotomies that are discussed), and one which is adopted by Scott as well as other scholars such as Comaroff (1985), who examine everyday resistance. He claims that in these works persuasion and coercion are given as two distinct phenomena. In other words, he says, there is an assumption that coercion can affect peoples' behavior but cannot be held to have an impact on peoples' minds. So, there should be two distinct types of power operating in the physical and mental world. According to him, this way of thinking results in imagining "self-formed, internally autonomous actors resisting external domination" (p.546). From this standpoint, the consciousness of people can be regarded as a given fact as if it may not be influenced by any kind of dominant ideology. Mitchell claims that this understanding is not able to explain how power works in the modern world. He says that "domination works through…constructing a seemingly dualistic world" (p.547). Similarly, White (1986) in her article, which examines the everyday resistance practices of Vietnamese peasants, claims that Scott may be reinterpreting what peasants claim as evidence:

> …the tricks of adding stones, straw, etc. to increase the weight of the landlord or the tax collector's share of the harvest can perhaps give peasants the illusion of having more power and maneuverability than is actually the case - that is, these ineffective but psychologically satisfying forms of resistance could in fact contribute to false consciousness, blinding people to the painful reality of the extent of their powerlessness and exploitation. (p.56)

Moreover, Mitchell criticizes Scott's usage of the term "hegemony" and blames him for using Gramsci's term in a narrow way so that it can be used to fit the evidence from Malaysia. First, he claims that Scott interprets hegemony as "domination at the level of ideas" (p.553). Mitchell, on the other hand, claims that what Gramsci means

is “non-violent forms of control exercised through the whole range of dominant cultural institutions and social practices, from schooling, museum, and political parties to religious practice, architectural forms, and the mass media” (p.553). In other words, hegemony is more about the usage of tools of social domination rather than the dominating of the ideas and beliefs of each individual. Second, he claims that Scott uses the term consensus in a way that requires harmony or the adoption of the interest of the dominator. However, for him, the term *consenso* which means “consent given by exploited groups to their exploitation” captures what Gramsci means (p.554). So, harmony is not needed for the constitution of hegemony. For Mitchell, the misusage of the term leads Scott to claim that hegemony does not exist in the villages of Malaysia. However, for him, hegemony exists in wider society, but it is ignored in the book. Many of its effects are labeled as ‘given situations’ or ‘obstacles to resistance’. For example, one of the obstacles the peasants face is being isolated from the other peasant groups and the productive process. The shifts in agricultural practices affected the peasants individually or in small groups so it prevented them from taking collective action. Their elimination from the productive process also serves to decrease potential areas of conflict. Another obstacle to resistance is the economic hardships that result from leaving the village and having to establish a new life in another village. Because of the risks of not finding permanent work or of being discriminated against in the new village, peasants are not able to avail of this option. Mitchell criticizes any interpretation of these examples as given factors as if they have nothing to do with the functioning of domination. For him, domination works through the creation of these limits in a way which makes people accept them as external factors that prohibit their resistance and lead to participation in this functioning of domination. This is how hegemony works.

Despite the critics, what I argue in this paper is that everyday resistance literature is very fruitful in terms of an understanding of how domination works on a daily basis. This is particularly so in the newsroom, an environment where a constant struggle between domination and resistance is in evidence. Looking at the responses of the journalists and their resistance strategies or trying to understand their understanding of resistance may show us how domination could survive for long years even though it clashes with journalism ethics. Scott proposes us a good way to figure out the functioning of domination and resistance: look at daily practices. If what Mitchell (1990), Adan (2007), and Vinthagen and Johansson (2013) claim is true, that domination and resistance have a complicated and intertwined relationship, we can understand this relationship only by looking at daily functioning. However, while looking at these practices, identifying clear-cut divisions between the resister and dominator, power and resistance, or mind and body can prevent us from portraying this complicated relationship. So, while following Scott's approach, consideration should also be given to those who argue against it, as this will only serve to enrich the discussion.

## 2.2 The core elements of everyday resistance

In 'everyday resistance' literature there are differences of opinion in terms of what constitutes everyday resistance and what does not. Hollander and Einhower (2004) review usage of the term by analyzing the current literature and conclude that four core elements of resistance are present: action, opposition, recognition, and intent. Only opposition and action are taken for granted in the literature. Even though there are differences in understanding of Scott's term of everyday forms of resistance, there is agreement in the literature that it is an oppositional act (Johansson &

Vinthagen, 2014). In another saying, it should be seen as an act that has oppositional relations with power. Being oppositional is considered to be central to the term. Action is also required: “resistance is not a quality of an actor or a state of being, but involves some active behavior, whether verbal, cognitive, or physical” (Hollander & Einhower, 2004, p.538).

Although including recognition as a core element of resistance is a contentious issue, Scott does not consider recognition as a central part of the term. He states that resisters can choose not to be recognized because it can be too costly. However, he only considers recognition by the dominator. Even though the resisters may choose to conceal their actions out of fear of possible sanctions the actions can be recognized by other people. Hollander and Einwohner (2004) claim that recognition is a central part of resistance. They accept that people may try to conceal the oppositional act from the target for safety and in this case recognition of the act by the target is not possible. However, they say there are also resisters and observers in the story who can recognize the act as opposition or not. By observer, they mean someone witnesses the action without being a part of it. So, they conclude that for an action to be called everyday resistance the action should be recognized by the observer or the resister even if not by the target.

Intention is another problematic element in the literature. The questions here are whether the actor is aware of making an oppositional act to undermine the authority and whether this awareness is an important element of resistance. According to Hollander and Einwohner (2004), there are three common approaches to the question of intent. The first group says that intention is a vital part of the resistance. Scott (1985), who belongs to this category claims that intention is a more important element of resistance than the outcome because there can be differences in

what is aimed at and what is achieved (p.290). The second group says that intention is not central because the resister may not aware of whether his/her action is resistance or not. And lastly, the third group claims that intentions are important, but it is hard to evaluate so it is not a vital part of resistance studies. Weitz (2001), who belongs to the third group claims that because of the problems of assessing the intention of the people, it is better to "try to assess the nature of the act itself" (p.670). Johansson and Vinthagen (2014), who also belong to this group say that intention may be important but there is not one kind of intention. For them, "everyday resistance is indeed done with intent, however, not with one type of intent: neither necessarily a political-ideological one nor antagonistic class interest. Actors' intent might be to survive, solve a practical problem, fulfill immediate needs, follow a desire, or gain status among peers, take a pause, or something else" (p. 20-21).

What I argue is the requirement of intention can load an overemphasized consciousness to the actors. However, from the critics of Mitchell (1990), we know that this portrayal of consciousness as an independent factor can manipulate us in terms of our determining the impact of domination on the self. If we recall the criticism of White (1986) of Scott, sometimes people can perform some kind of action by thinking that it is a form of resistance. however, it may stay within the boundaries of domination or serve the strengthening of domination. Of course, it does not mean that what people think as resistance is not important, but the intention should not be the central focus of the study.

Vinthagen and Johansson (2014) analyze repertoires of everyday resistance, relations between actors, and the spatialization, and temporalization of everyday resistance to obtain a more systematic analysis. With respect to the concept repertoires of resistance, they mean "a combined result of the interplay between

social structures and power relations, as well as activists' creative experimentation with tactics and experiences of earlier attempts to practice resistance, together with the situational circumstances in which resistance is played out" (p.421). They see the examination of the repertoires of action as a vital part of the study of everyday forms of resistance. Vinthagen and Johansson (2013) give an example of mostly used repertoires of action such as coping, accommodation, and avoidance or escape. They define avoidance as "the act of not engaging with space, time or relation where power is exercised" (p.24). Even though in some situations it may not be conceived as resistance, contextually it may because avoidance makes domination impossible and resistance is about undermining domination. They also contextually evaluate coping and accommodation. Other scholars also emphasize the repertoires of action. For instance, Gary Marx (2009) gives examples of 12 different repertoires of action that are used during resistance to workplace surveillance. These actions are:

> Discovering (bug detectors), avoiding (choose employer that doesn't monitor electronic communication), piggy backing (walk into restricted facility behind person with access), switching (substitute clean urine sample), distorting (holding down computer keys to appear productive), blocking (encrypting communication), masking (using another person's id and password), breaking (add battery acid to a urine sample), refusing (don't file reports about dating another employee), explaining ("I didn't know there was marijuana in the brownies"), cooperating (advance warning of drug test from supervisor), counter-surveillance (audio-recording harassing statements by supervisor). (p.298)

These repertoires of action can change from one setting to another, according to the extent of the domination, the role of those involved in the relationship between the dominator and the resister, previous experiences, etc. So, analyzing these forms of action by considering complementary ingredients should result in a more fruitful study.

The relationships among actors are the second aspect of resistance. They identify three main actors: the resisters, targets, and observers. The relationship

between them is crucial to an understanding of the phenomenon. Rather than a Scottian understanding of the static relation between dominator and the dominated, Foucauldian perspectives provide a more dynamic relation. This is discussed in detail in the previous parts of this section. In this formulation, oppression can come from the resister as well. Multiple forms of domination should also be considered, for example, in media outlets both government and the owner can be a source of domination.

The third dimension is space, which is also important in the exercise of power. Space can be a site, a location such as a workplace or a city, as well as a body. Feminist studies consider women's bodies as space, not only as an area of power, but also of resistance (p.426). In this thesis, space will encompass a newsroom environment but not be limited to it. Domination can exceed the boundaries of a newsroom, and reach to the identity of the journalists themselves, their relationships with friends outside the job or even to prison. Here, how domination functions in different contexts and portraying how its effects change in different locations are important.

Lastly, the temporalization of everyday resistance is an important element of resistance because control of time and space is fundamental to the exercise of power. According to Vinthagen and Johansson (2014), time and space are socially constructed and directly linked to power so these two should be analyzed together. Time not only determines the context of resistance but also it is an inseparable tool of power. Foucault (1991) claims that dominators want to control time by introducing schedules for employees. This results in their coming up with resistance strategies to overcome this time pressure. For example, Vinthagen and Johansson (2014) introduce the concept of “time theft” which is seen as a type of crime against bosses

and is widely used in workplaces (p.428). When we think about changing the media and political environment, one action that is not considered as resistance can be accepted as resistance when the time and circumstances have changed.

Even though everyday resistance literature is developed mainly in subaltern studies, the theory has the potential to contribute to many fields where power is in evidence. As per the resistance literature, working on resistance is seen as important for understanding not only the resistance but also the domination in the story. Media outlets are one of these contentious contexts where we see a constant struggle between domination and resistance. The theory gives us the necessary equipment to understand the ongoing power struggles in Turkish media. While introducing "everyday resistance" theory, this thesis does not adhere to Scott's (1985) use of it. Instead, it revises Scott's theory based on the critiques of Mitchell (1990), Lilja et al. (2017), Vinthagen and Johansson (2013), and Adnan (2007). It also contributes to the theory by focusing on a case where we see an intertwined relationship between domination and resistance in a competitive authoritarian setting, which is shaped by neoliberal policies, it also introduces new resistance strategies to the literature.

# CHAPTER 3

# LITERATURE ON MEDIA FREEDOM

The importance of the media to society lies not only in the entertainment that it provides, but also in its role as a conduit of information. It shapes daily conversations, preferences, and policies; and it connects individuals to the larger society of which they are a part. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948 affords protection to media freedom by linking it to the right to freedom of expression and freedom of opinion. Article 19 of the declaration states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

In most countries freedom of the press is under the protection of the constitution as a civil right. However, the implementation and interpretation of these laws change according to country in question. Breuning (1994) analyzed the contents of the constitutions of 160 states and concluded that 143 states guarantee at least one freedom of communication in their constitutions. These freedoms include freedom of speech (16), speech and opinion (21), the press (58), information (60), and opinion (103). However, as he states clearly, this analysis cannot be considered an indicator of freedom of the press. For example, while the Swedish constitution does not refer to freedom of press, the press is freer than most of the countries in the world. Emphasizing it in the constitution does not guarantee freedom of the press as can be seen from the examples of Turkey, Iran, North Korea, etc. in which press freedom is questionable.

Since media freedom is a broad topic, there is no single way to define it. Several scholars and non-governmental organizations come up with different methods to measure and compare the level of freedom within different countries. One of the broadly accepted methodologies is that developed by Freedom House, which conducts an annual evaluation and ranks countries according to that evaluation. Here, they ask several questions that can be categorized in three subcategories. The first set of questions are to understand the legal environment in which journalists work such as the existence of restrictive laws that lead to fines and the imprisonment of journalists. However, emphasis is placed on the implementation of these laws rather than their existence (Freedom House, 2019). The second category is related to the economic environment where ownership structures and government funding are evaluated. The last category is related to the political environment in which the level of censorship or the level of attack on journalists is analyzed. One of the other well-known methodologies is that developed by the Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF). To rank countries according to their level of freedom, they ask 87 questions, which are categorized under seven criteria. These categories are pluralism, media independence, media environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, infrastructure, and the level of abuse and violence experienced (Reporters Sans Frontières, 2019).

Efforts to understand what makes media free and the possible threats to it proliferate in the literature. There are scholars who focus on party press parallelism (Seymour-Ure, 1974; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Çarkoğlu & Yavuz, 2010), media fragmentation (Mancini, 2010), plurality (Czepek, Hellwig & Nowak, 2013), media ownership structure (Noam, 2009; Herman & Chomsky, 2010; Adaklı, 2010). However, since this thesis pays particular attention to the impact of neoliberal

transformation and regime type on media institutions, this chapter will only focus on discussions related to them.

Consideration will first be given to how the literature draws a connection between democracy and media freedom. Here, by comparing the liberal-pluralist approach with that of the critical political economy approach, discussions on the impact of liberal media structure on media freedom will be analyzed. Then, the literature that looks at media freedom in an authoritarian context will be discussed. Here, motivations and the mechanisms of authoritarian government control will be discussed. The chapter will end with a discussion of the literature that focuses on the journalists' side of the story.

## 3.1 Discussions on democracy, liberalism, and the media freedom

Apart from being accepted as a civil right, media freedom is considered to be an inseparable part of democracy in many studies. Some scholars even argue that freedom of speech and in particular, freedom of the press is more important to democracy than the other democratic institutions (Mueller, 1992). In addition to those studies that regard the media as playing a significant role in the development of democracy, there are other studies that state that the existence of democracy has a determinant role in a given countries' level of media freedom (Stier, 2015). However, even in democratic regimes media freedom is a contentious issue. One of the major discussions in the literature focuses on the liberal economic model of the media structure and its effects on media freedom. Here, we can address two main approaches that dominate this discussion: the liberal-pluralist approach and the critical political economy approach, which is developed as a response to the former.

The liberal-pluralist approach claims that the capitalistic free market creates the best environment for the media because of its adoption of liberal democratic values such as pluralism, freedom of expression, and press freedom. It proposes three fundamental roles for the press. One major role is that of watchdog of government policies and functioning as a 'fourth estate' through keeping the government accountable to the people (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990; Bennett, 1982). For them, media should be independent of the influence of the government or political parties and the best way to achieve this independence is the free market.

The second role is constituting a civic forum by ensuring a wide-open marketplace of ideas and a public sphere in which opposing views may meet and contend (Entman, 1989). It suggests that the diversity of viewpoints contributes "to the free and open circulation of ideas, necessary for opening up debate necessary for strengthening and maintaining democracy because in the debate process the governing elite could be pressurized and reminded of their dependence on majority opinion" (Bennett, 1982, p.40). The last role is functioning as a mobilizing agent, which facilitates the participation of people in the political process by keeping them informed (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990; Entman, 1989). Similarly, Schramm (1964) claims that media empowers the government as well as the public. According to him, governments use the media as a tool to promulgate their messages and to persuade voters; they also collect information about the public's opinions in order to shape their strategies. The public, on the other hand, relies on the media for the acquisition of information and in order to keep politicians accountable. He argues that having an independent media is crucial for developing countries since it promotes economic and social development. From this standpoint, United States is

seen as the best example among all the liberal democracies, because in Europe media outlets are associated with political parties and are subsidized by government.

This approach provides us with a model on the basis of what ought to be, rather than what is. It neglects the political and economic pressures that the media face out of its vision. It does not take into account the roles of ownership structure, political inclination, the private interests of the shareholders, advertisers, and journalists (Curran, 2000). The critical political economy approach, which emerged as a response to the liberalist-pluralist approach fills these gaps in the literature.

The critical political economy approach claims that political and economic forces have a non-negligible impact on the media, and they limit press objectivity, which is idealized by liberal pluralism. It claims that media content is heavily affected by the dominant ideology, state, and capitalist interests and the media outlets that are shaped by concentrated ownership structures serve these interests instead of those of the public.

Contrary to the first approach its arguments focus on criticisms of capitalism. It criticizes the assumption that a free market would guarantee freedom of expression and plurality (Granham, 2000). O'Neill (2006) claims that the monetary interest of the capitalist class does not guarantee freedom of expression, on the contrary, it leads to censorship. Here, he comes up with three explanations as to why this is the case. First, he says that each view does not have the chance to be published because of the costs involved. Secondly, the existing media outlets exclude marginalized views and focus on the demands and desires of the median citizen because they are profit-oriented. And lastly, he states that monetary aims lead to a violation of professional ethics and public responsibility. Similarly, Gurevitch and Blumler (1990) in their research say that the media in liberal democracies, particularly in the United States

"seem committed to the presentation, not of a broad spectrum of ideas but of mainstream opinion currents, whose flows are bounded politically by the two-party system, economically by the imperatives of private enterprise capitalism, and culturally by the values of a consumer society" (p.269).

One of the representatives of the critical political economy approach is Herman and Chomsky (2002), who claim that American media operates as a propaganda tool. They disagree with the liberal pluralist argument related to the objectivity of the media. Instead, they come up with a propaganda model in which they highlight five filtering mechanisms between what the media publishes and the facts:

> The essential ingredients of our propaganda model, or set of news "filters," fall under the following headings: (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) "anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism. (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, p.2)

According to them, the media cannot be free because it is a "manufactured consensus" between political and economic elites. However, Chomsky (1989) emphasizes that since mainstream media needs the illusion of objectivity and pluralism, they do not perform its function in a propagandist way but in more covert ways within "proper" boundaries (p.71).

What critical political economy approach suggests is very fruitful in terms of analyzing the relationship between the state and the media owners that consist of the capitalist class. It presents an overall picture of the role and the functioning of the media. However, both the liberal-pluralist and the critical political economy focus on discussions of media freedom in liberal democracies. Even though, the arguments

related to the effects of ownership structure are applicable to other countries, when it comes to authoritarian regimes, new discussions on media freedom come into play.

### 3.2 Media control in authoritarian regimes

Media freedom is questionable in nearly all countries, but there is also evidence that regime types have a huge effect on the level of freedom. Stier (2015) investigates the correlation between regime types and media freedom by conducting an analysis of 149 countries over a period of 17 years from 1993 to 2010. In the resulting article, he argues that the situation of the media is heavily affected by regime type and the governance strategies that governments implement. He concludes that in democracies, levels of media freedom are high compared to those in autocracies. He includes electoral autocracies, monarchies, military regimes, communist ideocracies, and one-party regimes inside the autocratic spectrum. He says that electoral autocracies, monarchies and military regimes have the freest media, communist ideocracies where the government holds a communication monopoly has less freedom and one-party regimes are in between within the autocratic spectrum. Some scholars claim that among non-democratic regimes there are variations in terms of media freedom. According to this 'instrumental view of authoritarian media freedom', some dictators may allow a degree of freedom to facilitate the gathering of information about the thoughts of the public (Egorov et al., 2009; Gehlbach & Sonin, 2014; Lorentzen, 2014; Qin et al., 2017). However, Sheen (2019) claims that this literature does not account for interim censorship, which may not allow dictators to collect information they need. He concludes that "unless dictators can make a credible commitment to not censoring any news reports, the non-sustainable media freedom policy would not be able to quench their thirst for information" (p.52).

One question that can be raised while analyzing media freedom in non-democratic regimes is the following: Why do governments want to control media? Some scholars claim that the main reason for controlling media is the desire to manipulate voters. According to this view, through biased news, citizens may believe what the government wants them to believe. One article in support of this argument is that from Geddes and Zaller (1989), who claim that the reason for government control of the media is the thought that voters can be manipulated through the news and can be channeled into thinking that a government is more successful than it actually is. Based on data collected from Brazil, they claim that people who are politically aware are exposed to government-dominated media more, but they are able to resist the pro-government arguments they are exposed to. However, the people who have middle-range awareness about political issues are more prone to believe the pro-government arguments even though they do not pay enough attention to be exposed to it. So, they reach the conclusion that even though, governments cannot alter the beliefs of all citizens, they can still use the media as a tool to persuade people who are not so politically aware.

In another explanation, it is claimed that even though people are not "manipulated" by pro-government arguments, state control over the media still works since it misguides public opinion because people use the media to learn about the opinions of others. Larreguy and Marshall (2019, March) note that "Even if biased content does not alter citizens' beliefs on either dimension, controlling media outlets could still inhibit the coordination required for effective collective action against the government by influencing whether citizens believe that other citizens will act" (p.15). This idea is supported by two more articles. Little (2017) develops "a game theory of propaganda which affects mass behavior without necessarily affecting mass

belief" (p.224). The article claims that people can support an opinion that is acquired from a pro-government media channel if they think that the majority of people would believe it. In a similar approach, Kuran (1991) gives an example of Soviet rule in Eastern Europe and claims that the absence of an independent media delayed the uprising against the regime because the absence of an independent media prevented people from learning the opinions and the dissatisfaction of others.

Lastly, the desire to control the media can be explained by the nature of the regime. For example, Levitsky and Way (2010) see repression on media as an inseparable feature of competitive authoritarianism and they claim that governments control the media in order to create an uneven playing field. He defines competitive authoritarianism as a regime in between full-scale authoritarianism and democracy. In this regime type, competition between the opposition and the government still exists, but the violations are frequent enough to create an uneven playing field on behalf of the ruling power. According to them, elections are held regularly but "incumbents routinely abuse state resources, deny the opposition adequate media coverage, harass opposition candidates and their supporters, and in some cases manipulate electoral results." In this case, journalists, opposition politicians, and dissidents may be "spied on, threatened, harassed, or arrested" to ensure an uneven playing field (p.53).

As with motivations, the strategies that are used by government to control the media give evidence of variation according to country. In full-scale authoritarian regimes, one common mechanism to control the media is not allowing any independent media outlets by either prohibiting them by the law or by suspending them temporarily. For example, in the former Soviet Union, only state-owned media outlets were allowed, and these were used as a tool for government propaganda. In

regimes that are neither fully functioning democracies nor totally authoritarian, the government comes up with mechanisms to enable it to control the media without totally banning it. Since each country is unique only those most frequently discussed in the literature and where repeated violations are in evidence discussed.

One of the mechanisms that enable this state-control is the use of laws that prohibit certain freedoms of expression (Hem, 2014; Levitsky & Way, 2010). Governments can introduce new laws or interpret already existing laws to intervene in the freedom of the press. These interventions may target media outlets by censoring specific news, applying monetary punishments or through the threat of closure. They may also target journalists by cancelling their journalism licenses, detention, and imprisonment. Sometimes these laws are designed to censor specific news directly and sometimes the motivation is hidden. To demonstrate this argument Hem (2014) compares Russia and Malaysia. In Malaysia, most of the time The Sedition Act is used to limit freedom of the press. Under this act, any speech that shows "seditious tendency" is forbidden. However, due to its broad definition, any act can be considered criminal. For example, the Act includes statements such as "to bring into hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection against any Ruler or against any Government" and a significant number of media outlets have been closed down because of it (p.15). On the other hand, Russia uses more indirect methods to punish media outlets. Hem (2014) gives an example of how the Russian government used the law that prohibits the 'promotion of drugs' to punish the media outlet named Esquire. Even though the media outlet was on the radar of government because of its oppositional views, the government gave it a warning for violating the rule against the promotion of drugs. Another regulation permits it to rescind the license of any media outlet if they have received two warnings in one year. Hem (2014) claims that

using indirect punishments gives the government the opportunity to claim they are not adopting political censorship. However, the media outlet understands that it is a warning for them because of their oppositional views.

Financial pressure is another mechanism used by governments (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016; Hem, 2014). Governments may reward loyal media outlets and punish those who dissent in order to control the media. At the beginning of the chapter the extent to which media is dependent on advertisement revenue and how this affects media freedom are discussed. Governments are important customers for newspapers because their advertisement spending is significant. By looking at the Argentine case, Di Tella and Franceschelli (2011) show how governments use advertisement as a tool for controlling the media. They determined that when a government's advertisement spending increased, the newspaper's coverage of corruption scandals decreased. Strömberg and Wu (2014) come to the same conclusion by analyzing over 100 Chinese newspapers. They claim that there is a positive correlation between government advertising and pro-government coverage.

The money does not have to be given to the media outlet directly. From the mid-nineteenth century onward, capital costs have increased due to technological developments and the desire of owners to increase market-share (Herman & Chomsky, 2010). The integration of the media into the wider market system, rules regulating the media's concentration, cross-ownership, and the entrance of conglomerates were loosened. As a result, while cost prevented the entrance of local and small businesses into the market, loosening regulations led to the domination of large conglomerates in the media. This environment made it easy for governments to reward some media outlets through the award of licenses in other sectors or through the provision of other business privileges to the owner of the conglomerate

(MacDonald, 1990). One of the best examples of this is the Grupo Clarín Company in Argentina. A newspaper that had existed for seven decades became a multimedia group, and then became an economic conglomerate as a result of a close relationship with the government (Sivak, 2015). The other tools used by government may include both verbal and physical attacks on journalists, assassinations, appointing pro-government managers to media outlets, canceling the licenses of journalists and media outlets, and the imposition of broadcast bans. These direct and indirect interventions are all threats against freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

### 3.3 Story of the journalists

The literature we have looked at so far, offers us a general understanding about the relationship between regime type and media freedom. While the first part focuses on discussions concerning political and economic relationships and their impact on media freedom in liberal democracies, the second part focuses on the motivations and mechanisms of control applied, especially by authoritarian countries. However, the manner in which this control is enacted and its success on a daily base are not addressed. To understand these daily experiences, we should consider those who experience this control at first-hand, namely the journalists. Do journalists choose to conform out of a fear of getting fired? Breed (1955), in his classic work, claims that the situation is more complex than that. In the beginning, he claims that conformity cannot be automatic for three reasons: ethical journalistic norms, the liberal attitudes of reporters when compared to those of publishers and the ethical taboos that prevent publishers from imposing restrictions on subordinates. Throughout the paper he wants to answer the question: “How is policy maintained, although it often contravenes journalistic norms, that staffers often personally disagree with it, and

that executives cannot legitimately command that it be followed?" (p.326). To answer this question, he conducts semi-structured interviews with staff. Based upon his findings he comes up with six reasons as to why media staff obey those rules that are usually not written down, but covertly understood:

1. Institutional authority and sanctions may have an impact on conformity but Breed claims that the fear of being fired is more relevant than the actual possibility of getting fired.
2. Feelings of obligation and esteem for superiors are counted as the second reason in which staff may feel an obligation towards the employer because of having been hired, respect, or admiration.
3. Mobility aspirations can be another factor since disobedience can be a bad mark on their curriculum vitae.
4. The absence of conflicting group allegiance through unions or coworkers is another reason.
5. The pleasant nature of the work is considered to be another reason for journalistic conformity. He claims that it may come from in-groupness in the newsroom, interesting assignments such as interviews with celebrities and the attending of events, and also non-financial perquisites such as meeting those in authority and being the first to know about issues that may often be of national import.
6. Lastly, he claims that news attains a value in and of itself. According to him, because of time constraints and the pressure to produce copy, a certain moral equivocation emerges (p.330- p.331).

Breed's work is an important contribution in terms of our understanding of the mindset of journalists working in media outlets. However, his study is based on American newspapers within a liberal and democratic context.

Journalists working in an authoritarian setting are faced with different obstacles and their responses invariably differ. Secondly, he builds his arguments on the premise that all journalists conform with news policy, or at least, his arguments are based on those who conform. However, it is also known that where there is power, there is resistance (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). So, what do these dissident voices do under the repression of the boss and the government? What do those, who do not wish to conform, do?

During the 2010s, the literature on Turkish media focused mainly on alternative new media and citizen journalism in an examination of the anti-surveillance practices of dissident voices in the Turkish media (Ataman & Çoban, 2017; Doğu, 2017). This approach prevails also in other parts of the world (Atton, 2010) with the rise of alternative media globally. Alternative new media are usually based on the Internet and social media platforms such as Twitter. The second feature of it is that it embraces those dissident voices, which are excluded from mainstream media outlets, and which are either dominated by the private companies or the state.

To understand the polarized media landscape after the Gezi Protests, Doğu (2017) undertook research based on network analysis in the Twittersphere. Throughout the research, he identifies the actors, their position within the wider news domain, examines the connections between them and explores the patterns of news diffusion. He notes that "the nonmainstream media – representing the civic network of dissident voices – bring together different segments of society around common issues and provide multifold aspects in the coverage of these issues" (p. 16). For him,

alternative and activist media accounts in Turkey share knowledge and collaborate with each other and also social movements against authoritarian rule more effectively than the pro-government mainstream media (Doğu, 2017, pp. 7-9). Similarly, Lievrouw (2011) says that it is becoming the role of "alternative and activist new media" to stand up to authoritarian rule and mass surveillance. According to the literature, alternative media takes its power from establishing networks to undermine authoritarian regimes' constraints on journalistic practices and form counter-surveillance strategies by bringing fragmented dissident voices together (Lievrouw, 2011, pp. 149-176; Nayar, 2015, pp. 158-174).

Ataman and Çoban (2014) go even further by claiming that "it is not the conventional journalists working for the mainstream but the members of Turkey's alternative and activist new media who are seeking 'ways to circumvent censors' and 'exploit the cracks in the system' or ignore openly directed threats" (p.1019). In their article, they aim to detect the counter-surveillance practices of activist citizen journalists as to look to combat the surveillance strategies of the authoritarian Turkish government. After making 22 in-depth interviews with journalists from alternative new media outlets, they conclude that the journalists adopt both offensive and defensive strategies. According to this differentiation "the whole process of news-making that criticizes the authoritarian surveillance state stands out as an offensive tactic. On the other hand, defensive tactics are very closely related to the safety of journalists, their sources, and data" (p.1014). They argue that through these journalists' efforts solidarity between dissident voices is established and through providing information about the stories that government and the ruling elite want to hide they reestablish the mechanisms of democratic decision-making (p.1015).

However, to understand the story in more detail we should not exclude journalists working in the mainstream media outlets under very restrictive conditions and where this struggle between power and resistance becomes more obvious. It may be true that journalists in the alternative media channels are freer to present criticisms of the incumbent government but learning about the practices of dissident journalists working in the mainstream media outlets would be fruitful and enrich this discussion.

For example, there are two related articles in which the journalist resistance practices in authoritarian settings are examined. One of them is Mikal Hem's (2014) article, *Evading the censors: Critical journalism in authoritarian states*. Based on the examples of four countries Malaysia, Singapore, Russia, and Venezuela, which he calls semi-democracies, he tries to determine what strategies journalists use to overcome censorship. Throughout the paper, he claims that "even in authoritarian states, journalists can find ways of publishing sensitive material. This is possible because the authorities do not exercise complete and total control of the media, either because they can't or because they do not need to, but also because journalists exploit cracks in censorship regimes" (p.4). After making in-depth interviews with a number of journalists he identifies six main ways of dealing with censorship: hiding sensitive sentences inside the news in interleaved lines or by using insinuations, asking critical questions at press conferences, publishing sensitive material in media not associated with politics, operating media from abroad, sharing content with media outlets less likely to be censored, and lastly using online media. Interestingly, contrary to Ataman and Çoban (2014), Hem does not differentiate between journalists working in alternative media and mainstream media outlets. Instead, he considers alternative media as a strategy that journalists use.

The second article is “Was It All Pure Propaganda? Journalistic Practices of ‘Silent Resistance’ In Soviet Estonian Journalism” (Lauk & Kreegipuu, 2010), which takes us back to Soviet times. The article investigates the strategies and practices of Estonian journalists who used to express their dissent under the heavy control of the Soviet regime. The difference in this set compared to the others is that the media was being controlled solely by the state and any other media outlet was not permitted, so the journalists had no option other than to show their ‘silence resistance’ as Lauk and Kreegipuu (2010) call it. They identify two classified strategies, one at the discursive level and the other at the editorial level. They claim that because there was no alternative, journalists were always “trying to test the limits of what vas ‘permitted’ and ‘prohibited’ within the framework of the official press” (p.169). On the discursive level, the article claims that one of the advantages enjoyed by the Estonian journalists was the difference in language. While orders were coming from the Russian speaking authorities, the journalists were translating them into the Estonian language, which made it easy to make jokes about them. They claim that even though Russian had prevailed for decades, “it did not become a natural element of the texts and remained alien and dissembling, and was thus, easier to ignore” (p.174). The second mechanism used by journalists was intertextuality in which they disseminated two different variations of the news on the same page, one of which political, while the other was not. The non-political hid criticism of the other, the political news. Since they were in different news sections, it was easier to escape Soviet party control, but at the same time, the audience could detect the message (p.177). Another interesting tool used by the journalists was criticizing the policies of the Soviet regime as if they took place in other countries because inside the newsroom criticizing other countries was promoted. From the standpoint pf editorial

strategies, the article presents several practices such as taking advantage of personal relationships, loopholes in the regulations, taking advantage of time constraints, overlaps in the chain of command, and misleading the censors (pp.183-187).

This article is important in terms of its not only shedding light on the resistance and repressive practices during Soviet times, but also because it shows how each political setting creates its own repertoires of action. Since the pressure and costs of being dissident are much higher in a Soviet regime, the journalists sought more creative ways to overcome this domination. In other words, the form of repression shapes the type of resistance generated. As Fernandez and Huey (2009) propose, a good starting point in the study of resistance and surveillance is not surveillance mechanisms, but resistance itself" (p.200).

All of the literature presented above, is important in terms of its not being restricted to domination alone as it also looks to analyze journalists' responses to it. Looking at resistance practices gives us a more concrete understanding of how domination occurs. However, there are certain gaps in these studies. First of all, the research does not portray the dynamic relationship between domination and resistance. In all of the articles, journalists are portrayed as the sole resisters and the government is portrayed as the dominator. How journalists' actions feed and encourage this dominance is not given. However, as Mitchell (1990), Adan (2007), and Vinthagen and Johansson (2013) claim there is a constant exchange between resistance and domination. Making clear cut distinctions in terms of resister/dominator and power/resistance could prevent us from understanding the complicated and intertwined nature of this relationship. Everyday resistance literature which was introduced by Scott and developed by other scholars gives us the necessary equipment to understand what is going on in the Turkish media.

# CHAPTER 4

# TRANSFORMATION OF THE TURKISH MEDIA

> News managers were very skilled and knowledgeable. As I was passing in front of his room, I used to feel like this: It is as if there is a cosmos with all the knowledge of the galaxy and its light radiates. Right now, frankly, I feel what I feel when I see a pile of garbage on the side of the road. Even worse. (Aydın, personal communication, April 4, 2020) (see Appendix C, 1)

These sentences come from a journalist who sought to describe the change in the media institution he had been working in over the previous 21 years. The purpose of this section is to examine the change in the Turkish media and to understand how and under what conditions this shift in the perception of a journalist towards news managers occurred. Turkish media has never been independent and has never been far removed from government scrutiny. The tutelary regime in place from the beginning of the Republic and the changes in media ownership structures starting from the shift to neoliberal practices during the 1980s did not present a favorable environment for the ideal media landscape. However, with the increasing authoritarian practices during the tenure of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the pressure on the media started to increase gradually. Economic sanctions on media outlets, the cluster of closures, arrests and imprisonments, the authorization of the distribution and cancellation of Yellow Press Cards, verbal and physical attacks on journalists, and the appointment of pro-AKP managers to media outlets were some of the main mechanisms used during this period. To understand the situation of the media sector today, examining the previous episodes is necessary since all the former experiences affect how we came to this point. Here, not only political changes but also political-economic transformations should be taken into

account to understand the whole picture. Therefore, these two will go hand in hand throughout the section.

## 4.1 Early days of the Turkish media

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, a tough process of nation-state building was on the agenda of the country. Newspapers and the radio were seen as tools for "the construction of the modernized, Westernized, secular national identity" (Yeşil, 2018, p. 21). This modernization role sometimes meant the introduction of reforms to the public and sometimes it meant excluding Greek, Kurdish, and Armenian voices to present the picture of a cohesive Turkish nation. There was a state monopoly in broadcasting and the state decided what would be published and how it would be published. Private newspapers were not excluded from state control, with strict press laws limiting the freedom of the press.

Mustafa Kemal, the founder of the Republic, expected newspapers to back the reforms and regulations that the state introduced. To demand journalists' support, several meetings were organized (16 January 1923 İzmit Press Meeting; 5 January 1924 İzmir Press Meeting; 25 May 1935 First Press Congress). Of course, dissident voices still existed, and the state was criticized by journalists during the abolition of the caliphate, during the multi-party regime experiments of the Progressive Republican Party (1924) and the Free Republican Party (1930). The Law on the Maintenance of Order (Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu) and Independence Tribunals was used to silence these dissident voices. Through the establishment of new laws, many newspapers were closed (Topuz, 2003).

The multiparty period starting with the establishment of the Democrat Party in 1946 had an important effect on the development of private newspapers such as

Hürriyet. The newspaper was established by Sedat Simavi in 1948 and became amajor newspaper throughout the 1950s. The first years of the Democrat Party rule were described as a "golden age" by Ahmet Emin Yalman (1970) because of the comparative political freedom and economic prosperity when compared to the Republican era. However, the economic progress and a comfortable political environment did not last long. During the second term in office, the Democrat Party started to become more intolerant towards journalists and any kind of criticism. Many closures and arrests occurred, while greater levels of censorship and the introduction of new laws that restricted journalism followed (Topuz, 2003, p.200). The military coup that ended the Democrat Party rule had both a negative and positive impact on the press. With the introduction of the new constitution, many rights were guaranteed for journalists such as freedom of the press, freedom of expression, freedom of thought as well as union rights. However, the arrests and closures continued to target the press. The rights given to journalists under the 1961 Constitution had been taken away by the 1982 Constitution. However, the major impact of the 1980s on journalism was the rise of conglomerates in the sector as a result of neoliberalization of the media (Sözeri & Güney, 2011).

## 4.2 The political-economic environment of the 1980s and the rise of conglomerates

Until the 1980s, the media sector was dominated by family businesses in which ownership was transferred from father to son and the owners were usually the journalists themselves (Topuz, 2003). These newspapers relied on government subsidies and government advertising because of economic turbulence and the lack of developed advertisement sectors. The dependence on the government made newspapers more vulnerable to government pressure (Adaklı, 2006).

The stability program introduced on 24 January decisions in 1980 which led to cuts in government subsidies on the media introduced new economic challenges for media owners, who were already burdened by the economic crisis (Sözeri & Güney, 2011, p.39). Those who could not afford the costs started to be eliminated from the sector or they started to establish ventures in other sectors or formed coalitions with companies from different sectors. The conglomerate corporations, who were involved in multiple sectors outside of the media saw this gap in the sector as a chance to extend their businesses. According to Tılıç (1998), they did not purchase newspapers because they were so profitable, but because "they wanted to open all the doors in front of them for their personal and economic interests" (p.245).

For example, Kemal Ilıcak, who was the owner of the newspaper, Tercüman, started to invest in real estate in those years, which was going to prepare his end due to the corruption scandals he is involved in. To deal with financial difficulties the family had, they formed a partnership with Aydın Doğan, who ran businesses in a number of different sectors such as auto dealership, haulage, pharmaceutical warehousing, and construction machinery. Aydın Doğan's investment led to his subsequent dominance of the media sector throughout the 1990s (Köker, 2018, April 11).

According to Yeşil (2016), the entrance of non-media entrepreneurs into the sector had several important effects on the media. First of all, newspapers became more vulnerable to government pressure because they needed government licenses, privatization deals, and subsidies for the sake of their businesses. The second effect was the prioritization of corporate logic rather than journalism ethics. Here, she proffers a number of examples, including the appointment of businesspeople to the various executive boards instead of journalists and the moving of newspaper

operations from Babiali, which is a center for journalism in İstanbul, to modern buildings on the outskirts of the city which cut ties between the public and the journalists. Another important result of the rise of the conglomerates was the change in the content of news. The news started to focus on subjects that attracted greater numbers of readers, such as entertainment, lifestyle, and sports, and the introduction of supplemental magazines, (p.35-36). Özerkan (2009), based on a content analysis of nine major newspapers, claims that the news relating to politics and the economy started to change its focus from the working class to the investor class with a greater emphasis on company news during the 1980s and 1990s. This was most notable in the major newspapers owned by Aydın Doğan and Dinç Bilgin, where these shifts in the areas of focus were more apparent (p.259).

Another important result of conglomerations was the change in journalist rights. Bosses of the media outlets started to reduce the salaries of journalists and to put pressure on journalists who were members of unions. This decline in union membership was also the result of government policies that favored companies over workers. The major conglomerates also made "gentlemen's agreements" to prevent the transfer of journalists between companies, forcing journalists to accept the status quo and to continue to work in the same media outlet (Yeşil, 2016, p.37).

Of course, all these changes in the media sector during the 1980s, cannot be understood solely on the basis of economic factors, without considering the political environment. The changes in union laws and content of the news were also affected by the environment after the military coup of 1980 (Özsever, 2004). The National Security Council that was composed of high-ranked military generals were in power until 1983 and they imposed lots of restrictions on media outlets as well as

journalists. The power of the military did not change even after the election of Kenan Evren in 1982 as the president of Turkey for a seven-year term.

Immediately after the coup, Arayış Magazine, Demokrat, Hergün, and Aydınlık newspapers were closed. Mehmet Young, who was the Secretary General of the Union of Journalists (TGS) of the Ankara branch, was detained and the union closed on 9 December 1980. For the eight newspapers in İstanbul, closure decisions were announced several times and to varying degrees. Milli Newspaper was closed four times for a total of 72 days, Cumhuriyet was closed four times fora total of 41 days, Tercüman was closed twice for a total 29 days, Günaydın twice for a total of 17 days, Güneş and Milliyet once for a total of 10 days, Tan once for a total of nine days and Hürriyet twice for a total of seven days (Katurman, 2007, March 10). 39 tons of newspapers and magazines were also destroyed and a total of 303 cases were filed against 13 large newspapers (Yüksel, 2011).

Freedom of opinion and expression which were supposed to be vital elements of journalism came under attack with the introduction of a new constitution prepared under the provision of the military junta. In this constitution freedom of thought and opinion, freedom of expression, and the dissemination of thought was guaranteed under the Articles 25 and 26. However, these rights were introduced with several restrictions set out in Article 26:

> The exercise of these freedoms may be restricted for the purposes of protecting the national security, public order and public safety, the basic characteristics of the Republic and safeguarding the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation, preventing crime, punishing offenders, withholding information duly classified as a state secret, protecting the reputation and rights and private and family life of others, or protecting professional secrets as prescribed by law, or ensuring the proper functioning of the judiciary.

Because anything can be regarded as an issue of national security, Article 26 resulted in mass accusations against journalists and media workers. According to Ministry of

Justice reports, during the military junta, 151 legal changes that restricted press freedom were introduced ("İşte 12 Eylül," 2015, May 10). One of the changes that targeted the media directly was the change in Article 3 of Martial Law, which gave the National Security Council the right "to censor broadcasts and communications made by all kinds of devices such as telephone, radio, radio, and TV, including the broadcasts of TRT". Some of them indirectly gave the Council the right to intervene to the journalists such as the legal change introduced on December 28, 1982 which states that "Those who spread unfounded and exaggerated news in a way that causes the public's rush and excitement for private purposes are punished with imprisonment from 6 months to 2 years" (Kösedağ, 2019). As a result of these legal changes journalists and editors-in-chief were detained, charged, and arrested several times. A total of 4,000 years of imprisonment was requested for 400 journalists, and they were sentenced to 3,315 years and 6 months in prison. 31 journalists remained in prison during this time. In the same period, 300 journalists were attacked, and 3 of them were killed ("İşte 12 Eylül," 2015, May 10).

### 4.3 Three developments in the 1990s

The imprisonments and closures continued throughout the unconsolidated political environment of the 1990s. However, three developments were significant in terms of their effect on the Turkish media. One of them was the commercialization of broadcasting, the second, the rise of Islamist media and the last the intensified armed struggle between the Turkish military and the PKK.

Television and radio broadcasting had been under the control of the state for a long time. The state-owned TRT had a monopoly on broadcasting. During the 1980s, the legal regulations that strengthened TRT's monopoly started to weaken as

a result of access to satellite channels, the modification of the ownership of broadcast transmitters, and the vesting of authority in the PTT (Postal, Telegraph and Telephone Corporation) to operate these transmitters (Yeşil, 2018). These changes gave way to the commercialization of broadcasting. In March 1990, Magic Box, which was owned by Cem Uzan and Ahmet Özal, started to operate from Germany. After TRT's very conservative style of broadcasting, Magic Box's channel Star1 attracted audiences with its more "liberal" programming (Serim, 2007). It broadcast Western talk shows and music programs, NBA games and distributed lots of gifts to audiences via small quizzes etc. The entrance of Star1 resulted in the introduction of lots of many channels to the broadcasting sector.

Islamist media emerged afterwards and as a response to the "westernization" of TV (Yeşil, 2018, p.45). Religious groups had concerns over the "openness" of the TV channels and interpreted it as an attack on religious values. However, a huge market had been created, and it was not possible to prevent the entrance of new actors. In an effort to spread religious messages, Islamist media channels were established such as Samanyolu TV, TGRT, and Kanal 7. Samanyolu TV was financed by the Gülen community and broadcast until 2015. When the relationship between the AKP and the Gülen community turned to one of enmity, the channels were closed.

One of the other things that had an effect on the media sector was the intense armed struggle between the PKK and the Turkish military, which reached a peak during the 1990s. As was mentioned before, the exclusion and repression of the Kurdish media occurred in the early years of the Republic, too. When the struggle that had started in the mid-1980s turned into a war, the military used strategies to legitimize its anti-Kurdish stance and decriminalize Kurdish expression. According

to Yeşil (2018), one of the strategies that the military used was the restriction of information coming from the southeast of Turkey. As a result, journalists were forced to cover news based on data coming from the General Staff. Journalists were invited to meetings with the president, military and intelligence officers. In these meetings journalists were told how to cover the war (p.54). Journalists who questioned the actions of the Turkish army had to contend with a military and media alliance. Here, Yesil (2018) gives the example of Ahmet Hakan, who was fired from Milliyet after writing an article named "What If Ataturk Was a Kurd?" The criminalization of Kurdish expression was eased by the courts as well. Here we can give examples of several laws that enhanced this criminalization. For example, Article 28 of 1982 Constitution targeted "anyone who writes any news or articles threatening the internal or external security of the State or the indivisible integrity of the State". The Anti-Terror Law of 1991 was instrumentalized to punish journalists. Article 2 states that "The ones who are not even a member of terrorist organization but committed a crime on behalf of the organization shall be deemed as terrorist offender and punished as the members of organizations." Article 6 includes the following:

> Those who announce that the crimes of a terrorist organization are aimed at certain persons, whether or not such persons are named, or who disclose or publish the identity of officials on anti-terrorist duties, or who identify such persons as targets shall be punished with a fine of between 5 and 10 million Turkish liras. Those who print or publish leaflets and declarations of terrorist organizations shall be punished with a fine of between 5 and 10 million Turkish liras.

Lastly Article 7, criminalizes "making propaganda for terrorist organizations". The Anti-Terror Law of 1991 was amended in 1995, 1999, 2003, 2006, and 2010, but the practice of the association of journalists with terrorism had continued (Yeşil, 2018).

While pro-Kurdish arguments were not included in the mainstream media outlets, the alternative media channels faced closure. For example, Özgür Gündem (Free Agenda), established in 1992 had a pro-Kurdish stance, and was closed down in 1994. In two years, the newspaper was closed three times for 30 days, 15 times for 15 days, and twice for 10 days. The officials of the newspaper were sentenced to a total of 147 years in prison and a fine of 21 billion Turkish liras. In only two years 37 people who worked in the media outlet including distributors and journalists were murdered ("Özgür Gündem", 2011, April 4). The newspaper continued publishing under nine different names (Yeşil, 2018) and each of them continued to be targeted by the government. In 2011, after 17 years, Özgür Gündem was published under its original name. However, in 2016, during the AKP period, the newspaper was closed again having been accused of "making propaganda for a terrorist organization" and charges against the journalists have continued ever since.

### 4.4 Media during the AKP period

After coming to power in 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has exerted strong control over the media through direct and indirect interventions. One of the strategies that the incumbent party used during this process was the creation of an AKP-friendly media through rewarding those businesspeople who had a good relationship with the party and punishing those who were opponents of the party (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016, 2018). As a result of the fact that media outlets were owned by large holdings that had businesses in other sectors, the AKP could affect the ownership structure of the sector more easily (Yeşil, 2018). Interventions in media outlets included handovers, taxation judgments, closures, and the appointment of pro-AKP managers; all of which were facilitated by the use of state resources

Journalists had also been individually targeted by the government for a long time. Many dissident journalists were arrested, detained, and charged with accusations of “insulting the president”, “making propaganda for terrorist organizations”, etc. Journalists had experienced not only judicial charges but also verbal attacks during the AKP period. And lastly, the news was under the scrutiny of the government. Censorship and self-censorship became a reality which affected journalists deeply. As a result of these direct and indirect interventions, Turkish mainstream media became one of the most contentious areas where the domination of the AKP is witnessed.

### 4.4.1 Creating an AKP-friendly media

One important development in the Turkish media sector was the purchase of media outlets by companies that had strong relations with the government. The Saving Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF) played an important role in transferring capital to pro-AKP businesses (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017). One of the biggest handovers happened during the first years of AKP because the 2001 economic crisis had a significant impact on the media groups, especially those with investments in the financial sector. The banks that were unable to pay their debts were seized by the TMSF, which can be regarded as a state institution because its managers are appointed by the government.

Among the 25 banks that were seized after the crisis, 10 of them had media outlets (Sözeri, 2014, p.369). One of these conglomerates was the Bilgin Group, which was owned by Dinç Bilgin. When Etibank which was carrying out business under the Bilgin Group was seized, the media outlets that were under the Bilgin Goup such as Yeni Asır, the Sabah Newspapers and ATV were affected. Similarly,

when İktisat Bank owned by Erol Aksoy, was transferred to TMSF, Cine 5 stopped broadcasting. After managing the media outlets for a while, TMSF sold these media companies by auctioning them off to AKP-friendly companies far below their market value and these practices changed the media sector significantly. Doğuş Holding which is a conglomerate that had business in both banking and the automotive sectors took over NTV and Kanal E, which turned into CNBC-e after its partnership with CNBC. From 2002 on, TMSF had confiscated 219 companies from Uzan Holdings including the Star newspaper and TV ("TMSF ATV," 2007, April 2). Furthermore, Ciner Holdings owned by Turgay Ciner purchased Sabah Newspaper and ATV through a TMSF auction. Even though, TMSF took it again in 2007 with the application of Dinç Bilgin on the base of the criminal charges about the earlier sale, Ciner continued its presence in the media sector by establishing the Habertürk channel and newspaper. One of the largest media outlets, Sabah and ATV were purchased by the AKP-friendly Çalık Holdings in 2008 with loan support from two state-owned banks (Erdem, 2015). Sabah and ATV joint television-newspaper outlet completed its journey in 2013 when another AKP-friendly Zirve Holdings owned by Ömer Faruk Kalyoncu purchased it ("Sabah ve ATV", 2013, December 20). TMSF's take overs and auctions continued during the later periods of AKP. In 2013, Akşam Newspaper, Show TV and SkyTurk were seized by TMSF as a result of the debts of the Çukurova Group. First, Show TV was sold to the Ciner Group in an uncontested auction. When the court cancelled this purchase, TMSF took over the channel, but in the end, it was purchased by the Ciner Group again (Erdem, 2015).

In all of these handovers, the relationship with the government was very important. For example, the biggest media conglomerate Doğan Group was in a better position after the 2001 economic crisis compared to other media

conglomerates. Even, in 2005 Aydın Doğan was able to purchase Star TV in a TMSF auction and increased its dominance in the media sector. During this time. Aydın Doğan had a good relationship with AKP. The media channels were broadcasting in favor of AKP, when discussions on whether the party should be closed down or not were underway. However, this good relationship did not survive. In 2009, Dogan Media which was a major media conglomerate that had dominated the sector since the 1990s was fined 3 billion dollars for tax evasion after they covered the Deniz Feneri scandals in Germany for the first time. Deniz Feneri was a charity, which was based in Turkey and had branches in Germany. In 2008, German authorities discovered that the charity had collected 41 million Euros for earthquake relief in Indonesia, but it had sent 16 million Euros directly to Turkey. Because the charity had close links with AKP, the incident was the subject of significant criticism. In addition to a 3 billion dollar fine, the National Broadcasting Authority (RTÜK) decided to close down 11 unlicensed broadcasting stations of the Doğan Media Group. The economic sanctions imposed on the Doğan Media Group resulted in the sale of the Milliyet and Vatan newspapers to an AKP-friendly joint venture of the Demirören and Karacan Groups. The dispute between Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was the Prime Minister at the time and Aydın Doğan, was also to the public as Erdoğan was directly targeting Doğan in his speeches. For example, in one of his public speeches Erdoğan criticized Doğan for attending an international interview complaining about Erdoğan's policies. In this speech Erdoğan said the following:

> Mr. Doğan, pull yourself together… You get annoyed because your habits are broken. Because you had used to the prime ministers had been bowing and scraping before you. Because you had used to managing the governments from İkitelli and Babıali… We said we will fight gangs, mafia, and corruption in this country. And we are fighting this struggle and we will continue to do so. ("Doğan Holding'e," 2009, February 18)

Disputes between Doğan and Erdoğan had continued for a very long time. To establish good relationships with the government, Doğan employed columnists that were in favor of the ruling party such as Abdülkadir Selvi. Doğan also fired many journalists who were critical of Erdoğan in his newspapers. One such example was İrfan Değirmenci, who was newscaster with the Kanal D TV channel. When Değirmenci declared that he would vote “no” in the 2017 constitutional referendum in his social media account, he was fired. However, economic sanctions continued against the media outlet. Finally, in 2018, all shares in Dogan Media outlets were sold to the AKP-friendly Demirören Holdings.

Another example of financial sanctions was the routine tax inspections of theTaraf newspaper that makes news critical to the incumbent government. Starting from December 2012, Taraf’s accounts and group companies were under close examination. The AKP commissioned tax inspector Abdulah Kiraz and examined five-years of accounts for 14 months. After he could not find anything, he imposed a tax penalty of 5.5 million pounds without any apparent justification, citing the zero receipt of VAT on scrap paper, a situation that persisted as a matter of course at almost all press organizations. Later, Kiraz was promoted to the position of vice president. Kiraz also did not accept the "bills" of the Sabah newspaper, a a pro-government publication, showing that it had received zero VAT on scrap paper, a point, which highlighted the discrepancy in the application of the tax code to both companies. The tax inspections continued and within 3 years the newspaper had been audited four times (“Taraf’a dördüncü,” 2015, May 25).

Apart from the handovers and economic sanctions, the government also intervened directly via the closure of some media outlets. Many media outlets were shut down because of their affiliation with the Gülenist movement or “terrorist

organizations". Following the declaration of the state of emergency after the 15 July 2016 coup attempt, which ran until 18 July 2018 with seven three-month renewals, the closure of media outlets reached a peak. During this period, 32 decree-laws were declared, absent any oversight or scrutiny by parliament. As a result of these decree-laws, 179 media agencies including 53 newspapers, 34 TV stations, 37 radio station, 20 magazines, six news agencies and 29 publishing houses were closed (Media Ownership Monitor, 2019). The majority of the closures had as their target either Gülen-affiliated media outlets such as the Zaman newspaper and Samanyolu TV or Kurdish media outlets such as Jiyan TV and Gazete Şûjin.

Another mechanism used by the AKP to create its own media was through the appointment of pro-AKP managers to the major media companies. Aydın, who worked for a media company for 21 years observed the appointment of pro-AKP managers and stated that:

> In particular, there are were two important turning points in this institution. One was the period when the Fethullahists were appointed to the managerial positions. The second period was after 2016 when they were trying to get rid of Fethullanists. (Aydın, personal communication, April 4, 2020) (see Appendix C, 2)

As Aydın states clearly, the dominant AKP partners of that time were being appointed to executive positions. It was an important tool used by government to strengthen its grip on power. In doing so, controlling journalists became easier in the absence of direct intervention on the part of the government. One of the best examples of this control, was revealed when Gülenist police officers leaked several tapes that contained conversations between Erdoğan, ministers and businesspeople. These records showed the scale of corruption at the highest levels of government. Two of these recordings, which are openly acknowledged by the actors involved,

were direct proof of Erdoğan's intervention in the affairs of the media outlets ("Turkish PM", 2014, February 12).

In the first tape we witness a dialogue that occurred in the first days of the Gezi uprising between Erdoğan and the senior executive of Habertürk, Fatih Saraç. Erdogan calls Saraç and says he is uncomfortable with the subtitle of MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli's speech and orders the text to be removed. In the recording, Saraç is heard to reply, "your wish is my command" ("Erdoğan'dan Habertürk'e", 2014, February 5). The second recording reflects a conversation between Saraç and Habertürk's editor-in-chief Fatih Altaylı. In this recording, the couple are heard as they are making plans to change the results of a public opinion poll, which will make the AKP look better. Following this conversation, we hear another phone call in which Saraç calls Erdoğan's son and says that they have found a solution for the poll and in which they request that this information is conveyed to Erdoğan ("Bilal Erdoğan", 2014, February 7).

All of these strategies involving the imposition of fines resulting from tax audits, takeovers, closures and the appointment of pro-AKP managers helped the AKP to build its own media and strengthen its competitive authoritarian regime (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2018). While doing so, the AKP instrumentalized state institutions such as the TMSF, RTÜK and the decree laws. While opponents of the AKP were eliminated from the sector, pro-AKP businesspeople gained power and took advantage of state interventions in the media sector. The AKP-friendly media owners not only benefited from this relationship by attending the auctions and taking over the assets of the bankrupted companies, but they also obtained concessions in other sectors that they had invested in.

As shown in Appendix D, today most of the mainstream media outlets are owned by those conglomerates that have a good relationship with the incumbent government not only in the media sector, but also in other sectors such as construction, energy, real estate, tourism, etc. For example, the Kalyon Group is one of the strongest conglomerates and dominates TV, online, and printed media. Apart from the media sector, it has investments in the energy, construction, and mining sectors. According to Reporters Without Borders and Bianet's Media Ownership Monitor website (http://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/) the company "has taken major public tenders in recent years, such as the construction of the third airport in Istanbul, the Mecidiyeköy-Mahmutbey subway line, the pedestrianization project of Taksim, the Bakırköy courthouse construction, the Metrobus line extension, , the Turkey-Cyprus drinking water pipeline construction, Başakşehir stadium, and the Çanakkale-Ayancık road construction". All of these megaprojects government-funded.

Apart from the economic links, there is also a personal relationship. For instance, during the wedding of the owner of the Kalyon Group, Ömer Faruk Kalyoncu, President Erdoğan served as one of the witnesses. During the marriage of Haluk Kalyoncu (brother of Ömer Faruk Kalyoncu) and Yelda Demirören (daughter of Yıldırım Demirören, who is one of the owners of the Demirören Group), President Erdoğan and his wife Emine Erdoğan also served as witnesses. The news reported this marriage as a marrying of companies, namely the Demirören and Kalyoncu Groups ("Yelda Demirören," 2019, April 14).

İhlas, Kalyon, Türk Medya, Albayrak, Ciner, Demirören, and Doğuş groups are other major media conglomerates active in multiple sectors. When we look at the audience share of these groups, they can be said to dominate the media sector. As shown in Table 1, four major companies (Kalyon, Demirören, TRT, and Doğuş)

dominate TV audience share with some 42.97 %. between them The largest audience share belongs to the pro-government Kalyon Group (14.27%) followed by state-owned TRT (13.3%), Demirören (8.43%), and Doğuş Group (6.97%).

Table 1. Audience Share of TV by Four Major Media Groups

| Media Group | Audience Share | TV Channels |
|---|---|---|
| Kalyon | 14.27% | ATV 11.91%<br>A Haber 1.82%<br>Minika 0.54% |
| TRT | 13.3% | TRT1 4.31%<br>TRT Belgesel 1.49%<br>TRT Çocuk 3.48%<br>TRT Haber 2.60%<br>TRT Kurdi 0.08%<br>TRT Müzik 0.33%<br>TRT Spor 1.01% |
| Demirören | 8.43% | Kanal D 7.04%<br>CNN Türk 1.39% |
| Doğuş | 6.97% | NTV 1.11%<br>Star 5.86% |

(Televizyon İzleme Araştırmaları, 2020)

High concentration levels that are seen among the audience share of TV are exist among newspapers, too. According to the analysis of Press Advertising Association based on the circulation rates of newspapers on 2018, the print media is dominated by four major media outlets in Turkey. As seen in Table 2, four media groups hold 60% of the market. The largest share belongs to Demirören (23%) followed by Kalyon (15%), Türk Media (12%), and Estetik Media (10%). Among the top four major companies only Estetik Media, which does not have any business in other sectors is known to adopt an oppositional stance towards the government. The other media conglomerates are known with their good relationship with the government under the AKP rule.

Table 2. Audience Share of Print Media by Four Major Media Group

| Media Group | Audience share | Newspapers |
|---|---|---|
| Demirören | 23% | Hürriyet 10%<br>Posta 7.5%<br>Milliyet 4.6% |
| Kalyon | 15% | Sabah 10.6%<br>Takvim 3.9% |
| Türk Media | 12% | Güneş 3.7%<br>Akşam 3.7%<br>Star 3.7% |
| Estetik Media | 10% | Sözcü 9.6% |

(Press Advertising Association, 2018)

The concentration level becomes much more obvious in online media. According to Gemius Turkey's October 2018 research results, four major media groups hold 83% of audience share between them, (the Demirören Group is excluded as it does not divulge its market share in results). As you can see from Table 3, the major media groups in online media are the Kalyon Group (29%), followed by Ciner Media (22%), Hayat Görsel (17%), and Estetik (15%).

Table 3. Audience Share of Online Media by Four Major Media Group

| Media Group | Audience Share | Online newspapers |
|---|---|---|
| Kalyon | 29% | sabah.com.tr 23.44%<br>ahaber.com.tr 3.17%<br>takvim.com.tr 8% |
| Ciner | 22% | haberturk.com.tr 18.51%<br>bloomberght.com.tr 2.67% |
| Hayat Görsel | 17% | haber7.com.tr 16.51% |
| Estetik Media | 15% | sozcu.com.tr 15.47% |

(Gemius Turkey, 2018)

These high concentration levels show that the media sector is dominated by a handful of companies and that the largest audience share belongs to those companies that have strong relations with the government (see Appendix D). High concentration

levels and the ownership structure of the media gave way to a highly polarized and politicized media environment. The media owners who benefited from government largesse, returned their favor by supporting the party. When the owners of the media outlets became essentially proclaimed loyalty to the AKP, it was easier to eliminate the access of opposition groups to these mainstream media outlets. By creating an AKP-friendly media sector, the government could establish a competitive authoritarian regime (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2017).

### 4.4.2 Interventions towards the journalists

Not only media outlets but also people working in those outlets experienced intervention by the government. Many journalists were arrested, charged, and convicted as a result of their political ideologies. The target group of these interventions changed according to the policies of the AKP, in that period. One of the massive waves of arrests of journalists happened during the Ergenekon investigation. The word Ergenekon was being used to refer to a secularist and ultra-nationalist network, which had been composed of high-ranking military officers, national intelligence officers, intellectuals, journalists, etc. The government claimed that this network was a “deep state” that aimed to unseat the AKP government through a military coup (Yeşil, 2016). The Ergenekon investigation started in 2007, when the police discovered ammunition in the apartment of a retired military office. Many military officers were imprisoned during the investigation on the basis that they had connections with Ergenekon. The investigation expanded to include not only military officers, but also academics, activists, journalists and any who were suspected of Ergenekon membership. According to Yeşil (2016), within only two years approximately four thousand cases had been opened against journalists. Some of the

journalists were being targeted because of their coverage of the Ergenekon trials. Article 285 of the Penal Code, which criminalizes people who "publicly breach the confidentiality of an investigation" and Article 288, which criminalizes actions that are taken to influence "a public prosecutor, judge, court, expert witness or witness to cause them to render an unlawful decision" were used as an excuse for the law suits. On the other hand, some of the journalists were targeted because of having connections to Ergenekon. During the first wave of arrests journalists such as Mustafa Balbay and Tuncay Özkan were charged under Article 309 of the Penal Code which states the following:

> Any person who attempts to abolish, replace or prevent the implementation of, through force and violence, the constitutional order of the republic of Turkey shall be sentenced to a penalty of aggravated life imprisonment.

In the second wave of arrestments Oda TV, which is known for its secularist and oppositional position towards the AKP was targeted. Its founder Soner Yalçın and journalists working in the institution were charged. In the last wave, Nedim Şener and Ahmet Şık were imprisoned. According to Yeşil (2016), these arrests were shocking because two of the journalists used to investigate deep state for many years and they were accused by being part of that network. When doubts as to the authenticity of the documents presented in the cases were raised, in addition to the lack of transparency and the selection of figures that were known for their oppositional position towards the incumbent party, the legitimacy of the investigation was called into question. At the end of the trials, the court decided to drop all the charges related to "being a member of an organization" by saying that there was no organization operating under the name of Ergenekon.

Another target of the government was the Kurdish journalists. As part of a larger investigation of the KCK (Union of Kurdistan Communities), many journalists

were charged with “membership of a terrorist organization” or “making propaganda for a terrorist organization”. Between 2009 and 2011, 4,500 people were arrested as a result of this investigation. In 2011, Of some 46 journalists working in the Kurdish press such as Dicle News Agency, Özgür Gündem, Azadiya Welat, Demokratik Modernite and Fırat Dağıtım. some 32 were arrested (“AİHM KCK”, 2019, November 24). As discussed in previous sections, the Kurdish press had always been the subject of government scrutiny. During the 1990s they were criminalized by the Anti-Terror Law. Even though, the incumbent government made amendments in this law to fulfill the requirements of the European Union, the law continued to be used by prosecutors to imprison journalists. For Yeşil (2018), this situation shows “the gap between AKP’s rhetoric and reality” (p.102).

Another major attack on journalists happened after the 15 July 2016 coup attempt when the government started to open large scale investigations into people who were charged with having ties to the Fethullah Gülen community. However, this turned into a witch hunt where oppositional figures started to be put on trial. The number of journalists in prison reached a peak during the state of emergency. While 31 journalists were imprisoned in 2016, as of 1 January 2017, this number had increased to 131. Among these imprisoned journalists 81 had been arrested within the scope of the Fethullah Gülen investigation, 31 were Kurdish media employees associated with the PKK organization. 11 journalists worked for the Cumhuriyet Newspaper - all had been arrested on a charge of providing “aid or propaganda for terrorist organizations” (Önderoğlu, 2017, February 10). During the first half of 2017, the number of imprisoned journalists increased to 136. With the release of a small number in the beginning of 2018, the figure fell to 122 (Önderoğlu, 2018, February 7).

In addition to imprisonments, the number of detentions was also very high during the state of emergency. In 2016, 201 journalists were arrested, the highest number during the AKP period (Önderoğlu, 2017, February 10). During 2017, this number decreased to 85 (Önderoğlu, 2018, February 7). The most common accusations were based on being affiliated with terrorist organizations or making propaganda for an organization without necessarily being a part of it.

According to the Media Monitoring Database, from the beginning of 2016 to the beginning of 2020, some 182 trials of journalists rested on Article 314/2 of the Turkish penal code, which states that "Any person who becomes a member of the organization defined in paragraph one shall be sentenced to a penalty of imprisonment for a term of five to ten years." During the same period, in 65 trials, journalists were charged under Article 220/7 of the Turkish Penal Code, which states the following:

> Any person who aids and abets an organization knowingly and willingly, although he does not belong to the structure of that organization, shall also be sentenced for the offence of being a member of that organization. The sentence to be imposed for being a member of that organization may be decreased by one-third according to the assistance provided (Amended on 2/7/2012).

Sixty-two journalists were accused of "insulting the president" which is regulated under Article 299 of the Turkish Penal Code:

> (1) Any person who insults the President of the Republic shall be sentenced to a penalty of imprisonment for a term of one to four years. (2) Where the offence is committed in public, the sentence to be imposed shall be increased by one sixth. (Amended on 29/6/2005) (3) The initiation of a prosecution for such offence shall be subject to the permission of the Minister of Justice.

After the coup attempt of 15 July 2016, 16 journalists including Nazlı Ilıcak, Ahmet Altan, Mehmet Altan, and Hidayet Karaca were accused under Article 309 of the Turkish Penalty Code:

> (1) Any person who attempts to abolish, replace or prevent the implementation of, through force and violence, the constitutional order of the Republic of Turkey shall be sentenced to a penalty of aggravated life imprisonment. (2) Where any other offences are committed during the commission of this offence, an additional penalty for such offences shall be imposed according to the relevant provisions. (3) Legal entities shall be subject to security measures specific to them for the commission of offences defined in this article.

One of the other common charges against journalists was the making of "propaganda for terrorist organizations" and from 2016 to the beginning of 2020, 156 journalists were charged under Article 7/2 of the Turkish Anti-Terror Law:

> The terrorist organization; Any person who propagates to legitimize or praise the methods of force, violence or threat of the terrorist organization or to encourage the use of these methods is punished with imprisonment from one year to five years. In the case that this crime is committed through broadcasting and publishing the penalty to be imposed is increased by half. In addition, judicial fines from one thousand to five thousand days are imposed on the broadcasters who have not participated in the committing of the crime. (Additional sentence: 17/10/2019-7188 / 13 art.) Statements of thought that do not exceed the limits of reporting or made for criticism do not constitute a crime.

Even if journalists were found not guilty, they could be remanded in custody for long periods on the basis that they could "darken the evidence" during trials. If they were not arrested, they would still have to spend most of their time in prolonged hearings. So, accusations are very effective in terms of silencing the dissident journalist. The criminalization of them in front of the public can be regarded as an obstacle for journalists who want to spread their views to a wider public. Last but not least, it should be noted that these accusations send a message to all dissident journalists and serve to encourage self-censorship.

During the AKP period, the government decided who could be regarded as a journalist and who could not. To control media workers, the AKP used the Yellow Press Card system, cards, which had been given to media workers by a commission

of the General Directorate of Press, Broadcasting and information, which falls under the remit of the Prime Ministry and is composed of union representatives, journalists, and government representatives. The Card provides certain privileges for journalists apart from the recognition per se. These privileges include being able to attend meetings, free transportation, some regulations with respect to pension rights, etc. The AKP started to use the distribution of these cards to punish dissident journalists and to reward loyal journalists and media outlets. First, the percentage of union representatives in the commission decreased. Then, in July 2018, the authorization to distribute cards became the sole prerogative of the Presidency. Following this development, a new law was introduced, which gave the Presidency the right to cancel the cards of journalists if they wrote against "national security and order". Before the law, cards were canceled by the Commission, but this change accelerated cancellations. The Vice President of Turkey, Fuat Oktay, declared that the press cards of 1,954 journalists had been canceled from 2016 till 2018. He said, 705 of them were cancelled because of their connections with media outlets that were affiliated with the Fethullah Gülen Community ("Press Cards", 2018, December 18). Even though, he did not provide an explanation for the remainder, the newspapers that were known for their oppositional views such as Birgün, Cumhuriyet, and Evrensel stated that many of their employees had lost their Yellow Cards in 2020 ("Sarı Basın", 2020, January 24).

Lastly**,** during the AKP period, many journalists were targeted especially by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, which resulted in further rights violations of journalists by other third parties. These attacks were sometimes verbal in form, while sometimes physical attacks occurred. For example, referring to Fox TV Anchor Fatih Portakal, Erdoğan said "Somebody, I do not know if he is orange, mandarin or citrus,

calls people to streets. Know your place. If you do not know your place, this nation will hit you in the back of your neck. Nobody can play games with my nation's honor. That would cost them, dear." Even though he did not specifically say the anchorperson's name it was obvious that he was talking about Fatih Portakal because his surname means "orange" in English. The reason for this verbal attack was Portakal's speech during a TV program on December 15. He said "Here we go, let's protest these price increases, the increases in prices of natural gas with a peaceful protest demonstration. Come on, let's do it. Can we do it? How many people can take to the streets out of fear and concern?" The attack by Erdoğan triggered several threats towards Portakal. One of the other journalists Erdoğan regularly attacks is Can Dündar who lives abroad as a result of charges laid against him. He uses nicknames such as "John Dündar" to highlight his connections abroad, sometimes accusing him of being an agent of the Fethullah Gülen Community.

Sometimes the interventions did not target a media outlet or journalists but the specific news and subjects. AKP censored specific news by blocking the URL of the articleand applied general broadcast bans on specific issues. According to the Media Monitoring Report (Önderoğlu, 2019), in 2016; 29 broadcast bans were issued and 10 websites, 323 news articles, and 76 websites were censored. During 2017, six temporary broadcast bans were issued while 10 websites, six newspapers, and 97 online articles were censored. During 2018, censorship towards online news increased dramatically and at least 2,950 online news articles were censored. Three broadcast bans were issued while 10 websites were blocked.

All of these interventions in relation to journalists, news items, and media outlets gave way to a highly polarized and politicized media environment. Of course, this shift did not occur in one day, or only during the AKP period. Previous political

and economic transformations have played a role in the current situation of the media today. However, during the AKP period we see an increase in competitive authoritarian practices. The incumbent party instrumentalized the existing media structure in such a way as to create an AKP-friendly media (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016). By rewarding loyal businesspeople and journalists and punishing opponents, AKP was able to strengthen its competitive authoritarian regime. The people who benefited from the opportunities afforded to them returned the favor by contributing to the support and buttressing of the regime. Right now, as a result of these interventions, individual journalists as well as the companies they work for are under government pressure.

# CHAPTER 5

# METHODOLOGY

The main aim of this thesis is to understand the daily functioning of domination inside Turkish mainstream media outlets. The literature we have looked so far gives us the necessary equipment to understand the power dynamics in the media sector on a macro level. However, as underlined in the previous chapters these macro analyses lack an understanding of the relationship between domination and resistance and how these two forms of power work on a daily basis. To fill this gap, this study is built upon a qualitative case analysis where the daily experiences of the journalists are examined.

In this methodology chapter, I want to provide information about the data collection procedure, sampling method, data analysis as well as the ethical considerations. However, before going into detail on these topics I want to briefly mention the challenges of studying a sensitive issue in an authoritarian setting and how I position myself in this research because these elements had an effect on all of the procedures adopted in this study.

## 5.1 The background of the study

Conducting fieldwork in authoritarian regimes may be challenging because these kinds of regimes are associated with attacks on freedom of expression and opinion and access to information (Yusupova, 2019; Goode & Ahram, 2016). However, it does not mean that the authoritarian context prevents the acquisition of meaningful data (Reny, 2016). This thesis required particular attention, as it examined

domination practices inside the newsroom and sought to understand its impact on journalists.

Before entering the field, I was warned by my thesis advisor that I could encounter several difficulties in terms of reaching out to participants, providing a safe environment where they would be able to share their experiences, and in analyzing the responses of the journalists. First of all, the journalists that I wanted to talk to were under t pressure from the government and the media institutions they were working in. They work in an environment where criticism is censored and levelling any form of criticism may result in sanctions which can result in dismissal or charges. This study also required journalists to reveal their resistance strategies some of which they hide from the media outlet and the government. So, hesitation with respect to participation was an expected outcome. My second concern related to the possibility of the journalists' reluctance to give too much information in case it would be dangerous for them in terms of revealing their identity or the identity of their colleagues.

Thirdly, there was the risk of obtaining biased information from the journalists, which would cause problems while trying to uncover the responses of the journalists. Koch (2013) who analyzes fieldwork in authoritarian settings which she refers to as 'closed systems' says that the opinion of the people may be misleading for the researcher because she claims that "opinion is itself a technology of the government" (p.393). She warns researchers to be more careful especially while conducting fieldwork in closed contexts because of the possibility of overvaluing the agency.

I have designed all my research procedures so as to minimize the effects of these problems in my analysis. Even though it will be presented in different subheadings they should all be thought of as a whole and in relation to each other.

One last thing, before going into detail, I would like to speak about my position in the field which I think has an important role in the research process. Generally, insider researchers are associated with those who study a group that they belong to, and the outsider researchers are considered to be those who are foreign to the community (Breen, 2012). Even though situating the position of the researcher is important especially in qualitative studies, this dichotomous representation of the researcher as stranger or native may be vague and fluid (De Volo, 2009, p.228). Schatz (2009) claims that this distinction between insider and outsider may be misleading since a person may be an insider and outsider at the same time in relation to a specific community.

Despite the ambiguities in relation to the term, I regard myself as an insider researcher. For three years I have been working as a journalist in internet-based alternative media outlets. Because of my job, I am familiar with the difficulties of performing journalism in an authoritarian setting and I knew some of the journalists before the interviews. However, it is also important to emphasize that it would not be appropriate to equate alternative and mainstream media outlets because they have different difficulties and opportunities in terms of daily functioning, revenues, the scope of the audience, the amount of censorship etc. So, most of the things they said during the interview were also new for me.

My position as a journalist has both advantages and disadvantages for the study. First of all, because of my occupation I was interested in the subject and my interest led me to write this thesis. Secondly, it enabled me to reach participants

easily because of the already-established trust relationship. Lastly, they did not feel the necessity to prove anything to me by exaggerating their role in the subject because of the belief that I was one of them and I already knew the difficulties in covering the news. However, I encountered difficulties in terms of drawing a line between my identity as researcher and journalist. There were times when the interviewees did not proffer too much information about the subject because they were of the view that certain points were already known to me. When I detected this, I asked them to elaborate on the details. There was also the risk of losing objectivity while analyzing certain motivations and behaviors. In these situations, I tried to stay within the limits of the examples they gave and tried to look for similar examples as recounted by the other journalists.

## 5.2 Research method and data collection

To meet the objectives of the thesis, qualitative research was conducted to understand dominance and resistance practices inside the newsrooms, it was essential to get first-hand information from the journalists who were the main subjects of these practices. This information was not quantifiable since it depended on the position, experience, and worldview of the journalists. In this research, I have conducted interviews with 12 journalists working in mainstream media outlets. I listened to the journalists' stories of how they perceive domination and how they produce a response to it and tried to identify similarities and differences between the different occasions to answer the more general questions which this thesis raises. In other words, I adopted an inductive approach.

Interviews were semi-structured, which means that in the first place the same open-ended set of questions was addressed to each journalist. Here, the journalists

were asked about their daily practices of reporting, their relationship with the institution they worked for, whether they faced any pressure in the newsroom, and if any, the strategies developed against that pressure. As can be seen from the interview questions presented in the Appendix B, initial questions were designed as warm-up questions. Here, journalists were asked to answer questions related to their news writing process and their role in the media outlet. The main aim of these questions was to prepare the journalists for the next questions, which touched upon more sensitive issues. Of course, these questions were important as they provided information about each respondent, too. Then, the journalists were asked about the difficulties they had witnessed while covering the news. This was a general question in which they could talk about anything they find thought important without any channelization. In the next set of questions, I sought to elicit more specific information in relation to censorship, self-censorship and possible disputes with managers. Here, I wanted journalists to support their arguments with examples, which constituted the main part of this thesis. Then, I tried to learn about their responses and strategies to the domination of managers and the government. After asking them how they perceived the transformation of the media sector during their journalism career I asked them whether they wanted to leave the job and if they had already left, what the reason for that decision was. Based on the responses new questions were added to the list. These questions were asked to learn more about their experiences, multiplate their examples, and to specify the details that can be important for the study. These additional questions helped me to keep the interview on track.

## 5.3 Sample selection

The journalists that were interviewed were selected by snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is defined as a sampling procedure where the researcher reaches out to the interviewees through contact information given by other participants of the study (Noy, 2018). In this type of procedure, the participants of the study recommend other people that may be relevant for the study, and the new contacts provide new contact information, which creates a snowball effect and enables the researcher to achieve a broader sampling.

Since my research subject was sensitive in terms of trying to understand resistance and domination practices in an authoritarian setting, gaining the trust of respondents and providing them with a secure environment was a priority for me. So, I decided to use snowball sampling, which enabled me to reach a broader network of journalists. In the first place, I asked for the participation of four journalists that I had met before during my journalism career because of the preexisting trust relationship. Then, at the end of the interview, I asked them to recommend other journalists working in mainstream media outlets. Each participant gave the contact details of several others that I could reach out to. Using these references made things easier for the study because the references ensured that the other journalists were more willing to talk about these sensitive issues.

The downside of this sampling method was not being able to provide diversification as with random sampling. To eliminate this problem to an extent, while choosing from among the recommendations I tried not to conduct interviews with more than two journalists working in the same media outlet. In the end, I reached journalists from eight different media outlets. Diversification was present with respect to both position and experience. To capture different experiences four

reporters, six editors, and two news managers were selected. One respondent, who had been a journalist for 21 years, had carried out different roles during his career so no specific position was assigned in relation to him. The level of experience of respondents ranged from 18 months to 21 years. Among the 12 respondents, six of them were still working in a mainstream media outlet, three of them had resigned, and three of them had been dismissed from their job. The list of the journalists interviewed can be seen in the table presented in Appendix A.

Before providing details about the selection of the media outlets, a note on terminology should be given. Today, we can identify two main types of media outlets that journalists work in: mainstream and alternative media. Of course, to perform journalism one does not have to be part of an institution. There are also freelance journalists and with the emergence of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, we can also start talking about citizen journalism. However, these two will be excluded from this discussion since they lack the institutional aspect.

Even though the terms alternative media and mainstream media are used by media scholars, there is no clear-cut definition of the two. The Cambridge Dictionary (2020) gives the definition of "mainstream media" as "forms of the media, especially traditional forms such as newspapers, television, and radio rather than the internet, that influence large numbers of people and is likely to represent generally accepted beliefs and opinions." There are two problems with this definition. First, the newspapers that reach large audiences started to shift to digital publishing because of the decreasing daily circulation of the printed newspapers in the era of digitalization so it should not be a criterion. Second, because of the changing media ownership structures, most of the large media outlets are publishing biased news outlets which favor the government or economic elites rather than presenting general beliefs and

opinions. By borrowing from some scholars, in this paper I prefer to define mainstream media outlets according to these criteria: They have a large readership compared to alternative media outlets (Turow, 1997);they are owned by large economic corporations or receive significant from the government, and they exclude peripheral and radical views (Atton, 2002).

While making a selection from among the possible media outlets I followed these three criteria. As a result of these selections, I selected eight different media outlets that were owned by the Demirören Media Group, the Kalyon Group, the Ciner Group, and the state. This selection helped me to make comparisons between different media outlets and to figure out whether the experiences recounted were similar or not.

## 5.4 Research process

I conducted interviews with the journalists between March 24, 2020 and April 20, 2020. Of the 12 interviews, eight of them were conducted face-to-face while four of them were carried out via online video conference because of the increasing health risks due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the quarantine measures introduced by the government.

Before carrying out the interviews I called each participant to learn whether they would be interested in participating in this study or not. In each call I introduced myself as a Master's student and I noted clearly that the research was for my thesis. This introduction was especially important because the people I talked to knew me also as a journalist. In my first dialogue with a journalist, I was asked whether I would write a news article about the subject or not. I think I was lucky to encounter this question in my first call because it was a source of hesitation for most

of the journalists. Even though the research was based on anonymous responses making writing a news article in about journalists' responses would mean publicity for them. Talking about sensitive issues as a journalist in a newspaper could result further sanctions for them. Being aware of this hesitation, I stated clearly that I would use their responses for academic purposes only. Secondly, I told the journalists that the study aimed to understand everyday resistance and domination practices of journalists working in mainstream media outlets. I explained to them that I would be asking questions about their daily practices, the difficulties they witnessed, how they experienced these difficulties and how they responded to them. I also told them their names and the name of the organization they worked for would be anonymized to provide them with a secure environment in which to speak. It was important to say this in the first place because I noticed that most of the journalists had hesitations about it. Of the 12 journalists, only two of them stated that it would not be a problem for them if their names were given in the study. One of them had resigned from their job and the other had been dismissed. However, it should be noted that during the interviews with these two journalists there were times when they said they did not want me to write down specific details because it night harm other journalists. The other respondents including those who had resigned, had been dismissed, or were still working clearly expressed the view that they preferred to remain anonymous. This was particularly the case for those who were still working, and they sought reassurance in relation to this on several occasions. Of the 14 journalists I contacted only two of them refused to take part in this study. In both cases, the journalists said that they would like to attend but they did not have time to spare. The reason for their refusal may indeed have been time concerns as they put it,

or their being busy may have been a "gentle" way of their expressing their - lacking, as I do, any additional information, I will refrain from further comment.

After this first introduction we set up a date to meet and, on several occasions, we had to rearrange the meeting date because of their busy workload. Each interview took place in different locations. As I said four of the interviews were carried out via online video conference. Two of the interviews took place in the media outlet they were working in. To prevent interruption by other journalists, both of the interviews took place behind closed doors. One of the rooms was for the unions, but because there was no busy union agenda nobody was using the room. The other room was a separate space s for the journalists who needed a quiet place to conduct their interviews. The remaining two interviews took place at a cafe and four of them took place at the houses of the journalists. All of the places were quiet - there were no distractions and it was possible to tape record the interviews.

The interviews lasted 40 minutes to one hour on average and all of them were tape-recorded, with permission for the recordings having been obtained from the journalists. Before starting the questions, I informed the participants about the structure of the interview, the aim of the study and I reminded them that their names and the name of their organization would be kept anonymous. I told them that they could withdraw at any point during the interview and they could refuse to answer any question. I asked them to sign a Consent and Briefing Letter, which reminded them that participation in the study was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from it whenever they wanted.

## 5.6 Data analysis

In this research I used thematic analysis to interpret the outcomes of the responses obtained from the interviewees. This approach is commonly used in qualitative studies because as a tool, it is geared towards dealing with a wide range of open-ended responses (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). It enables the researcher to find similarities and differences between different interviews answers, and to catch patterned responses or meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the first step of my data analysis process I transcribed all of the interviews that were tape-recorded. Then, I read all these transcriptions and started to code them according to the themes. Rather than prearranging these categories I decided on the categories as I read them. This helped me to notice different patterns that I had not thought of before. While making these categorizations, I used labels such as justifications for continuing to work, examples of censorship, transformation in the media sector etc. Sometimes I needed to create some sub-labels. For example, I divided censorship under the categories of censorship by the company, censorship by the government, censorship in relation to word choices, censorship with regard to topics, and self-censorship.

There were times when I could not use the information given by the respondents even on the condition of anonymity. One of the most striking examples of this was with Aydın, who worked as a reporter for 21 years. His experience was so unique among all of the respondents (maybe among most journalists) that I could not use some of his quotes out of a concern that the examples he gave might reveal his identity. In these situations, I focused on his general impressions about the functioning of domination but was unable to support them with the examples he

related. However, doing that was necessary since this study prioritized the anonymity of the respondents.

There were also other occasions when journalists did not want me to write specific examples about domination and resistance practices. There were two main reasons for these off-the-record requests. The first was related to a desire to protect their own anonymity since the examples might have revealed their identity. The second was a desire to protect their colleagues because the examples they shared were not only about themselves but involved other actors. In these situations, I accepted their requests. However, not including these quotes did not diminish the main arguments in this thesis because there were plenty of similar examples that stressed the same problems they had witnessed, or similar resistance approaches taken by the journalists. Still, it is important to share this information here, because it shows that it is not always very easy for journalists to talk about their experiences.

## 5.7 Ethical considerations

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee for Masters and PhD Theses in the Social Sciences and Humanities on March 16, 2020. The ethics committee approval form is presented in Appendix E. As I stated earlier, all participants signed informed consent forms regarding their participation in the study. The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary; that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and that their interviews would be anonymous.

To avoid the risk of being exposed to any kind of sanction because of their participation in the study, the names of the participants were not given in the paper. For each interview, several nicknames were given to the journalists to ensure anonymity because these journalists were already suffering from various levels of

pressure from the media outlet they were working in and from the government. Apart from the names of the journalists, the name of the media outlet they were working in was also excluded for the same reason. The journalists were informed that their names and the name of their institution would be kept confidential to ensure their privacy and confidentiality. Interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the participants.

# CHAPTER 6

# DOMINATION INSIDE THE NEWSROOM

This chapter aims to understand what kind of domination practices journalists working in mainstream media outlets witnessed during their journalism careers based on the responses of the journalists who were interviewed. Throughout the chapter, journalists' experiences will be examined in order to shed light on how domination works inside the newsroom. It will be divided into two according to the source of domination. First, the domination of the media outlet will be examined. Here, the effects of the ownership of the media outlets by the conglomerates, increasing media ownership concentration, and the digitalization of the newspapers on journalists will be analyzed. It will be claimed that these changes in the structure of the media then had a direct effect on the working conditions of the journalists in terms of time constraints, lower wages, and declining unionization. As a result, journalists were not only less financially secure, but lost control of the news they produced.

The domination of the government will then be analyzed. It will be claimed that the neoliberalization of the media increased the vulnerability of journalists to the AKP's authoritarian rule. Also, it will be argued that AKP instrumentalized the mechanisms used by the media outlets to apply its domination. After the media outlets were sold to pro-government businesspeople, the pressure from the media outlets and the government merged in such a way that the source of that pressure could no longer be separately identified. Here, we start to see the characteristics of the competitive authoritarian regime inside the newsroom and the news that was produced in consequence. The new structure also served to empower the competitive

authoritarian regime by restricting the access of oppositional groups and political parties to the mainstream media.

## 6.1 Media outlets that are shaped by neoliberal policies

In the 1980s, the embracing of a neoliberal ideology opened a new chapter in the Turkish media sector. This was the beginning of a new story where the working conditions of the journalists had been worsening day by day and their control over the news produced had decreased. The family-run businesses were sold to the owners of the conglomerates, the media-ownership concentration increased and by the 2000s, the news that reached the public from the printing houses had moved into the digital domain, where speed of delivery was critical.

The owners of the media outlets who had businesses in other sectors managed the newspapers like a factory where efficiency is prioritized in the service of profit (Yeşil, 2018) They also saw the newspapers as a means to serve their interests in relation to their businesses in other sectors (Tılıç, 1998). Today, many problems that journalists face took root in this neoliberal environment, something which is discussed in detail in Chapter 5 This will consider the effect on the daily practices of journalists and how this became a mechanism of domination.

### 6.1.1 Heavy workload and time pressure

First of all, journalists had to contend with an increasingly heavy workload and greater time pressures. Nearly all of the journalists that were interviewed complained about this situation. For instance, Zeynep, who worked in a news agency for more than one year said that they were forced to produce many articles per day. She described the situation as follows:

> The workload is unbearable. There is a very intense tempo and they give you a job in a burden that nobody can do. You try to complete what you asked for, but it has no end because each time they want more. (Zeynep, personal communication, March 27, 2020) (see Appendix C, 3)

Similarly, Leyla who had been working as a reporter in one of the mainstream media outlets for two years complained about the heavy workload. She was usually working outside of the office and she told me that she was writing the news on the road because of the lack of time:

> They expect us to produce too much news. In one day, I am going three or four different places. Most of the time, I am writing the texts of the news on the road. Otherwise, it is impossible to catch up. (Leyla, personal communication, April 20, 2020) (see Appendix C, 4)

To match this tempo, they had to work extra hours. Working overtime became the norm in this environment and most of the time they were not getting paid for it. Of the 12 interviews arranged, five of them were rescheduled because the journalists had to continue working out of working hours- at least according to what I was told. The reason for this workload was not only the busy Turkish agenda, but the underlying corporatization of the media. Here two factors were at play. The first was the profit motive, with each employee incurring a cost for the company; they wanted to maximize the profit they could earn from each worker. This profit is directly related to the quantity of the cost and the final product, in this case, the number of news items produced. Employing fewer journalists decreases overall costs and as a result increases profit. When the number of employees decreases it means a greater workload for each journalist. Mahir experienced this drop in the number of employees during his 21-year journalism career. According to him, the main reason for the low number of employees was the increasing media ownership concentration. He claimed that the news structure resulted in the establishment of news agencies:

> When I first started to work in 1999, newspapers were so big. Let's say Sabah and Hürriyet. Only in the Istanbul offices, 150 people were employed in each.

> There was at least one reporter in each hospital and the court. There was a flow of news. This changed because of the increasing media ownership concentration. Instead of big news centers, news agencies are established. (Mahir, personal communication, April 5, 2020) (see Appendix C, 5)

As a result of increasing media ownership concentration, news agencies started to be established according to Mahir. Instead of employing many journalists at the different media outlets he owned, Aydın Doğan established a news agency to feed these media outlets and it enabled him to sell the news to other media outlets that he did not own (Yeşil 2018). When these news agencies were established, employment capacity decreased in the mainstream media outlets. Today, news coming from the agencies constitutes a very significant proportion of the newspaper, which leads to further problems that will be discussed in the subsequent sections of this paper.

One of the other journalists who witnessed the decreasing number of journalists is Bekir, who was a journalist for 21 years and resigned from his last job after working for nine years as a news manager. He said that in 2001, the number of reporters was higher than the current number of all employees at the media outlet he works in. He justified this change by showing how the daily circulation of the newspaper had decreased. According to him, his newspaper was selling nine times the number of papers in those years when compared to the present: "If we think as a company, it is normal to decrease the number of the employees in this scenario," (Bekir, personal communication, April 19, 2020). Both explanations are directly attributable to the cost and profit analysis of the media owners.

The second reason for the heavy workload and time pressure was the digitalization of the media. As a part of a global phenomenon with the introduction of the Internet and the emergence of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, we see a change in the flow of information. One person living in Turkey can learn about forest fires in Australia more quickly than Australians themselves.

The public can talk about this event for two hours; then it can fade away with the introduction of a new event. The emergence of a consumer society that is supported by neoliberal policies affects how we acquire information. So, journalists who play a traditional role in providing information for society have to compete with the speed of the Internet most of the time.

In the printed media, the deadline for the final products is the time when the documents are handed to the printing house. However, in the digital newspaper, a journalist tries to push the news to the website before any other source. Covering breaking news is about speed. Hande experienced this shift from print to digital media during her three-year career. She expressed this transformation as follows:

> As we have entered the digitalization process, we are in a much faster broadcast stream, and we do not have to wait until 12 PM for news to be uploaded if there is no special embargo. We are working on how we push the news to the web in the fastest way. I am not a fan of this, as I am more of an old school journalist. But because capitalism has won, you are acting with the logic of how much clicks we can get? It is necessary to cover breaking news constantly. This has been added to my job description. For example, when Erdogan speaks, I immediately put on headphones and write it so we can give it as breaking news. (Hande, personal communication, April 5, 2020) (see Appendix C, 6)

Of course, this time pressure exists in many workplaces and it is not specific to the media sector. It is stated here because it is an important part of the daily pressure the journalists have been exposed to, and it limits their ability to resist since their main motivation turns into completing the job as soon as possible. In Foucault's (1991) analysis, time is particularly important for an understanding of the functioning of power. He gives an example of how employees introduce time schedules for workers to control both time and workers. So, what I argue is that time should be considered a mechanism for establishing control over journalists.

### 6.1.2 Click haunting

Apart from the heavy workload, the other effect of digitalization and profit-seeking in journalists' daily lives is ‘click haunting’. More visitors to the website mean more profit for the company because the advertisement revenue is directly related to the number of readers. Of course, this is the case, especially for Internet-based newspapers. This concern to increase the number of readers has a direct effect on the content, headlines, and the visuals of the news.

Şeyma, who worked for 9 years as an economics editor expressed the view that they preferred the headlines that raised levels of curiosity. For example, instead of using the headline “Inflation rate of February is 12.37 percent”, they state the “Inflation rate for February has been announced”. The main reason for this preference is to engage the audience and to entice them to view the rest of the news and increase the interaction of the audience with the website (Şeyma, personal communication, April 6, 2020).

Sometimes this pressure to get more clicks can be used as a threat – get results or face dismissal. Emre, who was working for more than one year in a mainstream media outlet, said that his managers told him that his first job was to bring more clicks to the newspaper and if he did not do it they would immediately fire him. He said that he overcame this pressure by prioritizing more sensational headlines and using lots of nudity as visuals. He said that these preferences sometimes led to political incorrectness and he was not content with what he had to do. For example, while reporting on a murder, which he calls a third-page news, they use pornographic images of the violence because it increases the level of interaction (Emre, personal communication, March 26, 2020). As seen from the example to the desire to reach larger audiences resulted in the abandoning of

journalism ethics. It may not be a direct tool for domination, but it normalizes the process of abandoning journalism ethics in daily practice.

### 6.1.3 Censorship by the companies

Another restriction on journalists is the type of news they cover. Most of the time it is thought that censorship comes from the government, but in reality, it is only one part of censorship. Journalists are not allowed to cover news that will criticize the owner of the media conglomerate or any other business partner. Since these media owners have businesses in multiple sectors covering energy to textiles it limits the range of topics and so the freedom of journalism.

For example, after Demirören Group purchased Doğan Media, news about the explosion of bottled gas containers was forbidden because Milangaz, which is a bottled gas brand, is owned by Demirören Group. News about the crime rate in Istiklal Street was not allowed because there is a shopping mall there that belongs to Demirören and any negative reports could have affected its potential customers. These bans are so strict that not obeying them can lead to dismissal according to Emre:

> If you cover this kind of news you would be immediately fired. Even, people are joking about it. When a bottled gas exploded in Taksim, people were saying 'Should I cover it? I was already a little bit bored of working' We are making fun of the situation. (Emre, personal communication, March 26, 2020) (see Appendix C, 7)

The bans on news related to the company is not restricted to just the company itself but it includes the company's business partners. According to another example given by Emre, when the yellow vests started to rise in France against price increases in fuel oil, the Demirören Media Group could not cover it because they are in partnership with Total Group, a target of the riots. However, when the government

wanted to increase visibility of the French riots, they had to cover the issue. It means when the interest of the government and the company clashed, the government won.

Another ban applied to news of companies that provide advertisements to the newspaper because the newspapers are dependent on advertisement revenues. Economic crises and digitalization have increased this dependency because they cannot rely on the revenue gained by selling daily newspapers. Those companies that provide advertising revenue to the newspaper take advantage of this dependency and can threaten to pull their advertisements. To avoid this, stories do not target big investors such as Turkish Airlines or BIM markets. Bekir, who works as a news manager related the following story:

> Before, we had the chance to choose the advertisements. We were saying we had no place. Now, we do whatever they say because the newspaper is not making money anymore. They [companies] use it too. For example, BİM is currently the most important sponsor of the media. It advertises two full pages. 15 percent of the newspaper's income. It is not possible to put down the news that criticizes BİM or any other news that they don't want. In fact, I heard an example from the Sabah newspaper. They were raising prices for markets. While putting it they used the photograph of the BİM's shelves, so they warned Sabah. After that incident, they [managers] said to us 'Don't put the photographs of their shelves otherwise they cut the advertisement'. (Bekir, personal communication, April 19, 2020) (see Appendix C, 8)

Bekir's recollection shows us that the companies that provided advertisement revenue became another point of pressure for journalists. The dependency on advertisement revenue made the media outlets very vulnerable to the market and the companies who knew this, took advantage of the situation by prohibiting the publication of news that they did not like. As a result, the range of topics that journalists were allowed to cover was restricted.

Leyla provided another example of censorship, but in this example rather than the business relationship, friendship was the reason according to her. When one of the media owners Acun Ilıcalı and Şeyma Subaşı got divorced, Leyla wanted to

cover it. However, she was prevented from doing so. When I asked whether there were financial concerns, she said that she did not think so. She thinks that her managers intervened because the owner of the media outlet was a close friend of Acun Ilıcalı (Leyla, personal communication, April 20,2 020).

All these examples are related to the discussion on media freedom that is presented in Chapter 3. Contrary to the liberal-pluralist approach which argued that the private ownership of the media outlets and existence of free-market would enhance freedom of expression (Bennett, 1982), we see that monetary interest of the media owners leads to censorship even in the absence of government intervention (O'Neill, 2006). Even though Demirören is a private company, we see that even lack of intervention by the government still results in the application of censorship to the news. Not only government but also the business relationships have a role in determining which news will be covered or not. As Herman and Chomsky (2002) states news production is a "manufactured consensuss" between political and economic elites.

### 6.1.4 Workers not journalists

As seen from the examples, companies apply domination over journalists in terms of not only how they work but also what they cover. The corporate logic prevails in the newsroom where journalists are seen as workers that are supposed to generate more profit for the company they work for. This is how the commodification of journalists happens. Some journalists internalize this corporate logic. According to Mahir, one of the main indicators of this corporate logic is the transformation in the self-identification of journalists:

> Instead of defining themselves as journalists, they are defining themselves as an employee of Doğan Group or Turkuaz Group. This is a symbolic

> representation because, at the same time, it is an indication of the breaking away from the ethical values of the journalism and the requirements of that profession. (Mahir, personal communication, April 5, 2020) (see Appendix C, 9)

Hande, who worked for more than three years as a foreign news editor noted that this identification with the institution was a very normal process for most journalists. “If you start to work in a broadcasting institution, you leave your self aside and follow the policy of that institution. If this bothers you a lot, you go somewhere else” she said. She gave an example of her friends who had worked for five years for Hürriyet and ten years for Yeni Akit. Even though Hürriyet adopts a more secular position while Yeni Akit takes an ultra-conservative line, the journalists were not thinking about these differences and instead, focused on the money they received, according to her. She claimed that this was a very normal process for most journalists but people who do not in these institutions still have difficulty understanding this mindset. She said she has had difficulties expressing these views even to her own family (Hande, personal communication, April 5, 2020).

Mustafa Alp Dağıstanlı (2014) who is a former journalist in NTV, describes this situation as “depersonalization” (p.34). He talks about his disputes with his manager (he does not state a name) and claims that his manager did not ask him to change his political opinions or worldview but rather to leave them aside while performing his job. He claims that this approach was widely accepted inside the newsroom by multiple journalists. He noted that:

> Those people were putting aside their ‘leftism’, worldviews, and consequently their moral stances while performing journalism. While entering the office, they were putting these features on the cloakroom like a coat, and then they were putting them on top when they left. While discussing the problems of the nation and the world, they were embracing their leftism, and while doing their work, they were acting in a way to create and reproduce one of those national problems. (Dağıstanlı, 2014, pp. 34-35) (see Appendix C, 10)

One of the commonalities among the journalists interviewed was the description of the political position of the organization they were working for. They clearly expressed the view that they were working for a pro-government media outlet:

> The political position of this newspaper is equivalent to the position of the government. It is shaped according to the position of the government. (Metin personal communication, March 24, 2020)
>
> Besides being a pro-government, it has a structure that tries to dominate the media sector. (Emre, personal communication, March 26, 2020)
>
> Each of the executives of the newspaper and therefore the corporate identity of the newspaper is a small Tayyip junior. The newspaper is a media organ that makes state propaganda. (Aydın, personal communication, April 4, 2020)
>
> It is a newspaper with a government perspective. (Hande, personal communication, April 5, 2020)
>
> I can say without hesitation that it is a pro-AKP newspaper. In the first years of AKP, the newspaper published accordingly. Now it is broadcasting according to the current situation. (Leyla, personal communication, April 20, 2020)
>
> If we evaluate it independently from the employees, it is a newspaper that is subjected to political pressure rather than closeness to a political party and tries to save the day. It is a newspaper that has turned into a political borosan in a way that has become a media organ rather than a broadcasting institution. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 11)

As a second common point, they stated that their political opinion did not overlap with the organization's political position. Even, Emre who worked as a foreign news editor in a mainstream media outlet for more than one year said that he could not define his political position clearly, but he could say that it is the opposite of the organization he was working for, in every respect. Leyla expressed the view that she would not read the newspaper they were producing if she had not been working there because she had no sympathy with the political position of the newspaper (Leyla, personal communication, April 20, 2020).

I should note that during the selection of journalists the media outlets that have close ties with the government and the journalists who define themselves as dissidents are chosen. So, these answers do not fully convey a picture of the general media environment. However, interestingly, some of the respondents claimed that their co-workers were mostly not supporters of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its policies:

> When you look at what is written in the newspaper, you think everyone is supporting AKP. But this is not the case. I think the majority is supporting CHP and HDP. (Emre, personal communication, March 26, 2020)

> I have not come across AKP supporters among the employees, yet. Or there is only a few people. One of my managers is a heavy supporter of CHP. He represents us abroad. Sometimes I am surprised. A couple of times I asked 'You trust him, right?'. Because it's a strange situation. (Hande, personal communication, April 5, 2020) (see Appendix C, 12)

Metin, who worked for five years as an editor in a mainstream newspaper told me that one of the most surprising things for him was the contradiction between the political opinions of the journalists and the newspaper they produced at the end of the day. He told:

> The most surprising thing in this newspaper is the following: The people who look so intelligent, democratic and leftist are making such a conservative newspaper when they come together. This is something that I still could not grasp. Of course, capitalism. Of course, they are [referring to the owner of the media outlet] giving you the money and you have to make a newspaper as they want. What seems interesting to me is how these people are missing the opportunity where they can use any initiative. (Metin, personal communication, March 24, 2020) (see Appendix C, 13)

What we see here is the loss of self and it is directly related to the functioning of neoliberalism. Wendy Brown (2015) in her classical work “Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution” examines how neoliberalism makes people produce a specific form of rationality in which all dimensions of human existence are degraded into economic relations. For her, this is the case with work life as well as in relation to social life. Similarly, we see that journalists start to establish a bond with

their profession by thinking of themselves as a market agent. Journalists turn into workers which requires their abandoning their identities and journalism ethics to perform their job. This commodification process is facilitated by daily practices such as the constant threat of getting fired, a heavy workload, and the normalization of the abandonment of journalism ethics while trying to secure as many clicks as possible. When they lose control over what they produce, they become more vulnerable to repression.

### 6.1.5 Deunionization

Accepting the worsening working conditions was not easy for journalists. However, the deunionization process made journalists more vulnerable to the companies' pressures. The repression of journalists has increased in tandem with the increasing dominance of conglomerates in the media sector and journalists were not able to protect their rights in relation to their working conditions because of the inefficiency of the unions, which in turn had also been diminished because of the rise of the conglomerates. The number of union members dropped sharply after the accession of the conglomerates. The pioneer of this attack on the unions was Aydın Doğan (Yeşil, 2018). Later, other media conglomerates adopted his tactics.

For one union to be effective in the collective labor agreement, it should have a majority in that institution. If they are not able to provide this, they are not authorized in the institution which means they will not able to sit at the same table with the employers during negotiations. Deniz, who worked for 5 years as a news manager, explained how Aydın Doğan was effective in removing the unions' authorization during the 1990s:

> Since 1999, I have never worked in an institution where the union has the authorization to be effective in the collective labor agreement. Because in

> time, Aydın Doğan deunionizating the media outlets. He is offering wage increases and sometimes threatening the journalists by saying if they would not give up their membership they would fire him/her. Sometimes, he is forcing the journalists to be resigned. As a result, unions lost their authorization in the 1990s. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 14)

Deniz claimed that right now the unions are no longer a threat for the owner of the media outlets because they don't have a majority. However, he added, if the number of employees that become a member of the union reaches a majority, the managers force them to resign or fire them. He gave the example of a mass firing in the Hürriyet newspaper during 2018. That year the number of union members was increasing, and the management saw it as a threat and fired 45 people.

Among 12 journalists that were interviewed, only three of them belonged to a union. One of them was dismissed after spending five years as an editor in a mainstream media outlet because of his membership of a union and his trying to enroll the remainder of the employees. The other was dismissed from his job recently and one of the reasons for this dismissal was his organizing of small-scale protests to promote the right to a union, according to him. The last one is still working but he was not given much work in the media outlet because he was not trusted, and he was counting down the days until he was fired.

Bekir, who was a journalist for 21 years and worked as a news director for 9 years explained the reason for his not being a member of a union as the inefficiency of the unions. He claimed that even if journalists become a member it is only for moral satisfaction and membership has no practical value:

> You can become a member of a union, but it is on the level of moral satisfaction. For a union to be effective it has to reach a number. I have only seen two times when the numbers of the members had increased. The first of them was when the Sabah newspaper was transferred to the TMSF. Journalists started to be organized when the control was on the government. However, they established two different companies and divided the journalists to prevent unionization. The other one was in Hürriyet which

> resulted in mass firings. I have friends who are members, but it is completely useless. (Bekir, personal communication, April 19, 2020) (see Appendix C, 15)

Journalists who could not get the support of the unions found themselves alone amid all these repressions. These changes in the working environment that were mentioned above are not specific to individual media outlets. Most respondents from different media outlets share similar experiences. Deunionization, digitalization, censorship, lower wages and increasing workloads are the norm in many media outlets. These shared experiences mean that journalists know that there is nowhere to go among mainstream media outlets, should they wish to move.

## 6. 2 Dispersed nature of the domination

> Journalism is not like as the movies tell us. Someone takes his/her backpack to discover the whole truth, travels the world, and finds something that makes all people astonished, tries to publish it, etc. However, in reality, this is not the case. There is a news factory. That news factory has managers, craft supervisors, and workers. There is a working assembly line. Each step is under the control of someone. This is the truth, not the other one. (Mahir, personal communication, April 5, 2020, see Appendix 16)

Based on his experiences, Mahir, who was a journalist for 21 years, described the effect of the transformation of the media outlets on journalists by saying “The journalist has turned into someone who is constantly getting poorer, who is constantly losing control of his job”. He compared the process of news writing in a media outlet with the process of manufacturing in a factory and says that every step was under the control of someone and the journalist did not have control over the final product - the news.

The number of available positions can vary according to the size of the media institution. The only thing that does not change is the hierarchical structure they have. In a medium media outlet, there are positions for interns, reporters, editors,

news managers, and chief executives in typical hierarchical order. Interns are not involved in analysis because most of the time they are temporary, but generally they are at the bottom of the ladder in terms of lack of experience, and in not having a contract with the institution. When we move up, we see reporters and then editors. Normally, the difference between these positions is based on the type of work they do. Reporters are the ones who work outside most of the time and editors are the ones who do the desk jobs such as editing the news, following up with the agencies, etc. However, when we look at the newsrooms in Turkey, we see that experienced journalists are preferred for the editorial positions and they get more wages compared to the reporters. They determine which news the reporter will cover or follow up on and edit the news that they get from the reporters or the agency. So, it would not be wrong to claim that their position is above that of reporters. If the media outlet is big, the editors can be divided into sections according to their areas of interest a. For example, there can be an environment editor, a foreign news editor, an economics editor, etc. After the editors, there are the news managers. They are the ones who are in charge of the daily functioning of the newspaper. Most of the time news managers decide what will be given space on the first page, which topics will be focused on and will check the edited news. They also keep the employees on schedule, solve daily problems, and report to the executive in chief. The editor-in-chief provides editorial direction for the newspaper, controls budgets, and represents the newspaper.  So, any complaint coming from the government or the companies are directed to the newsroom through the editor-in-chief. A media outlet may be a company run by multiple partners or just one person. Most of the time, they do not become overly involved in the functioning of the newspaper as long as it is profitable.

It is important to understand this structure inside the newsroom in order to appreciate what Mahir means by “each step is under the control of someone.” The orders come from top to bottom, but we don’t see big jumps in the hierarchical order. If you are an editor, it means the orders of the owner of the media outlet do not reach you directly in general. First, s/he tells the editor-in-chief then the editor-in-chief tells the manager, and finally, the news manager relays it to the editor. Following a similar logic, when an editor covers news, first it is controlled by the news editor, then it reaches the executive-in-chief, and finally, the owner of the media outlet sees it. This hierarchical structure sometimes makes it hard for journalists to understand which order comes from which position. During the interviews, most of the journalists used the phrase “the decision that comes from above” to describe the hierarchy of the process. However, the pressure does not only come directly from the top of the hierarchical pyramid. The journalists are responsible to those who have more authority than him/her. It can be said that power is distributed to all levels. Sometimes this facilitates the daily functioning of the newspaper, and sometimes it makes the working conditions more difficult for journalists.

All of the journalists interviewed noted that at least one of their news items had been censored after they had written it as a result of the intervention of the managers or supervisors even before it reaches the top of the hierarchical order. Zeynep, who worked for more than one year in a news agency as a reporter gave an example of censorships that she had experienced. She covered news about the visit of the European Parliament's former Turkey rapporteur, Kati Piri, and related her statement about the imprisonment of Selahattin Demirtaş, who is the former president of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). After the news was published, she found out that those sections related to Demirtaş had been removed from the news.

She recalled her subsequent discussion with her editor as follows: “When I realized the situation, I called my editor. I asked why it is removed. My editor told ‘We could enter this news before, but now, we can only give this much. The order comes to us from above’” (Zeynep, personal communication, March 27, 2020). When I asked whether it was the choice of the editor to remove that part, she told me that her editor used his initiative in effectively censoring this section of the report.

Similarly, Deniz who had worked for more than 7 years as a news manager related how he had made multiple interventions in relation to news reports that had been prepared by the editors and reporters because otherwise, he knew that if the news had been published it would have created problems for the newspaper or the executive-in-chief. After stating that he had intervened on numerous occasions, he noted the following:

> They say the road to hell is paved with good intentions. This situation is like that. Because you know certain things, you are notified, you know that if you publish that news something terrible will happen to the chief in the executive. And he is my friend. If I publish that news it will be on his head. After a while, even if you don’t care about yourself you care about him. You know that the news will turn back and you know the results. So, you are intervening. Yes, I intervened. I adopted censorship on others’ news. I have also adopted self-censorship. These are all confessions now. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 17)

The dispersed nature of repression shows that there is no clear distinction between the dominator and resister as Scott (1980) argues. As Vinthagen and Johansson (2013) claim, the relationship between the resister and the dominator is more complicated than Scott’s understanding (p.13). Indeed, it is a complex relationship because as we see from the examples one journalist may be the object and the implementer of resistance at the same time. The reason for this situation is the hierarchical structure inside the media outlets. We see that this chain of command facilitates oppression by extending responsibility across several levels. In fact, this

hierarchy enables journalists to pass responsibility to another journalist whose position is higher than them and this situation is commonly internalized among most journalists. This gives us one explanation in response to the question: How does domination work?

The second thing we see in these stories is how censorship turns into self-censorship in the long run. The journalists who know that their news will be controlled several times think that if they cover news that is not welcome, at some point there will be an intervention. The journalists familiar with the bans do not cover such news, or they cover it as requested because they know that it would cause them trouble otherwise. They also know that it can simply be controlled or erased and that this results in a waste of time which is very crucial for most of the journalists that have to stay on top pf the busy workload they have. Mahir explained this situation very clearly as follows:

> After all, the news is not produced by only one person. It goes through different hands. There is a manager who is responsible for supervising the journalist. He sat that position by accepting it. I know that even if I write it, it will not pass. The thing is that they have already drawn the red line and you do not try to pass that line because it is a waste of labor for something no one will see. Only you can do it to save memory to tell now. (Mahir, personal communication, date) (see Appendix C, 18)

This gives us another hint as to how domination works inside media outlets. The government or the owner of the media outlet do not need to watch the journalists all of the time. After the introduction of specific bans in the first place, journalists continue to apply these bans on their news. So, they are turning censorship into self-censorship in the long run. Measuring the extent of repression this becomes harder since self-censorship practices, even though they are very common, are hard to identify.

Platform Susma published a report entitled “Censorship and Self-censorship in Turkey: January 2019 November 2019”. In this report, some actions taken by the media outlets were considered to be forms of self-censorship. They gave an example of V5, Erkam Radio, RS FM which banned several programs and dismissed journalists without the existence of sanctions. The report claims that these institutions are one of the best examples of self-censorship occurs (pp. 9-10). Removing the programs or dismissing the journalists are measurable ways of self-censorship adopted by the media outlet. However, as a daily practice, journalists adopt censorship and the only way to catch these daily practices is by asking the journalists themselves. Even, in some cases, censorship may be so internalized by the journalists that they may not be aware of the situation themselves.

### 6.3 Domination by the government

So far, only the domination practices of the media outlets have been discussed. Some of them are a result of neoliberalization of media and some of them are related to the daily functioning of the newspapers such as the hierarchical chain of command. Even though during the AKP rule the neoliberal policies are were strengthened, the main reason for these practices are related to the overall economic transformation that occurred.

These neoliberal experiences overlap with the general pattern occurring in the global media landscape. When Gurevitch and Blumler (1990) examined the situation of the American media, they concluded that it is squeezed by the imperatives of private enterprise, the values of consumer society, and political domination. Based on the experiences of interviewed journalists it can be said that this situation is true for the Turkish media to an extent. However, as Stier (2015) has argued the regime

type and government strategies are very important for an understanding of the situation of the media and it cannot be degraded to economic imperatives alone.

In the rest of the paper, the political effect will be analyzed. It will be claimed that all these existing forms of domination provided a favorable environment for AKP to apply its authoritarian policies. However, when we look at the control mechanisms used by the AKP, we see that the situation of media cannot solely be understood by the neoliberalization. AKP used the vulnerability of the workers to control the Turkish media and strengthen its competitive authoritarian regime. Here the journalists encountered not only the pressure from the media outlet but also the government. After the owners of the media outlets became pro-AKP businesspeople we can no longer talk about two distinct sources of domination. The pressure coming from these two sources merged into one and it became harder to determine the source of the repression

Domination by the government during the AKP period has worsened the working conditions of the journalists who had already been under a heavy workload, time pressure, and company restrictions. Journalists' control over the news they write declined as a result of censorship. In this period, journalists were not allowed to cover topics in various areas ranging from economics to daily politics. Of course, censorship was not specific to the AKP and it was the case even before 2002. However, it started to increase continuously during the rule of the AKP, according to the journalists interviewed. For instance, Ulaş, who started journalism in 1997, compared before and after period of AKP's rule and claimed that today journalism is under more attack. He also noted that the first years of the AKP was better compared to today and said:

> Turkey had never been a democratic country. Even though people praise it, the 1990s in which I started journalism were one of the darkest periods in

> Turkey. The Kurdish issue reached an incredible dimension right after the coup period. It was a period with lots of unknown assailants, human rights violations. Leftists and LGBTİ+ were not on the agenda. Incredibly dark, incredibly bad, incredibly oppressive. The pressure was coming from the army rather than the political power in that tutelary regime. Still, if we compare it with today, you could report more accurately, and you could tell your troubles better. Today it has reached the level where we crave for the 1990s. Today what we are experiencing now is a period in which Islamic power has gradually strengthened itself and increased the pressure on people. (Ulaş, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 19)

The bans applied to the news by the government show characteristics of the regime during the AKP period in which criticism towards the government is not accepted, disproportionate space is spared for the oppositional parties, and the news that creates dissatisfaction with the status quo is not given. Some scholars consider media as the fourth estate because it contributes to a checks and balances system, which is supposed to be provided by the legislative, judicial, and executive branches (Schultz 1998). In particular, after 2012, AKP had contributed to the elimination of the checks and balances through the introduction of new regulations, appointing pro-AKP prosecutors and judges, and the introduction of the Presidency system (Akça, 2014; Benhabib, 2013; Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016; Kaygusuz, 2018; Öniş, 2016; Saatçioğlu, 2016; Somer, 2016; Yeşil, 2016; Tansel, 2018). We see that this transformation occurred in main media outlets too where the power of the media organs to criticize and question the government's practices was reduced and media outlets were turned into a propaganda tool for the government. Before explaining the details of the areas of intervention, the tools used t apply that domination will be examined.

### 6.3.1 Establishing control over the media

First of all, we see a direct intervention in the news both before and after publication. Here, the method applied includes bans on news through using the existing hierarchical structure of the media outlets that were mentioned before. Even though

there are some exceptions, usually the decisions are transferred to the journalists in the following order: The message of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan or the ministers are transferred to the Directorate Communications of the Presidency or Ministry counselors. They convey the restrictions or newly established bans, either to the Ankara representatives of the media outlet, which has a more direct relationship with the government or to the executive-in-chief of the newspaper. Sometimes we can see jumps in the hierarchy ladders. For example, Hakan who worked for 5 years in a mainstream media outlet, related how a story concerning energy was canceled by one of the counselors of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources. He stated that the counselor (the name is not given) texted a message to him saying that covering this news would not be welcomed by the Ministry. They also 'recommended' that he not use any information about this subject from the Ministry archives. Hakan noted that following this, they had a meeting with the news manager and other colleagues, and at the end of this meeting they decided not to publish the story.

There are also times, where Erdoğan directly calls the owner of the media outlet. It depends on the importance of the subject. Deniz who worked as a news manager for more than five years related how these messages and warnings from the government were relayed:

> They were not calling me personally. They were calling editor-in-chief. All the talks were transferred to us through him. Also, there are media commissaries. Generally, they consist of Ankara representatives of the media outlet. Those in Ankara (referring to the government) whisper to these representatives. They say that 'the Gentleman- they always say that to Tayyip- was disturbed by the news', 'the Gentleman was very angry with this news'. Sometimes it comes through the boss. Aydın Doğan called many times and said 'What are you doing? You are getting into trouble. Look, they called me from AKP and said this and that'. They had multiple interventions like this. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 20)

Apart from the phone calls and verbal warnings, multiple respondents claimed that there are WhatsApp groups that include editors-in-chief of several of the main media outlets owned by the media conglomerates. There are also WhatsApp groups specific to the media outlet. Aydın said that:

> There are WhatsApp groups that I am not involved in. There are too many conversations going on there. Sometimes the bans related to specific subjects are reported here from Ankara and the editor-in-chief transfer this message to the inner Whatsapp groups. So indirectly we know about the restrictions. (Aydın, personal communication, April 4, 2020) (see Appendix C, 21)

The establishment of these WhatsApp groups provides speed. WhatsApp groups can be regarded as direct proof of this hierarchical structure. There are multiple groups for each rank, so the decisions are transferred very quickly from the top to the journalists. Of course, these groups are established for the functioning of the newspaper and it is not only about which news will be censored. However, the existence of these groups makes it easier for the government to transfer their messages rather than dealing with journalists one by one. According to Mahir, who worked as an editor for more than seven years, the WhatsApp groups worked as follows:

> They developed a WhatsApp network. The owner of the media conglomerate sends the news to the head of the X media outlet from the group. The head of X media outlet sends it to the bottom WhatsApp, then to the editors, and finally to the reporters. (Mahir, personal communication, April 5, 2020) (see Appendix C, 22)

Another method used was the delivery of daily bulletins from the President's Office, according to Deniz. He noted that these bulletins contained details about which subjects should be covered, which were allowed and how a subject should be covered.

> Information notes come from the Palace [Presidency office] almost every day. It says we should make news like this or that. Think about it, letters from the Palace. Letterhead paper by the stamp of the Presidency. When there is a

> political event, it says you should cover this news like this. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 23)

According to Deniz, these information notes regulated how much space should be devoted to certain news items and which words etc. were preferred There were also sentences such as “In respect of the X issue, which is on the agenda, it is requested to respect the words of these institutions and to ignore the rest.” He stated that there were times when the leader of one of the opposition parties, the İYİ Party, Meral Akşener was denied coverage as a result of these notes.

There is no guarantee that the news will stay in the newspaper or on the website even after it passes through the control of the editors, news managers, or the executive-in-chief. The censorship mechanism works after it is published. Here, the intervention comes from the upper levels of the hierarchy and mostly from outside of the newsroom because inside the newsroom it has already passed from the controller. For example, Emre stated how one news item relating to the speech of a minister was lifted from the website after it had been published:

> One minister made a statement. It was something that is not for him to say. I asked whether we can cover that. Those in the newsroom said that we can. Three hours later after it is published an order came from the top saying we should change the content of the news. (Emre, personal communication, March 26, 2020) (see Appendix C, 24)

According to this account, one of the counselors to the minister called the executive-in-chief to warn him. He deleted it from the website on receipt of the call. Another tool of intervention for the government is the news agencies. Before, how agencies are established and how the media outlets became dependent on agencies were discussed in this paper. A media outlet that no longer has its reporter networks must rely on news that comes from the news agencies. Today, news coming from the agencies constitutes a very significant proportion of the newspapers’ content

according to the journalists interviewed. When asked to describe daily working practices, everyone noted that they are following the agencies. In Turkey, the main news agencies are Demirören News Agency (DHA) owned by Demirören Group, İhlas News Agency (İHA) owned by İhlas Group and the state-owned Anadolu News Agency (AA). These institutions provide daily news feeds to their subscribers. Sometimes the best way to intervene in relation to the mainstream media is by controlling these agencies, and journalists claim that this is happening.

Zeynep, who worked for more than one year in a news agency as a reporter said that the main rule in the job is not to comment on a news item. However, she stated that the decision in relation to the news items selected was a political one. For example, they didn't cover news items related to HDP, while news related to AKP wascovered as much as possible. Metin, who worked as a foreign news editor in a mainstream media outlet for more than one year, claimed that he saw a transformation which he describes as "rottenness" in the content of news coming from the news agencies, based on his previous two-years working experience in a news agency. He claims that as opposed to what Zeynep says, the news coming from the news agencies, especially the state-run Anadolu News Agency, is not as objective as it was before. In parallel to this explanation, Şeyma, who worked in one of the main media outlets for seven years, said that they were trying to change the content of the news they took from the agencies because they realized that all of the agencies had started to cover news in a more one-sided manner. "News started to be written more political to create a perception on behalf of the government," she explained (Şeyma, personal communication, April 6, 2020). So, the increasing dependency on news agencies not only decreased the number of personnel, but also affected the content of the news.

A lack of reporters was not the only reason for dependency on the new agencies. Reaching government officials in relation to stories about the government became harder. Right now, there is a barrier of Directorate Communications of the Presidency or Ministry counselors. Mahir compared the 1990s:

> We were able to follow the Prime Minister. I was following Bülent Ecevit's programs in Istanbul. There was no restriction on journalists. You wait, and if you find the correct moment you ask questions. He may answer or not. The army of bodyguards does not block you; they do not drive over you. With AKP these are normalized. Even making news related to a municipality started to face an obstacle. (Mahir, personal communication, April 5, 2020) (see Appendix C, 25)

Among the tools that the AKP used to control the media perhaps the most effective was the changing of the owners of the media outlets with pro-AKP businesspeople. By imposing economic and political sanctions, the AKP forced the owners that they did not like to sell the media outlets. The handovers of the media outlets is discussed throughout Chapter 3 in detail. Here, how journalists experienced this transformation and how it enabled the AKP to acquire control over mainstream media will be discussed.

According to the journalists, the absence of Aydın Doğan was particularly noticeable. Even though, Aydın Doğan had applied pressure on journalists by decreasing levels of unionization and firing journalists, the journalists working in Doğan Media Group stated that conditions became worse when he sold the newspaper to the Demirören Group. Hakan who had worked for 14 years as a journalist and had experienced the shift in ownership described life under Aydın Doğan as follows:

> Aydın Doğan was resisting the pressures to some extent. We should give him, his due. He was chasing for his business, trying to get some tenders and at the same time, he was trying to stay in mainstream media. He did not want to be a media organ for the government. He was smart in this sense. (Hakan, personal communication, April 15, 2020) (see Appendix C, 26)

Similarly, Metin who had worked for Dogan for five years, stated that when the media outlet belonged to Aydın Doğan, there was the constant threat of dismissal. However, he noted that when ownership changed to Demirören, the quality of news decreased, and they were not allowed to cover many topics:

> There was intense pressure at a time when the newspaper was in Aydın Doğan. We had friends who lost their jobs even because of using a wrong sentence. This was entirely the result of the pressure of government towards Aydın Doğan and his desire of not being the "bad boy" in the eyes of the government. Now there is a completely different story. We are not expected to perform journalism anymore. Most topics we choose are censored before they are published. (Metin, personal communication, March 24, 2020) (see Appendix C, 27)

Deniz stated that he felt the difference between the two periods – that before Demirören purchased the media outlet and that after - very clearly. He claimed that before the purchase the government was giving orders, too, but they started to be more effective when the owner of the media outlet had changed:

> After Demirören purchased, the newspaper became a media organ for the government. In the past, giving instructions was not so easy but now the newspaper started to be shaped by the instructions given by the Palace. Actually, it is a process shaped by the Presidential system in which media of an authoritarian regime took shape. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 28)

Deniz said that the information notes coming from the Presidential Palace, which regulated the news started to come to the media outlet after the newspaper was transferred to the Demirören Group. He also claimed that they started to produce 'light news' in which lifestyle and entertainment news were given more space than political issues:

> During the Doğan era, despite the pressures, we had continued to put rights-based news on the inner pages of the newspaper and even on the first pages. However, after the newspaper changed hands, it was started to avoid meddling. We started to spread news away from politics. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 29)

After the newspapers had been sold to the pro-government owners, the newspapers lost the attributes of a mainstream media outlet. Instead, they became a media organ for the government where the news is shaped by the government. Here, the pressure coming from the government and the media outlet starts to become indistinguishable for the journalists because the government uses the mechanisms that media outlets use. After this union is established, we start to see characteristics of the regime within the newsrooms and its impact on the news that is produced is visible.

### 6.3.2 Characteristics of the regime inside the newsroom

First of all, we see a decline in the space given to the opposition parties. The oppositional political parties in Turkey are the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) which is the political party that advocates Kurdish rights, the ultra-nationalist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and rightist nationalist İYİ Party[2]. The visibility of these opposition parties had changed according to their relationship with AKP with these parties. For instance, Zeynep who worked for a news agency as a reporter said that they were not following the news related to the MHP at first. After the party established a coalition with the AKP, they started to follow the members of MHP and allocated space for them within the news coverage. Of course, this is also a natural outcome of MHP becoming a more important player in the political field but its relationship with AKP determined this situation. Another example of this situation was HDP. Deniz claimed that the bans had changed during the Kurdish–Turkish peace process, also known as the Solution Process, and after the end of that process. He claimed that government officials targeted the newspaper according to the changing circumstances:

[2] İYİ Party is translated into English as Good Party but the term IYI is a reference to Kayı tribe which is accepted as the origin of the Turkish race.

> There was a Solution Process. During that time, they did not want us to put news related to martyr funerals. When you do it, they were asking whether you are an opponent of peace talks. When the war began again, they were asking why we are not making broadcasting that supports the war. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 30)

Similarly, Mahir said that before the solution process the publication of news related to HDP was forbidden. He said the name of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) the political party that advocates for Kurdish rights right now, but actually, he refers to the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) which was shut down in 2014 and replaced with HDP. He explained the ban on Kurdish news came from the government as the following:

> I remember the times when HDP news was forbidden. There were times when they said HDP will be not broadcasted, it will be not seen on news. On the other hand, it was said that you will not see opposing things during the solution process period. These are not fixed things. It is changing. Without putting it in more general time, there were phases that the process was blocked, failed, or went on its way. Changing impositions were coming in those stages and we were told not to see particular news. (Mahir, personal communication, April 5, 2020) (see Appendix C, 31)

Another factor that determines the bans on the oppositional parties is the elections. During the election process, the orders do not give coverage to opposition parties and their leaders were increased. In those periods, not only were there changes in relation to the volume of news, but also with regard to micro-interventions to the language that journalists used. Deniz stated that the coverage devoted to the leader of CHP, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, had changed when instructions was given during the November 2015 general elections (which were repeated after AKP could not reach a majority in the June elections):

> Normally if we put Erdoğan in a page on the other page we use Kılıçdaroğlu. During one election time, we get an instruction (he refers to the information notes coming from the palace that is mentioned earlier) saying that Kılıçdaroğlu cannot be used in a headline. Then we started to use Kılıçdaroğlu as a sub-news under Erdoğan news. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 32)

Deniz also recalled an incident he had heard from one of his friends in relation to Aydin Dogan. Mahir Ünal, the government spokesperson back then, called all executives-in-chief for a meeting. In that meeting, one of the pro-government executives-in-chief said that they could not find a nickname for Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu to use. Then, they discussed which would be better: Liar Kemal, or Cheater Kemal, etc. After discussing the matter for some time, one of the executives-in-chief of a media outlet owned by Aydın Doğan intervened in the discussion and said "We are journalists. We are talking about the representation of a political party. How can we talk like this?" (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020).

We don't know whether they were able to settle on a nickname and whether they used it at that time, but we know that during the local elections of 31 March 2019, and in the Istanbul elections, which were reheld after, CHP candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu had won the elections by a small percentage, and during the presidential elections of 2018 where Erdoğan competed with his opponent Muharrem İnce, there were micro-interventions to the language used.

Aydın stated that during the presidential elections of 2018 in the media outlet he was working in, Muharrem İnce was not referred to as a presidential candidate, but as the CHP candidate. A similar situation occurred in relation to Ekrem İmamoğlu when he was running for mayor of İstanbul against AKP's candidate Binali Yıldırım. Hande, who had been working as an editor under one of the newspapers of the Turkuaz Media Group for three years stated that: "Turkuaz Media could not write Ekrem İmamoğlu for months. They told 'candidate of CHP'. Without mentioning his name, making news about him would be very hard, I guess. How will you express this situation? [Laughing]" (Hande, personal communication, April 5,

2020). After Ekrem İmamoğlu had won the election, the interventions continued. Deniz stated that:

> When Ekrem İmamoğlu won the elections they said, 'You cannot make the photograph of İmamoğlu too big on the front page, it should be small'. He won the İstanbul elections, but we ensured that his photograph was equal in size to that of Binali Yıldırım. (Deniz, personal communications, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 33)

On some occasions, İmmoğlu did not receive any media coverage. Aydın said that when he took the certificate for the mayor there was an intervention from Ankara saying that they should not use the image:

> İmamoğlu is taking his certificate for the election. One of the intelligence editors is going to the montage room. I heard that from a friend who had actually experienced it. She is saying that 'the footage of İmamoğlu taking his certificate for election will not be used.' Then either she could not be sure or there is a dialogue with Ankara- I do not know- She is coming again and saying that 'I have deleted the footage from the archive. Probably right now there is no footage of İmamoğlu taking his certificate in the archive. It is really the bottom of the bottom. (Aydın, personal communication, April 4, 2020) (see Appendix C, 34)

Another example is that related by Hande. She said "For a long time we had been writing HDP as HDP. During one of the elections they said 'You will not write HDP anymore, each time you write HDP you will put 'pro-PKK' before it'" (Hande, personal communication, April 5, 2020). There are plenty of examples like that showing that opposition parties did not get enough coverage, or they were biasedly represented. For some of them, we do not even need the explanations provided by the journalists, as they were visible to all. When Ekrem İmamoğlu attended the CNN Türk program named Neutral Zone, as the guest of Ahmet Hakan, the censorship against the opposition parties became obvious. While İmamoğlu was making statements about the waste and corruption in the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, the advertisements started. Then, the program terminated before the time that Hakan had announced at the beginning.

This situation shows that there is a significant effort to limit the access of opposition parties to the media, a characteristic of competitive authoritarian regimes (Levitsky & Way, 2010; Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016; Özbudun, 2015). AKP did not completely deny the opposition parties access to the media, but by limiting and shaping that access, they skewed the field of competition. Even though there are elections regularly, not giving equal coverage to these parties and denying them necessary access especially during elections shows that the elections per se are not fair. All parties should be able to present their message to the general public, but it is very hard to do that while the mainstream media outlets are not even allowed to pronounce the names of the candidates. The experiences of the journalists show that especially during elections that threaten the survival of AKP or its authority the bans increased in number. In the June 2015 general election, when AKP lost its majority in parliament resulting in the repetition of elections in November. The March 31, 2019 poll to elect a mayor for İstanbul was also very important because that election was repeated on June 23 because the government claimed that the poll was fraudulent after the percentage of votes received by the CHP candidate exceeded that of his AKP counterpart by a narrow margin. Analyzing this election, Esen and Gümüşçü (2019) assert that "the election and its aftermath reaffirmed the competitive authoritarian nature of the regime, as the governing bloc enjoyed an uneven playing field, while the opposition had to meet a higher electoral bar than the incumbents to win" (p.1581). The newsroom experiences that are stated above prove that this was the case.

This is of course not limited to the opposition parties. Zeynep stated that the AKP has tried to eliminate critical views of the government. Normally, while covering news, journalists should include all relevant actors and views in order to

maintain impartiality. Sometimes, this principle is helpful for them in overcoming censorship and this will be discussed in the next chapter. However, sometimes the principle becomes an obstacle for journalists because they are expected to omit these critical views. For example, Hande said that during the war in Idlib, Syria they could not give space to the views of the Syrian regime:

> To put it in a banal way, the Syrian regime is an enemy. A lot of explanation came from the regime about the shooting of Turkish soldiers recently. 'Erdogan is a liar', 'Turkey is lying', 'they are killing people'. We did not enter any of these. Does it have news value, of course, it does. But neither the Turkish press saw it, nor did we see it. (Hande, personal communication, April 5, 2020) (see Appendix C, 35)

Similarly, she said that they could not give space to explanations made by the United States in relation to the Cemal Kaşıkçı case. Kaşıkçı was a journalist critical of Saudi Arabia. It is claimed that he was killed at the Consulate of Saudi Arabia in İstanbul. The United States was accusing Turkey of hiding the truth about how he was murdered in order to protect Saudi Arabia. The United States made several official explanations with regard to this claim. As these explanations targeted Turkey, they could not be afforded coverage.

In fact, anything that served to question the status quo such as the state of the economy was under the control of the government. The weakening lira, increasing inflation, price increases, and increasing poverty were only covered in the most oblique way. This was notable when the Turkish lira fell against the US dollar in August 2018. Deniz said that they could not even cover this news on the front page even though it deserved to be there:

> This country has experienced an economic crisis and it was not news. The dollar became 7.24 Turkish lira and we could not cover it on the first page. Neither we could cover news related to the inflation rates. In the 1990s it would be the headline. Right now, we were not allowed to say even economic crisis. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 36)

Şeyma who worked as an economics editor in a mainstream media outlet for nine years confirmed this ban and said they were not allowed to use the terms ‘economic crisis’ or ‘price increase’:

> You cannot write it as an economic crisis. Instead, you say by softening the words such as ‘economic fluctuation’ or ‘result of an increase in the currency’. For one period we were not allowed to write ‘price increase’. An order came that says, ‘you will write update instead of price increase’. This was a benchmark for economic news. (Şeyma, personal communication, April 6, 2020) (see Appendix C, 37)

Other examples show interventions in relation to the language of the news. For example, a decision was made that the ruling party’s name should be referred to as the ‘AK Party’ rather than ‘AKP’. Şeyma said that it is their red line and it is valid for all of the mainstream media. “When you write AKP you will be warned,” she said. Deniz told me that this was not the case before. He said “We were used to writing AKP. One day, as a result of increasing pressure they said everyone will write the AK Party. There was some resistance among columnists for a while but now everyone is forced to accept it.” (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020). Deniz gave another example and said that they were not allowed to say 'Palace' in reference to the President’s Office in Ankara despite controversies in relation to its budget and opulence. He noted the following:

> We were saying the Presidency Palace on purpose. Because it is a palace and we are living in a palace regime. In the first place, they put the name Palace by themselves but after it took reaction, they changed it to Presidency *külliyesi* (Islamic-ottoman social complex). Also, we are allowed to use the name 'Beştepe' in the news referring to the location. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 38)

One of the other indicators of authoritarian practices is the personalization of power. People, who have a close connection with President Erdoğan, have also been seen to rise in importance. The best example is Berat Albayrak, who is Erdoğan’s son-in-law. While he was Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, publishing news

related to the energy politics of Turkey was problematic, according to some of the journalists. Within three years in office between 2015 and 2018 news related to energy politics was under the scrutiny of the Ministry.

Şeyma, Emre, and Hakan said that during Berat Albayrak's tenure a s Minister, they had witnessed news critical to the energy politics of Turkey banned after it had been published  Here we can recall the example given by Hakan who worked for 5 years in a mainstream media outlet as discussed in the previous sections of this chapter. He told how one of the counselors of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources warned him for not covering news related to an energy issue. This was when Berat Albayrak was Minister.

These restrictions on energy topics are not about the general policy of the Ministry. Instead, it is directly related to the impact of Berat Albayrak because after he became the Minister of Finance and Treasury in 2018, the pressure on news related to energy issues seem to abate. Şeyma put it very clearly with her comment "Supervision was much more when Berat Albayrak was the Energy Minister but now it is not the case" (Şeyma, personal communication, April 6, 2020). However, she told, they are more careful right now, while covering news related to economy. It can be claimed that the increasing bans on economy news may be related with the worsening economic conditions of the country and its possibility to threat the survival of the ruling party. However, there are other examples that show that independent of the subject, the news related to Albayrak is under scrutiny. For instance, Deniz related an example based on a talk with friends:

> Ali Koç made a press statement, the head of Fenerbahçe football club. And in the lower text, he was saying politicians support Trabzonspor football club and it is destroying the right to equal struggle. It was published in the newspaper Hürriyet. Then, they collected all the printed copies of the newspaper. They destroyed the newspapers and distributed them again because Berat Albayrak was angry. Because he is the one who supports the

> Trabzonspor. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 39)

As it is seen from the example of Deniz, not only the news related to economy or energy issues, but also news related to a football club may face censorship. Of course, there may be other reasons for censoring economy news such as saving the image of the country and preventing opposition, but what I claim in here is independent from the subject the question of who the news targets has an effect on the censorship, too.

## 6.4 Conclusion

The experiences of the journalists that are presented in this chapter shows that journalists face not only the domination practices of the media outlet but also the government. Furthermore, the mechanisms of the neoliberalized media institutions contribute to strengthening of the domination of the government. In the previous chapter, how AKP instrumentalized the ownership structure of the media outlets to create an AKP-friendly media environment was discussed. Since the major media outlets were owned by the conglomerates that have business in other sectors, they need government licenses, privatization deals, and subsidies for their business (Yeşil, 2018; Sözeri & Güney, 2011). So, the government was able to intervene to the media outlets by rewarding the supporters and punishing the dissidents. When the high ownership concentration levels considered, it was not hard for AKP to control the majority of the newspapers. Creating a loyal business class was not specific to the media sector but it was a general approach adopted by the ruling party (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2018).

This chapter shows that the contribution of corporatized media outlets to strengthen AKP's domination was not limited to these macro-level dimensions.

Besides, through the precarization of the journalists and introducing new control mechanisms the media structure made journalists more vulnerable against the pressure. First of all, as a result of time pressure, heavy workload, decreasing wages, censorship, and declining unionization journalists turn into someone who constantly gets poorer, who lose their control over the news they produce. Even in the absence of government intervention, what will the journalist cover is determined by the interests of media owners and its business partners. This shows that on the contrary of liberal-pluralist approach which claims that free-market would enhance freedom of expression and objectivity of the journalists (Schramm, 1964; Bennett, 1982), what we see in the newspapers are filtered through the capitalist interests (Herman & Chomsky, 2010). At this point journalists start to abandon their journalism ethics and degrade their relationships with the media outlets on the base of economic relations. Brown (2015) claims that this is a result of normal functioning of the neoliberalism.

Secondly, the media structure creates its own mechanisms of control such as the hierarchical structure within the newsrooms and these mechanisms are instrumentalized by the government, as well. This hierarchy blurs the lines between dominators and resisters, allows journalists to pass the responsibility to other journalists, and turns censorship to self-censorship in the long run. AKP, on the other hand, could pass its orders by using this chain of command easily, and instead of changing every journalist it can control the media by only appointing pro-AKP managers. When the owners were changed, we cannot talk about two distinct sources of domination, but they merge into one and it makes resistant less likely.

However, the domination by the government cannot be understood by solely focusing on the economic relations or the structure of the media. As Stier (2015) demonstrates, the regime type has an important impact on the level of press freedom.

In the previous chapter, AKP's control over the news, media outlets, and journalists are discussed. This chapter looks at how this control works on a daily basis. The experiences of the journalists show that the government intervenes to the news before and after the publication through direct calls, daily bulletins, WhatsApp groups, and controlling the news agencies which provide the majority of the content for the mainstream media outlets.

The direct and indirect censorship practices of the government such as preventing the access of the oppositional parties and groups to the mainstream media show characteristics of the competitive authoritarian regime (Levitsky & Way, 2010; Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016; Özbudun, 2015). From the examples of the journalists we see that these practices increase especially during the election process. Even though there are elections regularly, not giving equal space to these parties and preventing their coverage especially during the election process shows that the elections are not fair, indeed. So, media outlets become tools for strengthening the survival of AKP's competitive authoritarian regime. In addition to news related to the oppositional parties, government targets any news that will question their position such as news related to the situation of the economy, Syrian policy, and mega projects. At the end of the day, we see that the conditions of the journalists who have been already under the pressure of the media outlet, are worsened as a result of these interventions by the government.

# CHAPTER 7

# RESISTANCE INSIDE THE NEWSROOM

> After all, you are not a robot. Someone wants to control what you do. They cannot have control over your mind, your abilities, and the experience you gain. So, the human factor finds a way everywhere dynamically. As a journalist, you have the following motivation in the profession: This is a business, there is a truth and this truth needs to be announced. You have to do this instead of covering it. OK, you are in a structure where you are an inevitable part of covering up but you are acting on texts and visuals to look for what you can do, what you can say, and how you can express it implicitly. Oh, I don't know if this effort reaches someone. (Mahir, personal communication, April 5, 2020) (see Appendix C, 40)

In the previous section, there was an effort to portray the practices of domination that journalists are exposed to. However, without examining the journalists' responses to domination, how this domination by the government and the media outlet works will not be understood. To what degree do journalists accept this domination, internalize it, and obey its demands? To what degree do they oppose it and take a stand against it? Mahir, who has been a journalist for 21 years, said that journalists who are squeezed among the orders coming from the boss and the government are in search of a degree of freedom for themselves. While explaining journalists' reaction to power, Mahir creates a distinction between his body and his mind. He claims that his mind cannot be controlled even though the government or the boss imposes repression on what he produces. Actually, this separation of mind and body is the core of Scott's Weapons of the Weak which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Scott arguments essentially fall within the bounds of this dichotomy and by looking at the resistance practices of the people; he concludes that we cannot talk about a hegemony by the dominator since they cannot control people's minds. He also contends that power is perceived as a form of coercion rather than persuasion and it is claimed that coercion can affect peoples' behavior, but it does not have control of

peoples' opinions. On the other hand, Mitchell (1990) claims that we cannot talk about this distinction. He says that thinking as "they can control my body, but they cannot control my mind" empowers domination. For him, domination shapes our ideological world, too, and determines our scope of actions and justifications and makes us believe that domination has no control over us. Scott (1985, 1989) provides evidence from the daily practices of people to prove his argument. What I will do in this chapter is to look deep into the everyday resistance practices of journalists by following Scott's path but in a more inquiring fashion. While doing it I will avoid creating a distinction between mind and body or coercion and persuasion as Scott does because as I discussed in Chapter 3 these distinctions limit the understanding of how domination works.

This section will examine the strategies that journalists come up with to overcome repression or to survive in this media environment. It aims to understand the nature of the relationship between resistance and repression more deeply and by doing that it aims to develop answers to the question of how domination works. To do that, journalists' strategies will be separated into two as the overt and covert forms of resistance. However, it should be noted that they do not exclude each other since they may occur at the same time, as a daily practice. Which strategy journalists employ is dependent on conditions and how much risk they are willing to take.

## 7.1 Overt resistance

When journalists face repression, one of the ways to overcome it is open confrontation. Scott (1985) describes these open forms of oppositional action as *overt resistance*. In these forms of resistance, the resister shows his/her dissatisfaction with a certain situation directly. The main aim of this action is that it

be acknowledged by the dominator and to make demands, as we will see from the following examples from the newsroom. Here, the journalists show their dissatisfaction with the bans or pressures to the superiors directly.

These overt forms of resistance may include large- and small-scale protests inside the media outlets, refusing to cover news, arguing over news that is censored, or being unwilling to sign off on a piece. However, most of the time these forms of open resistance result in sanctions and are risky for the journalists. For instance, Ulaş who has been a journalist for 20 years and worked in multiple mainstream media outlets during these years, related how he once refused to cover news which included "unnecessary praise" – according to his interpretation - for the government. After discussing it with his manager he said he was dismissed:

> I refused to cover this news because it was not true. The aim was to praise the government. As a result of this discussion, they fired me. Then, they forced someone to cover this news and they put my signature on it! Since because I did not sue them, I could not bring it to the agenda. If a journalist does not want to put his/her signature on it you cannot force him/her or you cannot force them to cover the news. (Ulaş, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 41)

Not only the threat of being fired but also the concern that they may be identified as a troublemaker may prevent journalists from refusing to fulfill their obligation. For instance, Emre stated that several times he refused to cover propaganda news that was demanded of him and he insisted on this decision. However, he said that after a while he felt it necessary to do so because he thought that he would start to be seen as a troublemaker inside the newsroom:

> The repression is assimilated. They are sending me news and asking me to cover it. I am saying no. I am arguing with the managers and refusing to do it. The people that are in the same position as me asking why I am questioning. One time I quarrel; the second time I have a quarrel but after a while being the person who always makes trouble is becoming annoying and I am accepting. (Emre, personal communication, March 23, 2020) (see Appendix C, 42)

As a result, Emre's reactions toward his managers diminished through time. This is similar to the situations discussed in the previous chapter in which it is argued that censorship gives way to self-censorship in the long run. Similarly, here we see that in the beginning, Emre refused to cover news that ran counter to his journalism ethics. However, because his colleagues did not approve of him or simply did not support him, he began to stop questioning orders.

Of course, there are exceptions to this. For example, journalists can insist on covering specific news items, which may not be welcomed. In the morning, all journalists come together to determine who will cover which news. In the previous chapter, it is said that this selection process is another form of censorship since some of the news is not selected during these meetings. Zeynep, who worked as a reporter for more than one year said that one of her proposals in relation to a problematic municipality policy was not selected for a long time. According to her, a journalist should insist on what they want to cover even though it may not be accepted several times. So, she proposed it again and again until it was accepted:

> A woman lost her child due to the neglect of a hospital. The woman sued the hospital. The case went up to the Provincial Health Directorate, but it was refused here. This news can put Provincial Health Directorate into trouble, I know. I have the case file and I want to cover this news. But at the meetings where we discussed which news we will do; my proposal was always rejected. I put it on the agenda again and again. Probably I will continue to propose it until they accept it. (Zeynep, personal communication, March 27, 2020) (see Appendix C, 43)

Similarly, Bekir who works as a news manager stated that a journalist should insist on what they want to cover. "You also have to be challenging and put that news in front of the managers all the time. I always say this to reporter friends. If you are not compelling in the worst period, there is no possibility that the news will come out in any way" he said (Bekir, personal communication, April 19, 2020). However, he said that all of these efforts may be a huge waste of time for the journalist as well. He

admitted that many journalists chose not to deal with a subject for a long time after being refused multiple times.

Aydın told another story about a time when he refused to cover a news item. He chose to argue with the manager directly. After arguing over it, he left the office and the news manager called him. According to his account, the news manager insulted him over the phone and ordered him to return the office and cover the news. Aydın closed the phone in anger and later they opened an administrative investigation against him for leaving the office and not obeying his superiors. As a result, the managers gave him a disciplinary penalty and cut his wages for a year. Later, Aydın sued the company and won the case and was reimbursed for his lost wages (Aydın personal communication, April 4, 2020). He said that these arguments over news had continued for a while. Then, the news managers had stopped assigning any stories to him and started to distribute work normally given to him to other journalists.

Another strategy is benefiting from the dispersed nature of the domination inside the newsroom. In the previous chapter, we discussed how passing the responsibility to another journalist contributes to the functioning of domination. The editors conduct multiple interventions in relation to the news by claiming that ‘If I do not apply censorship, my superior will do so eventually’. While looking at the resistance strategies we see a similar mentality. Differently in this case, however, journalists are transferring the news that they do not want to cover to other journalists. Emre said that when he does not want to cover specific propaganda news, he prefers to pass the responsibility to his manager:

> For example, the news is coming: 'The PKK terrorist raped a woman.' My manager wants me to do this news. I do not object to making news, but I say 'I don't do it'. He can do it himself if he wants. No such news can come out of my hand. In such cases, sometimes it remains unfinished, and sometimes

> someone else does. (Emre, personal communication, March 26, 2020) (see Appendix C, 45)

Leyla who has been working for two years as a reporter in one of the mainstream media outlets said that when she is told to cover news that she does not like sometimes she says that she does not want to cover it and passes it to another journalist. In addition to that, she said, she sometimes lies in order to evade such requests:

> When they want me to cover news that I find wrong or I don't want to cover, I am saying that I don't want to cover it and they are giving it to another journalist. Sometimes I am lying to avoid a quarrel. I am saying 'I am struggling with this news right now. If someone else can look at the other news, it would be better'. (Leyla, personal communication, April 20, 2020) (see Appendix C, 46)

Refusing to cover news by stating it is not appropriate is a form of overt resistance. However, lying should be considered a form of disguised resistance, which will be discussed later. Even though the intention is the same in both reactions, in one of the situations the journalist is choosing open confrontation, and in the other situation the journalist is seeking hidden ways to bypass the demand. Of course, passing the responsibility to another journalist or manager does not affect the outcome. The news can be covered by another journalist as well. Here the main intention is not preventing news from being published but not taking a role in the process. What this situation shows us is that reassigning responsibility is not only used in relation to orders received, but also instrumentalized while coming up with resistance strategies such as lying or refusing to cover the news. The perception of a contribution may be symbolic as well. For instance, Ulaş said that while he was working in a pro-government media outlet, he was covering news but not signing off on the item (Ulaş, personal communication, April 12, 2020). Actually, he was contributing to the production of news that he did not approve of, but he did not want this news to be

associated with his name. When we look at the final product, the news, I do not think that there is much difference between the two scenarios. In the end, the news is produced by the journalist or one of his colleagues. The important thing in both scenarios is that they are showing their dissatisfaction with the status quo.

The open forms of resistance can target the general working conditions of the journalists as well. For example, Hakan who worked for five years as an editor in a mainstream media outlet tried to collaborate with his colleagues to increase the number of union members. In Chapter 5, how the media outlets are deunionized in Turkey is discussed and in Chapter 6 how this deunionization gave way to worsening working conditions for journalists is analyzed. As journalist unions are supposed to protect journalists against the repressions the struggle to establish a strong union should be considered as a form of open resistance. Hakan expressed his struggle to increase t union membership in the media outlet he worked in as follows:

> We tried to increase the number of union members among the journalists for a long time. For this, we distributed leaflets to the journalists within the institution. We convinced our friends to join. Throughout this process, the managers told us to give up. When the number of union members reached a dangerous size for them, people, including me, who were unionized and tried to increase the number of union members were dismissed. We are currently continuing our struggle with the lawsuits we have filed. (Hakan, personal communication, April 15, 2020) (see Appendix C, 47)

Hakan's case is important because it is one of the most recent examples of resistance in Turkish mainstream media and it is very unique. For one union to be effective in a workplace the number of union members should pass a threshold. When Hakan saw that they were very close to that number he tried to mobilize his colleagues. We can say that it was a window of opportunity for them but resulted in them being fired. It should be noted that this struggle to increase union members happened at a time when the newspaper was sold to another conglomeration that had close ties with the government. The repression they faced was greater after ownership changed hands.

Aydın said that they had organized multiple large-scale protests in front of the media outlet against the dismissal of the journalists, deunionization, and censorship during the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. However, these tactics diminished as a result of the increasing amount of repression. “These days are over,” he said. Of course, this situation does not mean that there are no protests anymore. However, while journalists then were organizing large scale protests, right now there are individual protests. For example, Deniz said that he organized individual protests to demand union rights in the media outlets:

> I had started to hang banners that try to tell unionization is a right in a witty way. They were mocking with the media outlet. I was hanging them, and they were removing. Even, security started to ask when I am leaving the office. I suppose they took an order to watch me. They were calling me a ‘unionist’. The banners that I hang to the cafeteria and the middle floor had been removing in half an hour. The ones I hang on the last floor had been staying the full day. It was an individual protest. I did not want to massif it because I know that the conditions are different for each journalist. Some people had to work and cannot afford to be dismissed from the job even though they know all the nonsense stuff. They asked me not to do it several times. Despite the orders I had continued. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 48)

This personal protest did not last long. In the end, he was fired, and right now he is trying to support journalists’ rights from the outside. As seen from these examples, most of the time overt forms of confrontation were not a suitable way for journalists since it resulted in their being fired, the imposition of a disciplinary penalty, or at the least, being branded a troublemaker in the newsroom. These threats are an obstacle for journalists who have their reasons to keep working. Actually, all of the journalists confessed that they thought about leaving their jobs multiple times. Hande said that “there are pros and cons” and each time she had to evaluate them in her head to decide whether to keep working or not. They had their reasons to keep working. The justifications varied among the journalists that were interviewed. They included not wanting to lose the compensation money accumulated through the years by

resigning, experiencing the same problems in other media institutions, needing to work to ensure their livelihoods, and being deprived of the opportunity to reach large audiences/readers/public in other media institutions. Here are some of the responses that journalists gave to the question whether they wanted to leave the job or not:

> I have a rental bill that I have to pay, a life I have to maintain. I can do this by working. Why should I leave and keep my compensation in your pockets? After all, I worked there for about eight years. (Mahir, personal communication, April 5, 2020) (see Appendix C, 49)

> I am constantly thinking about leaving work, but there is no broadcasting company that can give my current salary. So, let me be frank, I'm getting 5000 [Turkish lira]. The offers that came before were nearly 3500. Also, when I cover news it gets 5 million clicks. There is no such possibility in the other institutions. (Emre, personal communication, March 26, 2020) (see Appendix C, 50)

> I want to quit, but I am also aware that I am probably in the best places in the media both materially and spiritually. I know that I am financially so. As I said spiritually, my friend's environment is very good. I am so used to seeing some people that it is very strange not to see them. It's very hard to break that habit. I need the money they give me, and I have some things to learn from there. My learning process continues. (Hande, personal communication, date) (see Appendix C, 51)

> Time to time I am thinking about leaving but also, I like journalism. Yes, I can continue elsewhere, but this place has made an incredible effort for my development. Also, I hear the pressure is much more intense in other media outlets. They work in very bad conditions. Less money and more pressure. (Leyla, personal communication, April 20, 2020) (see Appendix C, 52)

> Here, most of the people have accumulated compensation. I think this is the biggest reason why we can't change our jobs. Also 15, 20 years ago you used to leave X newspaper and go to Y newspaper and continue your work there. But there is not much place you can go in this polarization. If you are on the X side, you have to go to one of the newspapers on the X side. Opposite of it is not possible. (Şeyma, personal communication, April 6, 2020) (see Appendix C, 53)

For Aydın, apart from monetary concerns, another justification enters the picture: Not wanting to leave coverage to the journalists who acquiesce in the face of all the pressure. He sees this struggle inside the newsroom as a battle and does not want to lose it. He expressed the idea as follows:

> We had already resigned from the occupation/profession. The reason why I do not want to leave the institution is that it will make them happy. One obstacle would be eliminated. While they ogle to send us, I do not have any purpose to make it easy for them. If the conditions go on like this, I will be here. (Aydın, personal communication, April 4, 2020) (see Appendix C, 54)

Among all of the justifications raised by the journalists, one of them was very striking compared to the others. Nearly all journalists that are still working mentioned that they have bad working conditions, but they said that the conditions of the other journalists in the other institutions are worse. Emre and Leyla used this as a justification as to why they did not want to leave the media institution they were working in. For this thesis, I conducted interviews with journalists from eight different media outlets. Journalists think that they are in a more privileged position in terms of salary and the amount of repression they face compared to the other mainstream media outlets. There is no possibility to measure which journalist's situation is worse, but the similar explanations from different journalists show that this is not the case. So how can this be possible? One explanation may be that they are referring to a media organization that is not included in my sampling. However, they are generalizing while saying these things, so I do not think that this is the reason. What I argue is the combination of two situations. First, there is competition among the newspapers. Journalists in mainstream media try to publish news before any other rival newspaper because speed is very important in reaching readers. The success of the newspaper is also determined by making comparisons between the newspapers even though sometimes their owners are the same because of the high concentration levels in the ownership of media outlets. Bekir who worked as a news manager for nine years described this competition between the newspapers as follows:

> The next day, when newspapers are published, you immediately collect other newspapers. You have to explain why the news that is published in X

> Newspaper, has not existed in your newspaper. Or if your weekly circulation was more than other newspapers, then you will be in a good mood during that week. The next week the whole tension starts again. (Bekir, personal communication, April 19, 2020) (see Appendix C, 55)

As a result of this competitive environment, journalists may naturalize the making of comparisons with other media outlets and claim that their media outlet is better. My second explanation is that imagining themselves as being in a better situation is a cognitive mechanism that journalists develop. By doing so they can justify why they are continuing to work in a media outlet that applies pressure on them. I think the reason is an amalgamation of these two points. Both competitive nature and cognitive mechanisms show the internalization of domination to some extent. The fear of getting fired, wanting to maintain their livelihoods, and not wanting to be monetarily punished may be among the reasons that force them to continue their profession. However, the view that "other media institutions are in worse conditions", shows how coercive mechanisms can affect perceptions. During the 1990s, major conglomerates were making "gentlemen's agreements", which prevented the transfer of journalists to other media outlets (Yeşil 2016, p.37). Right now, they do not need this kind of deal because journalists' perception of the "other" prevents them from changing institution.

Whatever the reason, the journalists who do not want to get fired or who do not want to resign from their job are not able to engage in open confrontation to eliminate the repression because of the possible risks as in the examples given. Journalists had to come up with different strategies in order to do their work. Not being able to engage in overt resistance does not mean that they will accept all of the conditions they are confronted with. As Zeynep noted "There are very precious journalists inside. People are making insinuation, but these journalists are struggling.

There is a struggle to give the news. I think it's important in this respect" (Zeynep, personal communication, March 27, 2020).

## 7.2 Covert resistance

Multiple strategies are adopted by journalists to enable them to perform their work, as they want. These strategies not only sought to facilitate the truth as they saw it but also to circumvent h censorship and survive in the working environment in which they found themselves. Scott (1985) describes these kinds of oppositional actions as covert resistance. Different from the first form of resistance, here we do not see an open confrontation. These strategies are integrated into daily practice and the main aim is not to change the status quo or to be heard. On the contrary, remaining undetected by managers and the government is a better option. What they want is to open a space for themselves and to convey their message to the general public despite the obstacles.

One of the strategies used by journalists in this respect is a play on words. This may happen either via a softening of the language or the use of irony. For example, Leyla said that if the news included harsh criticism of the government, she would choose words that did not generate a reaction:

> It is impossible to publish some news that accuse the government. However, there is some news that if you write properly, you can include criticism. It is necessary to give expressions by softening them a little. For example, let's say a person said, 'The AKP is the primary responsible for the murder of workers.' While writing I am saying 'X, who evaluates the murder of workers, said that the government has a responsibility to prevent them'. (Leyla, personal communication, April 20, 2020) (see Appendix C, 56)

Hande gave another example of how she would "soften the language" while covering the news. She said that since it was impossible to use the term "economic crisis" she had to come up with different terms. "You cannot write 'economic crisis'. Instead, by

softening the words and changing the pattern, I would use phrases such as a 'fluctuation in the economy' or 'due to the increase in the exchange rate'" she said (Şeyma, personal communication, April 6, 2020).

If the news is propaganda news and includes praise for the government, Emre said that he would use irony by mentioning events that did not correlate with the statement that praised government. Sometimes, this search for a suitable way of presenting the news made things hard for the journalists and sometimes it was an amusing exercise.

> Of course, if you use obvious expressions like chanting a slogan, it will be definitely get caught somewhere because there are guardians everywhere. Actually, it was nice and fun to be able to bring my own words to the screen by making slalom among them. Because you are dealing with language. You say what you want to say in a way that those who want to understand, understand but you pass through the places where it may be caught. (Aydın, personal communication, April 4, 2020) (see Appendix C, 57)

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are bans on news in multiple areas from economics to daily politics. The journalists know that if they do not obey these bans, their news will not be able to pass the controls in place. So, another strategy used to cover an issue that is banned is to discuss the issue indirectly. Deniz said that since they were not allowed to cover news related to high inflation rates or economic crises, in general, they conveyed these points indirectly by referring to the prices of certain products:

> Instead of saying there are an economic crisis and poverty we were covering the onion. We were covering news about onions and putting that on the first page of the newspaper. We were not mentioning crisis, but we were saying the price of onion passed the price of gold. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 58)

Deniz was not the only one who had trouble finding ways to convey news related to the economic crisis. Şeyma, who works as an economics editor said that instead of saying there was an economic crisis, she would try to ascertain the opinions of

people and quote them. So, she would be able to defend herself if the item became the subject of scrutiny. Leyla used the same tactic with Şeyma. She said that it was safer to give coverage to critical views by directly quoting people.

> You cannot include criticism in the news. Also, you have to be objective. But it is much safer to write someone else's criticism. If they oppose, you can defend yourself by saying, 'The person I talked to said this. What can I do?' Of course, they may ask, 'Why did you include that person?' (Leyla, personal communication, April 20, 2020) (see Appendix C, 59)

Visuals are as important as the content of the news. So, another strategy was to choose photographs that told the story that they were not allowed to relate in words. Deniz said that sometimes they chose photos with a strong message that obviated the need to relate the situation in words:

> We journalists have created the experience of telling the truth in a different way. For example, you choose such a photo that Erdogan stands in the palace and the public passes from afar. You use that photo in large scale and you give the title from his words. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 60)

Leyla recounted a similar example. She said that while covering news related to the People's Garden, she chose photographs that showed the ecological destruction of the project. The People's Garden is an AKP project, which aims to open parks in 81 provinces. The project was criticized because of the ecological changes that it would have wrought in places such as Salda Lake and Hewsel Gardens, where the creation of a park would have destroyed the natural beauty of the site. The emphasis on "People" is perceived as a populist discourse that is used by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Leyla stated that she drafted an article that praised the project, but she used photographs that gave the opposite message:

> For example, People's Garden news. In the news, I am describing the benefits of the project to the city and how green it is, as the government says too. But as a photograph, I put the views from the park, which is overwhelmed with concrete. (Leyla, personal communication, April 20, 2020) (see Appendix C, 61)

Of course, all of these strategies are developed as a result of the learning process. The bans change constantly and tighten depending on the prevailing situation. “The process has changed so much. It is changing every day. Today my news passed from the control, but I do not know whether I can cover this news tomorrow. We are trying to do as much as we can” Zeynep told. (Zeynep, personal communication, March 27, 2020). Journalists learn about the bans from written and verbal warnings as discussed in the previous chapter. Experience is as always, a particularly good teacher. Sometimes the news is censored after it has been written so journalists learn about the applicable limits during these censorship per se. One of the strategies developed as a result of this learning process is how much coverage they should give to news that may be problematic for the government or the company. Deniz told me that they used a trial-and-error method. He said that if a certain type of news item was censored multiple times, they tried to find a way to make it acceptable and to play with the boundaries:

> We are constantly trying to learn our limits. For example, after a while, you realize that if you put a story big, they will completely remove it from the newspaper. So, you put it in a small size so that it stays in the newspaper. You do it for a while. The next day it may be censored. Then you try a new way. It is not so easy to stop telling the truth. Censorship methods of resistance have always been. (Deniz, personal communication, April 12, 2020) (see Appendix C, 62)

Playing with the boundaries of the bans required an understanding of what first attracted attention. To do that several journalists said that they were very careful about the headings and the first paragraph of the news. However, they hid the problematic sentences within the body of the news item. Hakan said that he preferred headlines that would not cause any problems inserted those sentences that he wished to sue within the main body of the text. This method did not cause any problem, according to him. Deniz said that while covering the news he did not mention any

problematic subjects at the beginning, but while giving the background to the event at the end of the news he gave space to what the news was actually about and presented the problems that needed to be communicated there.

Journalists can hide the news among footage as well. Zeynep noted that when there was a flood at İstanbul Airport they were not able to publish it the news directly because it might have generated an adverse reaction from the government. During the construction of this mega project, it was criticized because its location was not suitable for an airport. However, she said that they brought together footage of other floods in Istanbul and in between them said that the new airport had been submerged by the floods:

> When the new airport flooded, we published its footages. But we could not say 'Istanbul Airport flooded'. A few more places were flooded in Ayazağa. We gave that footage and used the footage of Istanbul Airport in between. Experts say the reason is that the airport is built on lakes, but we can't say this much. (Zeynep, personal communication, March 27, 2020) (see Appendix C, 63)

Hiding the content between the lines or among the footage should be considered a form of covert resistance. We see that journalists struggle to publish news. However, it also means that this kind of news will be seen by only the most avid readers. Mahir said that he uses strategies such as hiding the content, softening the language and "being particularly flexible with the visuals" but he stated that he did not think that these efforts were apprehended by readers:

> We are making an effort. If the reader is careful, s/he may recognize these (strategies). However, when readers, media groups, and society wear a lot of armor and come across the sword shield, there is no purpose. It doesn't reach anyone. Then, people are thinking 'This place does not appeal to us, we should read somewhere else'. Some of them have no attention or interest. There is this side as well. (Mahir, personal communication, April 5, 2020) (see Appendix C, 64)

This echoes the study of Geddes and Zaller (1989) discussed in Chapter 2. Based on research carried out in Brazil, they claim that the people who have a wide range of

awareness of political issues are more resistant to pro-government arguments in government-dominated media outlets. When people do not engage with political issues too much, they note that they are more prone to believe these pro-government arguments. In like manner, journalists in Turkey are trying to find implicit ways to transfer those messages that are banned. These strategies are developed in order to circumvent government controls and and those of superiors in the media outlet. So, we can say that they are hard to detect and may not appeal to a general readership. If the pro-government arguments are not accepted by politically aware people as Geddes and Zaller claim, then the government does not need to control the news in detail because those who will be able to detect the strategies used by journalists would probably be able to read the news critically anyway even in the absence of any such strategy. Apart from its not constituting any threat to domination, these kinds of resistance practices may also strengthen domination because they empower the argument 'there is still room for criticism'. For example, Bekir, who worked as a news manager for nine years, told me that he wanted to resign but this was rejected by the media outlet and he was asked to continue working. When I asked the reason for this he said:

> I was writing a little bit of critical but when we look at the general, I did not have much influence. They wanted me to continue working to be able to say 'We give space to criticism. Look, X is writing for us.' They wanted to save the image. (Bekir, personal communication, April 19, 2020) (see Appendix C, 65)

This is similar to the nature of competitive authoritarianism. If the media outlets were owned by the government completely then it would result in a questioning of the legitimacy of the regime because it presents itself as a democracy. However, when the media outlets pretend to give space to critical views, it contributes to their

image of being a mainstream media outlet in which the news is transferred impartially.

If all of these strategies are not adequate to communicate news that is banned, another strategy may present, where the news is published from another media institution where censorship is not that strict. Hakan said that several times he wrote the news in another media outlet by using a nickname or passed it to his other journalist friends for them to cover:

> Of course, I was trying to publish it in the newspaper but when I saw that there is no possibility for it and it will bring trouble for me, I was publishing the news from other newspapers by using a nickname. Several times when I received information that will show corruption, I have to send the news to my other journalist friends who could report it. (Hakan, personal communication, date) (see Appendix C, 66)

The examples given so far reflect the way journalists try to bypass bans to enable them to share the news with the public. However, this is not the only strategy developed by journalists. They also try to find ways to cope with repression so that they can survive in this environment and protect themselves. These survival strategies are used to hide their political inclinations and thoughts from their coworkers. These strategies include hiding their social media accounts, trolling, and not talking or discussing an issue that may reveal their political allegiances.

Journalists' relationships with associates differ according to the position of the journalists. Most of the respondents said that they did not have to hide their political views. Among 12 participants only two of them, Zeynep and Emre, stated that they had to hide their political views in the newsroom. Zeynep who was working as a reporter for more than one year in a news agency, said that she knew her colleagues' political views were, and they were mostly opponents of the current government, but they never talked about that:

> I know which political opinion the person in front of me has. But s/he does not utter. Neither do I. We are just making business. We don't talk about it usually. Of course, if we are close friends, I am talking but not with everyone or with a manager. (Zeynep, personal communication, March 27, 2020) (see Appendix C, 67)

Zeynep said that she preferred not to talk about her personal beliefs and kept her distance from colleagues. She also did not accept any friendship requests from colleagues in the workplace in relation to her social media accounts:

> I am very careful in my social media post. I don't know whether they are examined or not because I am not adding anyone. It is my personal preference. If we are very close then I can add her/him, there is no problem with it. The otherwise is not possible. I can write something polemical, and someone can come and say, 'I saw something like this, please delete it.' I will not enjoy such a conversation, so I am not allowing them to see. (Zeynep, personal communication, March 27, 2020) (see Appendix C, 68)

Emre who worked for more than one year in a mainstream media outlet used a different tactic in his workplace. He said that he said what he wanted to say but exaggeratedly, by trolling so his coworkers would not take it seriously:

> It is a reflex that I developed over the years. It is my general attitude. Whenever someone says something, I say the opposite. Even it is a small conversation I am doing that. My colleagues started to say, 'please don't troll.' As a survival strategy, I developed this. I am also reflecting on my ideas but sarcastically, so they cannot be sure. It is a survival strategy in the newsroom. (Emre, personal communication, March 26, 2020) (see Appendix C, 69)

Emre's and Zeynep's attitude shows that journalists' strategies may not be only about their product, the news, but also their own identity. Hiding one's identity can also be seen as another strategy that enables journalist to avail of a more relaxed environment. The examples contribute to our understanding of how domination actually works. In both cases journalists prefer to make a distinction between their "actual personality" and their "personality as a worker". They come up with strategies with the aim of protecting their "actual personality". When they go to work, they engage their second personality. Actually, this performance is similar to

what Scott (1985) observes in the village in Malaysia in which peasants maintain their performance in front of the dominator. He takes this performance as proof of the absence of hegemony. I would argue that this can be considered proof since it is the way domination works: Creating two separate realms and forcing people to act accordingly. However, we cannot talk about these two spheres in reality. Indeed, in Zeynep's case this performance in the workplace becomes something that affects her personal life since she has to be careful with her social media accounts. So, we see how these spheres are intertwined.

## 7.3 Resistance to domination

All of the examples presented in this chapter show how journalists develop reactions to certain forms of repression that are discussed in detail in Chapter 6. When journalists face restrictions and bans, they try to come up with different kinds of overt and covert resistance strategies. As claimed at the beginning of this paper the daily practices of journalists prove that there is a constant struggle between domination and the resistance. Sometimes journalists prefer open contestation such as refusing to cover news, transferring responsibility to another journalist, insisting on a subject, which they have not been asked to cover, opening a lawsuit and organizing small- and large-scale protests for union rights. However, these open forms of confrontation can be risky for journalists in terms of the sanctions they may invite such as the threat of being fired, monetary punishment, colleagues' pressure, etc. So, as Scott (1989) claims when they cannot afford these sanctions they come up with disguised forms of resistance strategies such as lying, playing with words, softening the language, employing irony, expressing the issue indirectly, using visuals that contradict the message given in the news, etc. Scott differentiates these

two forms of resistance by claiming that one of them is an organized form of resistance and the other an everyday practice (p.34). He also states that in overt forms of resistance the main aim is to acquire de jure recognition of rights and demands and in the covert forms the main aim is to acquire de facto gains. However, when we look at certain open forms of resistance such as refusing to cover news by arguing over it, we see that they are also a part of the daily practices of journalists and it is not about the formal recognition of a request. As Simi and Futurell (2009) claim, there is no strict boundary between the hidden and open forms of resistance since both forms are performed naturally as a part of daily practices. In addition, the interlinkage between these two forms is stronger than that which Scott claims. He says that the accumulation of everyday forms of resistance can lead to significant collective resistance. However, newsroom experiences show us that there is a constant exchange between the two. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, a journalist can refuse to cover news by saying that s/he finds it wrong. After a while s/he may prefer to lie by saying s/he is busy instead of having a quarrel. As Lilja et al. (2017) claim there is a constant exchange between these forms of resistance.

Another thing that the experiences of the journalists show is how resistance strategies are shaped by forms of domination. As opposed to what Scott (1989) claims, we see a constant exchange between the practices of resistance and domination. First of all, resistance strategies are developed as a result of a learning process. The types of bans and restrictions change with time as discussed in Chapter 6. Journalists have to come up with strategies in response to these changing circumstances. For example, when the journalists realize that a news item is banned totally when they cover it on the front page, they start to put that kind of critical news in inner pages. We also see that resistance strategies borrow from the mechanisms of

domination. For instance, passing responsibility to other journalists or the manager is used both as a mechanism of domination as well as resistance. Journalists who do not want to cover specific news pass this responsibility to other journalists. Even though this is a resistance tactic that journalists use, this action does not prevent the news from being published. So, we see that the resistance strategy contributes to the functioning of domination to some extent. As Scott (1985) argues the resisters can act with the intention of undermining domination but in the end, we see that these strategies can result in a strengthening of that domination as Lilje and Vinthagen (2009) claim.

The struggle of journalists to 'tell the truth' by hiding the content between the lines or among other footage is seen mostly by careful readers. According to Geddes and Zaller (1989), these readers are resistant to being 'manipulated' by pro-government arguments. Apart from not constituting any threat to domination, these kinds of resistance practices may also strengthen domination because they create the argument that 'there is still room for criticism'. For example, Bekir who worked as a news manager for nine years told me that he wanted to resign but this was rejected by the media outlet and he was asked to continue working. When I asked why he said:

> I was writing a little bit of critical but when we look at the general, I did not have much influence. They wanted me to continue working to be able to say 'We give space to criticism. Look, X is writing for us.' They wanted to save the image. (Bekir, personal communication, April 19, 2020) (see Appendix C, 65)

This is similar to the competitive authoritarian nature of the regime. If the media outlets were owned by the government completely then it would result in a questioning of the legitimacy of the regime because it presents itself as a democracy. However, when the media outlets pretend to give space to critical views, it

contributes to their image of being an impartial mainstream media outlet. Of course, I am not claiming that the strategies that are used by journalists are not valuable. We also cannot claim that they cannot be considered as resistance. These actions should be considered as resistance, but their existence may lead to different consequences than those intended

These evaluations should make us question what Mahir claimed at the very beginning of the paper. He says “Someone wants to control what you do. They cannot have control over your mind, your abilities, and the experience you gain” (Mahir, personal communication, April 5, 2020). Scott (1989) echoes Mahir and says that power has no capacity to control peoples’ minds. We see a similar logic from journalists when they look to justify their continued t working or their strategies to hide their political opinions. However, creation of this duality should be considered a mechanism of domination. Journalists are forced to seek daily resistance strategies instead of open forms of confrontation.

# CHAPTER 8

# CONCLUSION

Mainstream media outlets are one of the best examples of the domination of government and the economic elites as a daily practice. Because of their power to shape public opinion they have been under the scrutiny of the government. Economic elites, on the other hand, see these institutions as a profitable investment not only for the advertisement revenues but also for giving them a chance to enhance their relationship with the government and other business partners. This thesis analyzes Turkish mainstream media outlets as a case study because as a result of direct and indirect interventions these media outlets became particular areas of contention where we witness the domination of government.

My main aim in this thesis was to find an answer to this question: How does domination work inside Turkish mainstream media outlets? The neoliberal transformation of the Turkish media throughout the 1980s and the competitive authoritarian nature of the AKP's rule provide macro-level answers to this question. However, I argued that to fully understand the daily functioning of domination, we need to focus on journalists' experiences, along with the political and economic environment. Fernandez and Huey (2009) claim that to understand the mechanisms of domination, one should look at resistance too because of its being an inseparable part of domination. Based on interviews with 12 journalists working in eight different mainstream media outlets I tried to figure out the repression and domination mechanisms at work in the newsroom.

As a result of neoliberal transformations, we witness increasing media ownership concentration, the entrance of non-media conglomerates into the sector and the digitalization of the newspapers. With the entrance of non-media entrepreneurs into the sector, newspapers became more vulnerable to government pressure since they needed government licenses, privatization deals, and subsidies for their business (Yeşil, 2016). By punishing its opponents and rewarding its supporters, the AKP were able to use this vulnerability to strengthen its competitive authoritarian regime by utilizing state resources and opportunities (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2018). The experiences of journalists show that the effects of neoliberal transformation in the media outlets were quite noticeable in the daily lives of journalists, too. Furthermore, its impact served the domination of government in two ways. First, these policies increased the vulnerability of journalists against domination. Journalists bear a heavy workload and are subject to exacting time constraints. The reasons for this situation are the corporate logic that prevails in these institutions, which prioritizes profit and the rise of digitalization which forces journalists to compete with the speed of the Internet. They also have to cover news that gets more clicks. Sometimes this requires the covering of sensational news or the prioritizing of sensational headings, which pave the way for an abandoning of 'journalism ethics' as a daily practice. In such scenarios, what journalists cover and how they do it are subject to the scrutiny of the media outlet. Even though censorship is associated with government intervention, we see that the media outlets apply censorship in relation to various subjects, e.g. any criticism of the owner of the media conglomerate, other business partners or friends, and companies that provide advertisement revenues to the newspaper. While the working conditions of the journalists worsened day by day, the absence of unions limited their ability to resist. When they lost control over what they produced and

how they produced it, they started to see themselves as workers rather than journalists. Wendy Brown (2015) argues that under neoliberalism, people started to produce a specific form of rationality in which they started to evaluate their existence and their relationships by reducing them to their economic fundamentals. As in line with Brown's argument, journalists started to establish a bond with their profession by thinking of themselves as market agents.

Other than their increasing vulnerability, the government took advantage of certain mechanisms that were developed by the media outlets for establishing their mechanisms of domination. One example of this was the establishment of news agencies. When the cross-ownership in the media sector increased, instead of employing lots of journalists in each media outlet, the owners established news agencies such as the Doğan and İhlas news agencies. We should also add the state-owned Anadolu Agency to this list. The news coming from these agencies constitutes a huge proportion of what journalists cover. So, interventions in respect of these agencies affected what the newspapers were able to cover directly. The second example was the hierarchical structure within the newsrooms. This hierarchy was established for the daily functioning of the media outlet. The chain of command was top-down and every person was answerable to his/her superiors. This structure blurs the lines between resister and dominator, because those at the mid-point such as editors and news managers become both resister and dominator according to the context. Those who are subjected to domination start in their turn to dominate. This constitutes another answer to the question as to how domination works. We see that the chain of command facilitates domination by giving roles to each subject in its formation and distributing responsibility. Contrary to what Scott (1985) argues we need to understand domination and resistance as concepts that are intertwined as

Mitchell (1990), Lilja et al. (2017), Vinthagen and Johansson (2013), and Adnan (2007) argue. The hierarchical structure also enables government intervention in the media outlets. Most of the time, the bans are transferred to the journalists through this existing hierarchical structure. Furthermore, instead of replacing all journalists within the institution, replacing the media owner with a person who has close ties with the AKP is sufficient to establish domination over the media outlet. Actually, the experiences of the journalists show that at that point, the pressure coming from the media outlet and the government becomes indistinguishable which limits the resistance of the journalist. As a result, we start to see the characteristics of the competitive authoritarian regime within the media outlet.

During the AKP period, we see direct interventions in relation to the news both before and after publication. Demands by the AKP can include the lifting or changing of news already published, the collection of newspapers already printed, and the blocking of URLs to news We also see direct interventions before publication such as the sending of information notes, which regulate how much coverage should be afforded to certain items, which subjects can or cannot be covered, etc. In addition to this, we see interventions made via Ankara representatives of the newspaper, WhatsApp groups, meetings, or personal phone calls.

As a result of these interventions, we start to see the characteristics of the competitive authoritarian regime inside the media outlet in which we see a decline in the coverage devoted to the opposition parties and the groups in mainstream media outlets. News related to HDP, CHP, and İYİ Party is not covered or covered in a biased fashion. Of course, we do not see static censorship here. Instead, how these items are covered depends on the context of the political situation at that time. For

example, the coverage of HDP had changed before, during, and after the Peace Process. Only during the Peace Process was HDP able to receive positive coverage. Another factor that determines the bans on the opposition parties is elections. We see that especially just before elections the number of interventions increases. During contentious elections such as the November 2015 general elections and the March 2019 local elections, the amount of pressure increased further. At that time even writing the names of the candidates became problematic for journalists. This situation is clear proof of the competitive authoritarian nature of the regime. It shows that there is a huge effort underway to skew the field of competition by shaping how candidates are represented and how much coverage they receive. Even though there are elections regularly, not affording equal coverage to these parties and blocking coverage especially during election time shows that the elections are not fair (Levitsky & Way, 2010; Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016). Of course, the interventions are not limited to the opposition parties. The government targets any news that will call their position into question such as news related to the economy, its Syrian policy, and mega projects.

Among all these bans and pressures, journalists come up with strategies to overcome or to simply survive in this environment. Here, two forms of resistance strategies come to the fore. The first is open confrontation via a direct display of discontent with the status quo such as refusing to cover news that does not correlate with the journalist's s ethics. Another strategy that is used by journalists is organizing small or large-scale protests and these forms of strategy are mostly related to the general working conditions of journalists and include areas such as union rights rather than daily practices. However, choosing overt forms of resistance is for the most part too costly for journalists because the possibility of dismissal is high.

Journalists who cannot afford these risks end up adopting covert forms of resistance as Scott (1989) argues. However, it should be noted that they do not abandon the open forms of contestation totally and there is a constant back and forth between these two forms. As Simi and Futurell (2009) claim, there is no strict boundary between the hidden and open forms of resistance since both forms are performed naturally as a part of daily practices.

In disguised forms, journalists' main aim is to convey the message that is banned to the audience. Here, we see a wide range of strategies such as playing with words, a softening of the language, conveying the argument indirectly, using irony, using the power of visuals, etc. It should be noted that these strategies are developed as a result of the learning process. The journalists who learn which news will be banned or censored try to bypass such control mechanisms both within and outside of the newsroom. So, we see a constant dialogue between domination and resistance. For example, when they want to criticize the government, they do not insert that criticism into the headlines, but rather conceal it in the body of the text as to do otherwise would invite censorship.

There are two important things to note in this situation. Even though this learning process is vital for developing resistance strategies, it is also an indicator of how domination functions because we see that during this process external censorship turns into mechanism for self-censorship. Secondly, we see that using covert strategies means that these strategies will be seen only by the careful reader because they are designed in such a way as to evade the attention of those in control. This may be also an explanation of how domination works. It does not matter for the government whether they convince all of the people or not. Reaching the majority is sufficient for them to stay in power. Even giving space to a controlled form of

criticism can strengthen their domination. Actually, we see that media outlets use the strategy of employing dissident journalists so that they are able to say, 'We are not that controlling'. Similarly, this is the central argument of competitive authoritarianism. In this kind of regime, elections are held regularly, there are opposition parties and democratic institutions, but all of these various elements are weighed heavily in favor of the incumbent. The government does not need to abolish these institutions to stay in power. On the contrary, their controlled existence strengthens its legitimacy (Levitsky & Way, 2010). What we see inside the Turkish mainstream media outlets is a reflection of the characteristics of the regime.

Another fundamental thing that the experiences of journalists show us is their tendency to create two different realms while working in these media outlets. On the one hand there are their dissident personalities and on the other there is the pseudo-performative personality, the one created within the context of the domination that they are subject to. Within a work environment it is a role that they adopt. While applying self-censorship or hiding their political opinions from the media outlet, they are essentially engaged in a performance. It is similar to what Scott (1985) observes in the village in Malaysia. He claims that the existence of these two spheres is proof of the absence of hegemony by the dominator because we cannot talk about consensus in the context of these villagers. However, in contrast to Scott, I claim that the creation of these two different realms is proof that there is hegemony as Mitchell argues (1990). By setting the boundaries of resistance, by putting in place the rules of the 'game' and by making journalists internalize these restrictions and participate in the functioning of domination, domination ensures its survival.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWEES

| Nickname | Position | Employment Years | Experience in Journalism | Status | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Metin | Environment Editor | 5 years | 5 years | Still working | 24.03.2020 |
| Emre | Foreign News Editor | 16 months | 3 years | Still working | 26.03.2020 |
| Zeynep | Reporter | 18 months | 18 months | Resigned | 27.03.2020 |
| Aydın | Reporter | 21 years | 21 years | Still working | 04.04.2020 |
| Mahir | Editor | 7,5 years | 21 years | Dismissed | 05.04.2020 |
| Hande | Foreign News Editor | 3 years | 3 years | Still working | 05.04.2020 |
| Şeyma | Economy Editor | 9 years | 9 years | Still working | 06.04.2020 |
| Ulaş[3] | Reporter | - | 20 years | Resigned | 12.04.2020 |
| Deniz | News Manager | 8 years | 22 years | Dismissed | 12.04.2020 |
| Hakan | Editor | 5 years | 14 years | Dismissed | 15.04.2020 |
| Bekir | News Manager | 9 years | 21 years | Resigned | 19.04.2020 |
| Leyla | Reporter | 2 years | 4 years | Still working | 20.04.2020 |

[3] The interview was based on the experiences in multiple media outlets.

## APPENDIX B

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(1) Hangi medya kuruluşunda çalışıyorsunuz? Bu kurumda kaç yıldır çalışıyorsunuz? (*In which media outlet do you work? For how many years have you been working in that institution?*)

(2) Çalıştığınız gazetedeki görevinizi anlatabilir misiniz?
(*Can you describe your duty in the newspaper you work for?*)

(3) Haber yazma sürecinizi açıklayabilir misiniz?
(*Can you explain your news writing process?*)

(4) Haber odasını anlatabilir misiniz? Nasıl bir çalışma ortamınız var?
(*Can you describe the newsroom? What kind of work environment do you have?*)

(5) Haber yaparken karşılaştığınız zorluklar neler?
(*What are the difficulties you face while reporting?*)

(6) Haberlerde kesinlikle işlenmemesi gereken bir konu veya yaklaşım üzerinden uymanız gereken sözlü ya da yazılı birtakım kurumsal ilkeler var mı? Hangi konularda daha rahat haber yapıp hangi konularda zorluk yaşıyorsunuz?
(*Are there any written or verbal institutional principles that prevents you from covering an issue or taking a specific approach while you are writing a news? On*

*which topics do you report more comfortably and on which issues do you have difficulties?)*

(7) Yaptığınız bir haberin yayınlanmadığı veya büyük ölçüde değiştirildiği oldu mu? Eğer olduysa, neden?
(*Have you ever had a piece of news that is not published or substantially changed? If yes, what was the reason?*)

(8) Yayın yönetmeniyle haberinizde yapılan bir değişiklik üzerinden tartıştığınız oldu mu? Olduysa bu tartışma nasıl sonuçlandı?
(*Have you ever argued with a manager over a change in your news? If so, how did this discussion end?*)

(9) Mevcut hükümeti veya politikalarını doğrudan veya dolaylı bir şekilde onaylamayan bir habere imza attınız mı? Eğer yaptıysanız bu sebeple herhangi bir yaptırıma maruz kaldınız mı?
(*Have you cover news that did not approve the current government or its policies directly or indirectly? If you did, did you face with any sanctions because of that?*)

(10) Çalıştığınız süre boyunca medya sektöründe ve çalıştığınız iş yerinde bir dönüşüm oldu mu? Nasıl?
(*Has there been a transformation in the media sector and in your workplace during your employment? How?*)

(11) Bu dönüşüm size yansıdı mı? Haber yapmaya yaklaşımınızı değiştirdi mi?
(*Is this transformation reflected on you? Has it changed your approach to covering news?*)

(12) Hiç mesleğinizden veya çalıştığınız kurumdan ayrılmak istediniz mi? İstediyseniz bunun sebepleri neydi? Eğer kurumdan ayrıldıysanız ayrılma sebebiniz neydi?
(*Have you ever wanted to leave your profession or the institution you work for? If you wanted, what were the reasons for it? If you left the institution, what was your reason for leaving?*)

# APPENDIX C

## EXCERPTS IN THE ORIGINAL TURKISH

(1) “Haber yöneticileri çok yetenekli ve bilgiliydi. Odasının önünden geçerken, kendimi şöyle hissediyordum: Sanki galaksinin tüm bilgisine sahip bir kozmos var ve ışığı yayılıyor. Açıkçası, şu anda yolun kenarında bir çöp yığını gördüğümde ne hissedersem onu hissediyorum. Hatta daha da kötüsü.”

(2) “Özellikle, bu kurumda iki dönüm noktası oldu. Biri Fethullahçıların yönetim pozisyonlarına atandığı dönemdi. İkinci dönem ise 2016 sonrasında Fethullahçılardan kurtulmaya çalıştıkları zamandı.”

(3) “İş yükü dayanılacak gibi değil. Çok yoğun bir tempo var ve insanın yapamayacağı yükte sana iş veriyorlar. Senden istenenleri tamamlamaya çalışıyorsun ama bunun bir sonu yok çünkü her seferinde daha fazlasını istiyorlar.”

(4) “Çok fazla haber üretmemiz bekleniyor. Bir gün içerisinde üç, dört farklı yere gidiyorum. Çoğunlukla haber metinlerini yolda yazıyorum. Aksi takdirde yetişmesinin imkânı yok.”

(5) “Mesleğe başladığım 199 yılında gazeteler çok büyüktü. Diyelim ki Sabah ve Hürriyet. Sadece İstanbul servislerinde 150 kişi çalışıyordu. Bütün hastanelerde ve adliyelerde, en az birer muhabirleri vardı. Böyle bir haber yağıyordu. Medya sahipliğinin yoğunlaşmasıyla o farklılaştı. Büyük haber merkezleri yerine haber ajansları kuruldu.”

(6) “Dijitalleşme sürecine girdiğimizden beri çok daha hızlı bir yayın akışındayız ve bir haberin yüklenmesi için gece 12'ye kadar beklemek gibi bir durumumuz yok eğer özel ambargolu bir şey değilse. En hızlı şekilde web'e nasıl koyarız bunun üzerinde çalışıyoruz. Ben eski ekol gazeteciliği daha çok seven biri olduğum için bunun taraftarı değilim. Ama kapitalizm kazandığı için ne kadar tık alabiliriz o mantıkla hareket ediyorsun. Sürekli breaking geçmek lazım. İş tanımıma bu eklendi. Erdoğan konuşuyor mesela direk kulaklıkları takıp yazıyorum ki breaking olarak onu verebilelim.”

(7) “Eğer bu tarz haberler yaparsan direk kovulursun. Bazen hatta insanlar şakalaşıyor. Taksim’de tüp patladığında insanlar ‘Haberini yapsam mı zaten biraz sıkılmıştım çalışmaktan’ diyor. Durumla dalga geçiyoruz artık.”

(8) “Önceden reklamları seçme şansımız vardı, yerimizin olmadığını söylüyorduk. Şimdi gazete para kazanmadığı için ne derlerse yapıyoruz. Onlar da bunu kullanıyor. Mesela BİM şu anda medyanın en önemli sponsoru. Tam iki sayfa reklam verir. Gazete gelirinin yüzde 15’i.  BİM'in aleyhine olmasını bırak BİM'in istemediği bir haberi koymak da mümkün değil. Hatta şöyle bir örnek duydum Sabah gazetesinden. Marketlerde fiyat artırıyorlardı. Haberi koyarken BİM’in rafının fotoğrafını koymuşlar. Bunun için Sabah'a bile ihtar kestiler. Olay sonrasında bize dediler ki ‘Onların raflarının fotoğrafını koymayın sakın yoksa ilanı kesiyorlar.”

(9) “Artık orada çalışanın gazeteci kendisini gazeteciyim diye tanımlamak yerine Doğan grubunun ya da Turkuaz grubunun çalışanıyım diye tanımlıyor. Bu aslında çok sembolik bir gösterge. Çünkü aynı zamanda o gazeteciliğin etik değerlerinden

mesleğin gerekliliklerinden falan da kopuşun göstergesi. O bir kurumla özdeşlik hali anlamına geliyor.”

(10) “O insanlar, ‘solculuklarını’, dünya görüşlerini, hatta sonuç olarak ahlaki duruşlarını gazetecilik yaparken bir yana koyuyordu. Ofise girerken, bu özelliklerini bir palto gibi vestiyere bırakıyor, sonra çıkarken yine üstlerine alıyorlardı. Memleket ve dünya meseleleri konuşulurken solculuklarını kuşanıyor, işlerini yaparken ise o memleket meselelerinden birini yaratacak, yeniden üretecek biçimde davranıyorlardı.”

(11) “Çalışanlardan bağımsız olarak değerlendirirsek gazete çizgisi itibariyle bir siyasi partiye yakınlıktan ziyade siyasi baskıya boyun eğmiş, günü kurtarmaya çalışan bir gazete. Bir şekilde siyasi borazana dönüşmüş artık yayın kurumundan çok yayın organına dönüşmüş bir gazete.”

(12) “Henüz çalışanlar arasında AKP’lilerle karşılaşmadım. Ya da sadece birkaç kişi var. Yöneticilerimden biri koyu CHP’li. Bizi yurtdışında temsil ediyor. Bazen şaşırıyorum. Birkaç kez 'Güveniyorsunuz ona değil mi?' diye sorduğum oldu. Çünkü garip bir durum.

(13) “Bu gazetede en şaşırtıcı olan ise şu: Bu kadar zeki, demokratik ve solcu görünen insan bir araya geldiğinde böyle muhafazakâr bir gazete yapıyor. Bu, hala anlayamadığım bir şey. Elbette ki kapitalizm. Tabii ki onlar [medya kuruluşunun sahibine atıfta bulunarak] size parayı veriyor ve istedikleri gibi bir gazete yapmanız

gerekiyor. Bana ilginç gelen, bu insanların herhangi bir inisiyatif kullanabilecekleri fırsatı da kaçırmaları.”

(14) “Ben 1999’dan bu yana hiç sendikanın yetkili olduğu toplu sözleşme olan bir yerde çalışmadım. Çünkü zamanında Aydın Doğan sendikasızlaştırıyor. Teklifler yapıyor maaşlara ekstra zam yapma gibi, tehditler yapıyor sendikadan ayrılmayanı işten atacağız gibi. Bunları yaparken de insanları istifa ettiriyor. Ve 1990larda sendika yetkisini tamamen kaybediyor.”

(15) “Bireysel olarak sendika üyesi olabilirsin ama bu biraz manevi tatmin boyutundadır. Çünkü sendikanın anlamı olabilmesi için toplam çalışan sayısı üzerinden bir örgütlülük sayısı gerekiyor. Ben gazetecilik dönemimde iki kere gördüm. Birinde Sabah gazetesi TMSF’ye devredildiğindeydi. Sabahtakiler devlete devrolmasını fırsat bilip örgütlenmeye çalışmışlardı. Ama iki ayrı şirket açıp gazetecileri böldüler sendikalaşmayı engellemek için. Diğeri de Hürriyet’teydi. Toplu işten çıkarmayla sonuçlandı. Arkadaşlarım var sendika üyesi olan ama bir karşılığı yok.”

(16) “Gazetecilik öyle filmlerde anlatıldığı gibi değil. Birisi bütün gerçekliği aramak için sırtına çantasını vurur, dünyayı dolaşır ve herkesi şaşkına düşürecek bir şey bulur, onu yayınlamaya çalışır falan. Gerçekte durum böyle değil. Orada bir haber fabrikası var. O haber fabrikasının müdürleri var, ustabaşıları var, işçileri var. Orada işleyen bir bant var. Onun her aşaması birinin kontrolünde. Böyle yani, hakikat tarafı bu ötekisi değil.”

(17) “Cehenneme giden yol iyi niyet taşlarıyla döşenmiştir denir ya bu durum tam o. Çünkü sen belli şeyleri biliyorsun sana tebliğ edilmiş, onu koyduğun onu koyduğun zaman biliyorsun ki yayın yönetmeninin başına büyük bir iş gelecek. Diyorsun ki lan yayın yönetmeni de benim arkadaşım sonuçta. Yayınlarsam onun başına patlayacak. Kendini önemsemesen de onu önemsiyorsun bir süre sonar. Haberin geri döneceğini ve sonuçlarının ne olacağını biliyorsun. O yüzden de müdahale ediyorsun. Evet, müdahale ettim. Başkalarının haberlerine sansür uyguladım. Otosansür de uyguladım. Şimdi bunlar hepsi itiraf.”

(18) “Sonuçta bir kişi oturuyor ve bütün haberleri yapmıyor. Değişik ellerden geçiyor. En son gazeteciyi denetlemekle sorumlu olan bir yönetici var. Onu kabul ederek oraya oturmuş. Yazsam da geçmeyeceğini biliyorum. Zaten öncesinde çektikleri bir kırmızı çizgi var ve sen de o çizgiyi geçmeye yeltenmiyorsun boşa emek kaybı, kimsenin görmeyeceği anlamsız. Şimdi anlatmak için bir anı biriktirmiş olursun anca.

(19) “Türkiye hiçbir zaman demokratik bir ülke olmadı. İnsanlar övse de gazeteciliğe başladığım 1990'lar Türkiye'deki en karanlık dönemlerden biriydi. Kürt sorunu, darbe döneminin hemen ardından inanılmaz bir boyuta ulaştı. Pek çok bilinmeyen saldırganın, insan hakları ihlallerinin olduğu bir dönemdi. Solcular ve LGBTİ + gündemde değildi. İnanılmaz derecede karanlık, inanılmaz derecede kötü, inanılmaz derecede baskıcı. O vesayet rejiminde baskı, siyasi güçten çok ordudan geliyordu. Yine de bugün ile karşılaştırırsak daha doğru haber yapabildiğin ve dertlerini daha iyi anlatabildiğin bir dönemdi. Bugün 1990'ları aratan bir seviyeye ulaştı. Bugün

yaşadığımız şey, İslami gücün giderek güçlendiği ve insanlar üzerindeki baskıyı artırdığı bir dönemdir.”

(20) “Bizzat beni aramıyorlardı. Genel yayın Yönetmeni'ni arıyorlardı. Konuşmalar onun üzerinden gidiyordu. Bir de medya komiserleri var. Ankara temsilcileridir bunlar genel olarak. Ankara’dakiler bu temsilcilere fısıldar. Derler ki ‘Beyefendi-Tayyip’e her zaman öyle söylerler- bu haberden rahatsız oldu, Beyefendi bu habere çok kızdı’. Bazen de patron üzerinden gelir. Aydın Doğan çok defa arayıp ‘Siz ne yapıyorsunuz? Başımı belaya sokuyorsunuz. Bakın AKP'den aradılar beni, şöyle dediler böyle dediler’ demiştir. Bu şekilde sürüyle müdahaleleri oldu.”

(21) “Benim dahil olmadığım WhatsApp grupları var bunların. Orada çok fazla muhabbet dönüyor. Bazen belirli konularla ilgili yasaklar buraya Ankara'dan rapor edilir ve baş editör bu mesajı iç WhatsApp gruplarına aktarır. Biz de dolaylı olarak kısıtlamaları öğreniriz.”

(22) “Bunlar bir WhatsApp ağı geliştirdiler. Medya şirketinin sahibi haberi doğrudan grup üzerinden medyanın başlındaki kişiye gönderiyor. Başındaki kişi de alttaki WhatsApp grubuna, sonra da editörlere ve muhabirlere.”

(23) “Saray’dan bilgilendirme notları gelir hemen hemen her gün. Bilgilendirme notları. Bu haberleri böyle şu haberleri böyle yapmalıyız diye. Düşün saraydan geliyor, saray damgalı antetli kağıttır. Politik bir olay olduğunda, o haberi nasıl işlememiz gerektiğini söyler.”

(24) “Bir bakan açıklama yapmıştı. Haddi olmayan bir konuşmaydı. Haberini yapıp yapmayacağımı sordum. Haber odasındakiler yapabileceğimi söyledi. Yayınlandıktan üç saat sonra yukarıdan haber içeriğini değiştirmemiz gerektiği emiri geldi.”

(25) “Başbakan takibi yapabiliyorduk. Ben Ecevit’in İstanbul’daki programların takip ettim. Gazetecilere bir sınırlama yoktu. Beklersin, uygun anı bulursan sorunu sorarsın. Cevap verir veya vermez. Koruma ordusu önünü kesmez, arabayı önüne kırmazlar. AKP ile birlikte bunlar normalleşti. Bir belediye hakkında bile haber yapmak süzgece takılmaya başladı.”

(26) “Aydın Doğan baskılara bir noktaya kadar direniyordu. Hakkını yememek lazım. Bir yandan işlerini kovalıyor, yeni ihaleler almaya çalışıyordu ve bir yandan da merkez medya olarak kalmak istiyordu. Hükümetin bir yayın organına dönüşmek istemiyordu. Bu bakımdan akıllıydı.”

(27) “Bir dönem gazete Aydın Doğan’dayken yoğun bir baskı vardı. Yazdığı hatalı bir cümle yüzünden dahi işini kaybeden arkadaşlarımız oldu. Bu tamamen hükümetin Aydın Doğan'a yönelik baskısının ve onun da hükümetin gözünde “kötü çocuk” olmama arzusunun bir sonucuydu. Şimdi ise bambaşka bir hikaye var. Artık gazetecilik yapmamız beklenmiyor. Seçtiğimiz çoğu konu yayınlanmadan önce sansürleniyor.”

(28) “Demirören’in satın almasından sonra gazete hükümetin bir yayın organına dönüştü. Eskiden talimat vermek o kadar kolay değilken şimdi gazete Saray’dan

gelen talimatlarla şekillenmeye başladı. Aslında bu otoriter bir rejimin medyasının şekillenmeye başladığı, başkanlık sisteminin şekillendirdiği bir süreç."

(29) "Doğan döneminde, baskılara rağmen, gazetenin iç sayfalarına ve hatta ilk sayfalarına hak temelli haberler vermeye devam ettik. Ancak, gazete el değiştirdikten sonra, suya sabuna dokunmamaya başlandı. Haberleri siyasetten uzaklaştırmaya başladık."

(30) "Çözüm süreci vardı. O dönemde şehit cenazelerini gazeteye koyamamamız istenirdi. Bunu yaptığın zaman 'Sen barış sürecine karşı mısın?' derlerdi. Savaş yeniden başladığında da neden savaşı destekleyen yayın yapmadığımızı sorarlardı."

(31) "HDP haberlerinin yasaklandığı zamanları hatırlıyorum. 'HDP yayınlara çıkarılmayacak, HDP haberde görünmeyecek' dendiği oldu. Diğer yandan, çözüm süreci döneminde de 'buna muhalif olan şeyleri görmeyeceksiniz' dendiği oldu. Bunlar sabit şeyler değil. Değişiyor. Daha genel bir zamana oturtmadan çözüm sürecinde tıkandığı, yürümediği, yolunda gittiği evreler vardı. O evrelerde değişen dayatmalar geliyordu ve bize şu haberleri almayalım diye söyleniyordu."

(32) "Normalde bir sayfada Erdoğan koyuyorsak diğer sayfada Kılıçdaroğlu'nu kullanırdık. Bir seçim zamanı Kılıçdaroğlu'nun manşet olamayacağını söyleyen bir talimat geldi. Sonrasında Kılıçdaroğlu Erdoğan'ın altında küçük haber olmaya başladı."

(33) “İstanbul seçimini Ekrem İmamoğlu kazanınca ‘İmamoğlu'nun resmi birinci sayfalarda büyük olmayacak, küçük olacak’ dediler. İstanbul'un seçimini kazanmış adam ama oraya fotoğrafını Binali Yıldırım ile eşit boyda koyduk.”

(34) “İmamoğlu seçiliyor, mazbatasını alıyor. İstihbarattan gene editörlük yapan bir kadın montaj servisine gidiyor. Bizzat bunu yaşayan arkadaşlardan duydum. İmamoğlu'nun mazbata alma görüntüsü hiçbir şekilde kullanılmayacak diyor. Sonra gene emin olamıyor, ya da Ankara ile bir konuşma mı geçiyor bilmiyorum, tekrar geliyor ben ham görüntüyü sildim arşivden diyor. Büyük ihtimal şu anda görüntü haber arşivinde İmamoğlu'nun mazbata alma görüntüsü yok. Bu gerçekten dibin dibi.”

(35) “Suriye Rejimi, amiyane tabirle düşman. Öyle olunca son zamanlarda Türk askerlerinin vurulması üzerine rejimden çok açıklama geldi. ‘Erdoğan yalancı’, ‘Türkiye yalan söylüyor’, ‘esas onlar insanları öldürüyorlar’ diye. Hiçbirini girmedik. Haber değeri taşıyor mu, tabii ki taşıyor. Ama ne Türk basını gördü ne biz gördük.”

(36) “Bu ülke ekonomik kriz yaşadı ve bu haber olmadı. Dolar 7.24 liraya çıktı ve biz bunu ilk sayfadan veremedik. Enflasyonla ilgili haberleri de veremedik. 1990’larda olsa bu bir manşet olurdu. Şimdi ekonomik kriz demeye dahi iznimiz yok.”

(37) “Ekonomik kriz yazamazsınız. Onun yerine ekonomideki dalgalanma ya da kurdaki artışın nedeniyle gibi kelimeleri yumuşatarak söylersiniz. Bir dönem zam

yazmamıza izin verilmedi mesela. ‘Zam yerine güncelleme yazacaksınız’ diye bir emir geldi. Bu ekonomi haberleri için bir mihenktir.”

(38) “Biz Cumhurbaşkanlığı Sarayı diyorduk bilerek. Sonuçta orası bir saray ve biz de bir saray rejimi altında yaşıyoruz. İlk başta Saray ismini de kendileri koymuştu ama tepki çekince adını Cumhurbaşkanlığı Külliyesi’ne çevirdiler. Bunun dışında yerine atıfta bulunduğumuz zaman Beştepe ismini de kullanabiliyoruz.”

(39) “Ali Koç basın açıklaması yaptı, Fenerbahçe'nin başkanı. Alt metinde siyasetçilerin Trabzonspor'u desteklediğini ve bunun eşit mücadele hakkını yok ettiğini söylüyordu. Açıklama Hürriyet gazetesinde basıldı. Sonrasında gazetenin basılan bütün kopyalarını geri topladılar. Gazeteleri imha ettiler ve yeniden dağıttılar Berat Albayrak kızdı diye. Çünkü Trabzospor’u destekleyen oydu.”

(40) “Sonuçta robot değilsin. Birileri senin yaptığın işi denetlemek istiyor. Senin zihnin, yetilerin, kazandığın deneyim üzerinde bir kontrol sahibi olamaz. Dolayısıyla insan faktörü her yerde dinamik bir şekilde bir yol buluyor. Sen gazeteci olarak meslekte ağırlıkla şu güdüye sahipsin. Bu bir iş, burada bir hakikat var ve bu hakikatin duyurulması gerekiyor. Yapman gereken bu, bunun üstünü örtmek değil. Üstünü örtmenin kaçınılmaz bir parçası olduğun bir yapı içindesin eyvallah ama işte ne yapabilirsin, neyi söyleyebilirsin, nasıl örtük bir şekilde dile getirebilirsin diye metinler ve görseller üzerinde cambazlık yapıyorsun. Ha, bu çaba birisine ulaşıyor mu onu bilemem.”

(41) “Ben bu haberi yapmayı reddettim çünkü doğru değildi. Amaç hükümeti övmekti. Bu tartışmanın sonucunda beni kovdular. Sonra o haberi birine yaptırdılar ve habere de benim imzamı koydular! Gazeteci bir habere imzasını koymak istemiyorsa onu zorlayamazsınız veya haberi yapması için onu zorlayamazsınız. Ben dava açmadığım için onu gündeme getiremedim.”

(42) “Baskı özümsendi. Bana bir haber yollayıp bunu yapmamı söylüyorlar. Hayır diyorum. Yöneticilerle tartışıyorum ve yapmayı reddediyorum. Benimle aynı pozisyonda olan insanlar neden sorguluyorsun ki diyor. Bir kere kavga ediyorum, iki kere kavga ediyorum ama bir yerden sonra sürekli sorun çıkaran insan olmak da can sıkıcı oluyor ve kabul ediyorum.

(43) “Bir kadın hastanenin ihmali yüzünden çocuğunu kaybetti. Kadın hastaneye dava açtı. Dava İl Sağlık Müdürlüğü'ne yükseldi, ancak burada reddedildi. Bu haberin İl Sağlık Müdürlüğü'nün başını belaya sokabileceğini biliyorum. Dava dosyam var ve bu haberi yapmak istiyorum. Ancak hangi haberleri yapacağımızı tartıştığımız toplantılarda teklifim her zaman reddedildi. Tekrar tekrar gündeme aldım. Muhtemelen kabul edene kadar teklif etmeye devam edeceğim.

(44) “Bir de zorlayıcı olmak ve o haberi yöneticinin önüne sürekli getirmek zorundasın. Ben muhabir arkadaşlara da bunu söylerim hep. En kötü dönemde sen zorlayıcı olmazsan o haberin hiçbir şekilde çıkma ihtimali olmaz.”

(45) “Mesela haber geliyor: ‘PKK’lı terörist bir kadına tecavüz etti.’ Yöneticim bu haberi yapmamı istiyor. Ben de haberin yapılmasına karşı çıkmıyorum ama ‘ben

yapmam’ diyorum. Kendisi isterse yapabilir yani. Benim elimden böyle bir haber çıkamaz. Böyle durumlarda bazen yapılmadan kalıyor bazen de başkası yapıyor.”

(46) “Yanlış bulduğum veya yapmak istemediğim bir haberi yapmamı istedikleri zaman yapmak istemediğimi söylüyorum ve onlar da haberi başka bir gazeteciye veriyor. Bazen kavgadan kaçınmak için yalan söylüyorum. 'Şu anda bu haberle uğraşıyorum, diğer habere başkası bakabilirse daha iyi olur’ diyorum.”

(47) “Gazeteciler arasındaki sendika üyelerinin sayısını uzun süre artırmaya çalıştık. Bunun için kurum içindeki gazetecilere broşür dağıttık. Arkadaşlarımızı katılmaya ikna ettik. Bu süreç boyunca yöneticiler bize vazgeçmemizi söyledi. Sendika üyelerinin sayısı onlar için tehlikeli bir büyüklüğe ulaştığında, ben de dahil olmak üzere sendikalaşan ve sendika üye sayısını artırmaya çalışan insanlar görevden alındı. Şu anda açtığımız davalarla mücadelemizi sürdürüyoruz.”

(48) “Sendikalaşmanın hak olduğunu esprili bir şekilde anlatmaya çalışan afişler asmaya başladım. İş yeriyle alay ediyordu. Ben asıyordum, onlar kaldırıyordu. Hatta güvenlik görevlileri kaçta çıkacağımı soruyordu. Herhalde onlara izlemek için talimat vermişler. ‘Sendikacı’ diye isim takmışlar. Yemekhaneye, ortak kata astıklarım yarım saat bir saat içinde indiriliyordu. Üst kata astıklarım gün boyu kalıyordu. Bireysel bir eylemdi. Zaten onu kitleselleştirmek istemedim. Çünkü biliyorum herkesin koşulları farklı. Bütün o saçmalıkları bilerek çalışmak zorunda olan, atılmayı göze alamayacak birçok gazeteci var. Çok defalarca yapmamamı istediler. Uyarılara rağmen devam ettim.”

(49) “Benim ödemek zorunda olduğum bir kira faturalarım, sürdürmek zorunda olduğum bir hayatım var. Çalışarak yapabiliyorum bunu. Hem neden ayrılayım da tazminatım ceplerinde kalsın? Sonuçta ben oraya sekiz yıla yakın emek vermişim.

(50) “Sürekli işten ayrılmayı düşünüyorum, ancak şu anki maaşımı verebilecek bir yayın şirketi yok. Açık söz edeyim, 5000 Türk lirası alıyorum. Daha önce gelen teklifler yaklaşık 3500’dü. Bir de şu an yaptığım bir haber 5 milyon tık alıyor. Başka bir kurumda böyle bir olasılık yok.”

(51) “Çıkmak istiyorum ama bir yandan şunun da farkındayım maddi ve manevi olarak büyük ihtimal medyada en iyi yerlerdeyim. Maddi olarak öyle olduğumu biliyorum. Manevi olarak da dediğim gibi arkadaş ortamım çok iyi bunun çok artısı var. Bazı insanları görmeye o kadar alıştım ki onları görmemek çok tuhaf geliyor. O alışkanlığı bozmak çok zor. Hem bana verdikleri paraya ihtiyacım var hem de öğrenecek bazı şeylerim var oradan. Öğrenme sürecim hala devam ediyor.”

(52) “Zaman zaman ayrılmayı düşünüyorum ama gazeteciliği de çok seviyorum. Başka bir yerde devam edebilirim belki, evet ama burası benim gelişmem için inanılmaz bir çaba gösterdi. Bir de diğer medya kuruluşlarında baskının çok daha yoğun olduğunu duyuyorum. Çok kötü koşullarda çalışıyorlar. Daha az para, daha çok baskı.”

(53) “Burada insanların büyük bir kısmının birikmiş tazminatları var. İşlerini değiştirememesinin en büyük sebebi bu diye düşünüyorum. Bir de eskiden 15, 20 sene önce a gazetesinden ayrılıp b gazetesine gidip işinizi orada devam

edebiliyordunuz. Ama bu kutuplaşmada pek gidebileceğiniz bir yer yok. Eğer a tarafındaysanız a tarafındaki gazetelerden birine gitmeniz lazım. B'deyseniz gene aynı şekilde çünkü karşılıklı bir alışveriş çok mümkün değil."

(54) "Meslekten zaten çoktan ayrıldık da. Fiilen kurumdan ayrılmayı şu anda istememin sebebi onları sevindirecek olması. Bir pürüz eksilmiş olur. Onlar zaten bizi göndermek için iştahla bakarken, onların işini böyle kolaylaştırmaya hiç niyetim yok. Şartlar böyle devam ederse buradayım."

(55) "Ertesi gün, gazeteler yayınlandığında hemen diğer gazeteleri toplarsınız. Gazetenizde X Gazetesinde yayınlanan bir haberin neden bulunmadığını açıklamalısınız. Veya haftalık tirajınız diğer gazetelerden daha fazlaysa, o hafta iyi bir ruh halinde olursunuz. Ertesi hafta tüm gerilim tekrar başlar."

(56) "Hükümeti suçlayan bazı haberlerin yayınlanmasının ihtimali yok. Ama kimi haberler var ki eğer düzgün bir şekilde yazarsan eleştiriye yer verebilirsin. İfadeleri biraz yumuşatarak vermek gerekiyor. Mesela diyelim ki bir kişi "Mevcut hükümet işçi cinayetlerinin başlıca sorumlusudur" dedi. Bunu yazarken "Yaşanan işçi cinayetlerini değerlendiren X, hükümetin de bunları önlemek konusunda sorumluluğu olduğunu söyledi" şeklinde yazıyorum."

(57) "Tabii ki çıkıp slogan atar gibi kör göze parmak ifadeler kullanırsan mutlaka bir yerde takılır çünkü her yerde bekçi Murtaza tipli kişiler var. Asıl zaten benim için onların arasından slalom yaparak kendi sözümü ekrana taşıyabilmek hem güzeldi hem eğlenceliydi. Çünkü dil ile uğraşıyorsun. Söylemek istediğini öyle bir

söylüyorsun ki anlamak isteyecek olan anlıyor ama takılabilecek yerlerden de geçiyorsun.”

(58) “Ekonomik kriz ve yoksulluk var demek yerine soğan üzerinden haber yapıyorduk. Soğan hakkında bir haber yapıp onu manşete koyuyorduk. Krizden bahsetmiyorduk ama diyorduk ki soğan fiyatı altının fiyatını geçti.”

(59) “Haber içerisinde eleştiriye yer veremiyorsun. Hem objektif de olman gerekiyor. Ama başka birinin eleştirisini yazmak çok daha güvenli. Eğer karşı çıkarlarsa ‘konuştuğum kişi böyle dedi ben ne yapabilirim?’ diye kendini savunabilirsin. Tabii ‘O kişiye neden yer verdin?’ diye de sorabilirler.”

(60) “Biz gazeteciler gerçeği farklı şekilde anlatmanın deneyimini oluşturduk. Mesela öyle bir fotoğraf seçiyorsun ki Erdoğan Saray’da duruyor, uzaktan da halk geçiyor. O fotoğrafı kocaman kullanıyorsun, başlığı da onun sözünden veriyorsun. Fotoğrafla anlatıyorsun derdini. Direk söyleyemiyorsun çünkü.”

(61) “Mesela Millet Bahçesi haberleri. Haberin içerisinde projenin kente faydalarını ve ne kadar Yeşil bir proje olduğunu anlatıyorum. Hükümetin de söylediği şekilde yani. Ama fotoğraf olarak betona boğulmuş parktan manzaraları koyuyorum.”

(62) “Sürekli sınırlarımızı öğrenmek için deniyoruz. Mesela bir süre sonra anlıyorsun ki bir haberi büyük koyarsan tamamen çıkartıyorlar gazeteden. O yüzden küçük boyutta koyuyorsun ki gazetede kalsın. Bir süre bunu yapıyorsun. Ertesi gün bakıyorsun ki onu da çıkartmışlar. O zaman yeni bir yol deniyorsun. Gerçeği

anlatmaktan vazgeçmek o kadar kolay değil. Sansüre direniş yöntemleri her zaman oldu."

(63) "Yeni havalimanını su bastığında görüntülerini yayınladık. Ama 'İstanbul Havalimanı'nı su bastı' şeklinde veremedik. Ayazağa'da birkaç yeri daha su basmıştı. O görüntüleri verdik, aralarında da İstanbul Havalimanı'nın görüntülerini kullandık. Uzmanlar, sebebin havalimanını göller üzerine inşa etmek olduğunu söylüyor ama bu kadarını söyleyemeyiz."

(64) "Çaba gösteriyoruz. Okuyucu dikkatliyse bunların (stratejiler) farkına varabiliyor. Ama okur, medya grupları ve toplum çok fazla zırh giyip de kılıç kalkan karşı karşıya geldiği zaman bir amaç kalmıyor. Kimseye ulaşmıyor. İnsanlar o zaman 'Burası bize hitap eden bir yer değil, başka bir yeri okuyalım' diye düşünüyor. Bir kısımın da zaten dikkatleri yok, ilgileri yok. Bu yanı da var."

(65) "Ben biraz eleştirel yazıyordum ama genele baktığımızda çok fazla etkim yoktu. 'Eleştiriye yer veriyoruz. Bakın, X bizim için yazıyor' demeye devam edebilmek için benim devam etmemi istediler. Görüntüyü kurtarmak istiyorlardı."

(66) "Gazeteden çıkması için uğraşıyordum elbette ama baktım hiç imkanı yok ve başıma iş açacak o zaman başka gazetelerde takma isim kullanarak yayınlatıyordum. Birkaç kez de elime bir yolsuzluğu anlatacak bir bilgi geçtiğinde bunun haberini yapabilecek gazeteci arkadaşlara gönderdiğim oldu. Siz bari yapın diye."

(67) “Önümdeki kişinin hangi siyasi görüşe sahip olduğunu biliyorum. Ama söylemiyor. Ben de öyle. Biz sadece iş yapıyoruz. Genellikle konuşmayız. Tabii ki yakın arkadaşsak, konuşuyorum ama herkesle ya da bir yöneticiyle konuşmuyorum.”

(68) “Sosyal medya paylaşımlarımda çok dikkatliyim. İncelenip incelenmediklerini bilmiyorum, çünkü kimseyi eklemiyorum. Benim kişisel tercihim. Eğer çok yakın olduğum biri varsa onu ekleyebilirim, onunla ilgili bir sorun yok. Aksi mümkün değil. Polemik yaratacak bir şey yazabilirim ve birisi gelip “Böyle bir şey gördüm, lütfen sil’ diyebilir. Böyle bir konuşmadan hoşlanmayacağım için de görmelerine izin vermiyorum.”

(69) “Yıllar içinde geliştirdiğim bir refleks. Bu benim genel tavrım. Biri bir şey söylediğinde hemen aksini söylüyorum. Küçük bir konuşmada da bunu yapıyorum. Arkadaşlarım ‘trolleme lütfen’ demeye başladı. Hayati bir strateji olarak bunu geliştirdim. Bunun dışında düşüncelerimi sarkastik bir şekilde söylüyorum böylece emin olamıyorlar. Haber odasında hayatta kalma stratejisi.”

APPENDIX D

MEDIA OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE

| Company | Owners | Newspaper | TV | Online | News Agency | Non-media business |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Albayrak Group | Ahmet Albayrak (6.4%), Bayram Albayrak (6.4%), Nuri Albayrak (6.4%), Kazım Albayrak (6.4%), Mustafa Albayrak (6.4%), Muzaffer Albayrak (6.4%) | Yeni Şafak | TV Net, Tempo Türk TV | Yenisafak.com.tr, tvnet.tv.tr, gazetemanset.com | | construction, energy, mining, logistics, tourism, transportation |
| Ciner Group | Turgay Ciner (100%) | | Show TV, Habertürk, Bloomberg HT, Show Max, Show Turk | bloomberght.com, haberturk.com, businessht.com.tr, hthayat.com | | energy, mining, construction, medical, tourism, ports, sea and air transport, insurance, glass manufacturing |
| Demirören Group | Erdoğan Demirören (40.4%), Yıldırım Demirören (12.4%), Fikret T. Demirören (12.4%), Meltem O. Demirören (12.4%) | Milliyet, Hürriyet, Posta, Fanatik | CNN Türk, Kanal D | milliyet.com.tr, milliyet.tv, gazetevatan.com, skorer.com, hurriyet.com.tr, dha.com.tr, posta.com.tr | Demirören News Agency | energy, manufacturing, tourism, ports, construction, education |
| Doğuş Group | Filiz Şahenk (30.4%), Deniz Şahenk (17.3%), Ferit Faik Şahenk (32.5%) | | NTV, Star TV, NTV Spor<br>KRAL TV<br>Kral Pop TV | ntv.com.tr, ntvpara.com, ntvspor.net<br>startv.com.tr<br>tvyo.com<br>kralmuzik.com.tr | | Automotive, construction, tourism, real estate, energy, food and beverages, retail |

| Company | Owners | Newspaper | TV | Online | News Agency | Non-media business |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | NTV Avrupa<br>Eurostar | vogue.com.tr<br>glamour.com.tr<br>gq.com.tr<br>cntraveller.com.tr<br>nationalgeographic.com.tr | | |
| Estetik Yayıncılık | Burak Akbay (100%) | Sozcu Gazetesi, Açık Mert Korkusuz Spor Gazetesi, Gırgır Dergisi | | sozcu.com.tr, korkusuz.com.tr, amkspor.com.tr | | |
| Hayat Görsel Yayıncılık | Zekeriya Karaman (25%), Mustafa Çelik (25%), İsmail Karahan (25%), Zahid Akman (25%) | | Kanal 7, Kanal 7 Avrupa, Ülke TV, Ülke Haber | haber7.com, izle7.com | | |
| İhlas Group | Ahmet Mücahid Ören (10.6%), Floating Capital (86.4%) | Türkiye Gazetesi | TGRT Haber TV, TGRT Belgesel TV | ihlas.net | İhlas News Agency | construction, real estate, mining, healthcare, education |
| Kalyon | Ömer Faruk Kalyoncu (100%) | Sabah, Takvim Fotomaç, Yeni Asır, Sabah Avrupa, Sabah USA, İşte İnsan, Sabah Emlak, Sabah Sarı Sayfalar, Cafe Ruj | ATV, A Haber, Yeni Asır TV, Minika, ATV Avrupa | www.sabah.com.tr, www.takvim.com.tr, www.ahaber.com.tr, www.ahberradyo.com.tr, www.atv.com.tr, www.turkuvazradyolar.com | | Energy, construction, mining |
| Türk Medya | Zeki Yeşildağ (100%) | Akşam, Güneş, Star | TV360, 24 TV, TV 4 | ligradyo.com.tr, gunes.com, aksam.com.tr, star.com.tr | | |

Note: The table is prepared based on the data collected from the website called Media Ownership Monitor Turkey (see https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/tr/) and official websites of the companies.

# APPENDIX E

# ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 26/06/2020-49

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER YÜKSEK LİSANS VE DOKTORA TEZLERİ ETİK İNCELEME KOMİSYONU
TOPLANTI TUTANAĞI

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Toplantı Sayısı | : | 2 |
| Toplantı Tarihi | : | 16/03/2020 |
| Toplantı Saati | : | 14:00 |
| Toplantı Yeri | : | Skype Sanal Toplantı |
| Bulunanlar | : | Prof. Dr. Feyza Çorapçı, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen, Prof. Dr. Özlem Hesapçı Karaca, Doç. Dr. Ebru Kaya, Prof. Dr. Fatma Nevra Seggie |
| Bulunmayanlar | : | |

Elif Ünal
Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler

Sayın Araştırmacı,
"Türkiye Ana Akım Medyasında Gündelik Tahakküm ve Direniş Pratikleri" başlıklı projeniz ile ilgili olarak yaptığınız SBB-EAK 2020/01 sayılı başvuru komisyonumuz tarafından 16 Mart 2020 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.

Bu karar tüm üyelerin toplantıya çevrimiçi olarak katılımı ve oybirliği ile alınmıştır. COVID-19 önlemleri kapsamında kurul üyelerinden ıslak imza alınamadığı için bu onam mektubu üye ve raportör olarak Fatma Nevra Seggie tarafından bütün üyeler adına e-imzalanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla, bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.

Prof. Dr. Fatma Nevra SEGGIE
ÜYE

e-imzalıdır
Prof. Dr.Fatma Nevra SEGGIE
Raportör

SOBETİK 2 16/03/2020

Bu belge 5070 sayılı Elektronik İmza Kanununun 5. Maddesi gereğince güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

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