

T.C.
GALATASARAY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

**AS THE MAINSTREAM NEWS MEDIA COLLAPSES IN
TÜRKİYE:**
**TURKISH SERVICES OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS
ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH THE EYES OF JOURNALISTS**

MASTER'S THESIS

İrem DOĞANIŞIK

Thesis Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Tolga ÇEVİKEL

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To the Boğaziçi Resistance

and each and every one of its members fighting
to preserve Boğaziçi as a university,

PREFACE

We have seen a growing academic interest in journalism and media studies in Türkiye, probably because journalism has been going through perhaps its most challenging period in recent years. Indeed, in these days where journalists' struggle for independence has turned into a struggle for existence, it must not be easy to be and remain a journalist in Türkiye.

Rather than academic curiosity, my interest in journalism began in my childhood with my admiration and enthusiasm for the profession. Although this enthusiasm led me to dream of becoming a journalist for a while, shrinking news media and worsening working conditions in Türkiye's media and the exclusion/attempted exclusion of many good journalists from the field discouraged me from doing so. That's why by studying journalism in this thesis, I hoped to show some solidarity with colleagues of my childhood dream. In this regard, I am grateful to the journalists who made this study possible by participating in my research and sharing their experiences.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	: Anadolu Agency
AKP	: Justice and Development Party
BBC	: The British Broadcasting Corporation
BDP	: Peace and Democracy Party
BİK	: Directorate General of Press Announcements
BTK	: Information and Communication Technologies Authority
CHP	: Republican People's Party:
CPD	: Center on Public Diplomacy
DW	: Deutsche Welle
HDP	: Peoples' Democratic Party
HRW	: Human Rights Watch
HSYK	: Council of Judges and Prosecutors
MHP	: Nationalist Movement Party
MİT	: The National Intelligence Organization
OSCE	: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OWI	: United States Office of War Information
RSF	: Reporters Without Borders
RT	: Russia Today
RTÜK	: Radio and Television Supreme Council
SETA	: Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research
TGS	: Türkiye's Journalists' Union
TMSF	: Savings Deposit Insurance Fund of Türkiye
TRT	: Turkish Radio and Television Corporation
TSK	: Turkish Armed Forces
USIA	: United States Information Agency
VOA	: Voice of America

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RESUME

Confronté à la fois à une crise des revenus et à un processus de transformation dû à la numérisation, le journalisme dans le monde entier cherche de nouvelles façons d'exister. En Turquie, en plus de cette tendance mondiale, le journalisme a peut-être connu sa période la plus difficile ces dernières années face aux politiques mises en œuvre par l'AKP pour prendre le contrôle des médias depuis le jour où il est arrivé au pouvoir. Cette thèse interprète la transformation des médias turcs sous le règne de l'AKP comme l'histoire de l'effondrement de courant dominant (le mainstream) et se fonde sur l'affirmation selon laquelle, dans ces conditions, les médias étrangers sont devenus un champ d'action pour les journalistes en Turquie. Dans ce contexte, cette recherche examinera les processus de production d'informations et les pratiques journalistiques des journalistes travaillant dans les services en turc des organisations de presse internationales et étudiera la manière dont ils subissent la pression et les mécanismes de contrôle dirigés à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de l'organisation contre les journalistes turcs lorsqu'ils travaillent dans les médias étrangers.

Le rapport 2022 de Reporters sans frontières (RSF) indique que 90 % des médias nationaux en Turquie sont contrôlés par le gouvernement (RSF, 2022). L'approche dominante dans les études récentes sur les médias turcs est que l'AKP a eu une intention envers les médias depuis le premier jour et qu'il a réalisé cette intention avec les politiques qu'il a poursuivies au fil des ans. Les transformations de la structure de propriété des médias par le biais du Fonds de garantie des dépôts (TMSF) au cours de la première mandat de gouvernement de l'AKP et la formation des "médias de l'AKP" par conséquent, comme définit par Adaklı (2009), constituent la base de cet argument. Uraz Aydın affirme que la politique de l'AKP à l'égard des médias repose sur deux piliers : l'élimination de courant dominant et le renforcement des médias conservateurs (Aydın U. , 2015). Ayan (2019), dans son étude sur les médias de l'ère AKP, soutient que l'AKP a conjoncturellement diversifié ses politiques à l'égard des médias dans différentes périodes de pouvoir et catégorise ces pratiques comme la conquête, la capture, la fondation, la configuration et la destruction. Dans ce contexte, Ayan affirme que le gouvernement de l'AKP a conquis les médias existants en modifiant la structure de propriété des médias ; a capturer d'autres médias dont il ne pouvait pas conquérir, en les disciplinant par des pratiques telles que les pénalités fiscales ; a fondé de nouveaux médias en encourageant des groupes de capitaux proches de lui ; a configuré des médias par des pratiques de pression et de coercition telles que les menaces, la diffamation et les arrestations de journalistes ; et enfin a détruit des médias qu'il ne pouvait pas saisir et transformer en les fermant, en particulier pendant l'état d'urgence déclaré après la tentative de coup d'État du 15 juillet (Ayan, 2019).

D'autre part, une autre conclusion importante du rapport de RSF est que les lecteurs en Turquie se tournent vers des organisations des médias indépendantes, y compris des sites d'information internationaux tels que les services en turc de BBC, VOA et de DW, pour obtenir des informations (RSF, 2022). L'histoire de ces organisations de presse internationales montre qu'elles peuvent servir des sources alternatives de nouvelles et d'informations dans des pays et des périodes où les médias sont sous

pression. (Price M. , 2003). Par exemple, le journalisme de la BBC en Turquie après le coup d'État de 1980 sont analysés dans ce cadre. (Nohl, 2010; Yanardağoğlu, 2014).

Aujourd'hui, le rôle des médias étrangers en Turquie ne se limite pas à être une source d'information alternative. Dans ce contexte, on peut observer que les organisations des médias étrangères ont ouvert un espace non seulement pour les lecteurs mais aussi pour les journalistes. L'augmentation de nombre de personnel des services turcs de ces organisations internationales de presse au cours des dernières années, est conforme à cette disposition.

Dans le cadre de cette étude, afin de comprendre pourquoi les journalistes se sont tournés vers les médias étrangers à la suite de la transformation des médias turcs sous le règne de l'AKP, quelles sont les difficultés auxquelles ils sont confrontés et quelles sont les limites auxquelles ils sont soumis lorsqu'ils exercent leurs activités journalistiques dans des organisations médiatiques étrangères, nous examinerons tout d'abord l'évolution des médias depuis 2002, la date de l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'AKP, ainsi que les études actuelles sur les pratiques journalistiques en Turquie. En respectant la classification d'Ayan et en prenant en compte les tournants de l'histoire récente des médias turcs, cette période de vingt et un ans sous l'ère de l'AKP sera analysée en quatre périodes : la période 2002-2008, la période 2008-2013, la période 2013-2017 et la période 2017-2023. L'étude est d'accord avec l'idée que la transformation des médias turcs est le résultat d'une stratégie de la capture, comme le suggèrent de récentes études dans la littérature. Les développements médiatiques au cours de gouvernement de l'AKP, qui sont discutés dans la première partie de la thèse, nous montrent la manière de la formation de "médias de l'AKP", selon la conceptualisation d'Adaklı (2009).

Comme mentionné vers la fin du chapitre, après la vente de Doğan Media au groupe Demirören en 2018, le courant dominant était complètement sous le contrôle du gouvernement AKP, et Olay TV, qui a été créée en 2020 et n'a poursuivi sa vie de diffusion que pendant 26 jours, est devenue l'un des indicateurs les plus évidents de cette décalage. Dans ce contexte, Yanardağoğlu considère la situation actuelle des médias en Turquie comme une période de "post-mainstream" (Yanardağoğlu, 2022). Dans cette période post-mainstream, on observe que les activités de journalisme indépendant sont principalement menées sur internet et qu'un écosystème médiatique fragmenté a émergé. Alors, Keten et Ayan (2023) réparent qu'à la suite de la prise de contrôle des médias par le gouvernement AKP, la situation actuelle des médias turcs se caractérise par le fait qu'un grand nombre de journalistes ont été exclus de la sphère médiatique, et les journalistes se sont tournés soit vers les médias d'opposition, soit vers les médias numériques, soit vers le journalisme d'entreprise. Selon Keten et Ayan, si l'on tient compte des nouveaux diplômés en outre les journalistes qui ont été éliminés de courant dominant, il y a actuellement *"un grand nombre de journalistes qui peuvent travailler dans très peu d'organisations médiatiques" en Turquie* (Keten & Ayan, 2023) .

Dans ce contexte, bien que les possibilités offertes par la numérisation ouvrent un espace aux journalistes à la recherche d'un débouché en Turquie, on constate que le gouvernement AKP, conscient de cette situation, a réglementé et renforcé ses mécanismes de pression et de contrôle sur les médias de manière à inclure le journalisme sur l'internet. La loi sur l'internet et la loi sur la désinformation adoptées dans les dernières années sont les exemples les plus évidents de cet effort (Karan, 2022).

Afin de comprendre le rôle actuel des organismes de presse internationaux dans les médias turcs et leur fonctionnement interne, la deuxième partie de la thèse examinera comment la presse internationale est née, comment elle s'est développée au cours du processus et avec quels objectifs et fonctions elle exerce ses activités. Cette section révèle que la radiodiffusion internationale a été rendue possible par la découverte des ondes radio courtes dans les années 1920, qu'elle a été lancée par les États dans le cadre de leur politique étrangère et qu'elle s'est multipliée au fil du temps. Pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la radiodiffusion internationale a effectivement été utilisée comme une activité de propagande et, pendant la guerre froide, elle a été considérée comme une activité de propagande et a progressivement commencé à être définie comme une partie de la diplomatie publique qui est alors, en développement. Avec l'entrée en scène des organisations médiatiques internationales commerciales dans les années 1980, la radiodiffusion internationale parrainée par l'État a connu une crise de finalité et de crédibilité et s'est efforcée de se trouver de nouvelles objectifs. (Price M. , 2003; Powers & Youmans, 2012; Samuel-Azran, 2013). D'autre part, il existe quelques exemples de radiodiffuseurs internationaux qui fonctionnent comme des sources alternatives d'informations, en particulier dans les pays où les médias sont soumis à des pressions. (Price M. , 2003; Zöllner, 2006; Torfeh & Sreberny, 2010; Thiranagama, 2011; Umejei, 2018; Workneh, 2019; Elswah & Howard, 2020; Workneh, 2021). A ce stade, la BBC en turc est également évaluée dans ce cadre avec le rôle qu'elle a assumé dans les médias turcs après les coups d'État militaires de 1960 et 1980. (Nohl, 2010; Yanardağoğlu, 2014).

De même, aujourd'hui, en Turquie, où les médias sont sous pression, on observe un intérêt accru pour les médias étrangers et les lecteurs se tournent vers eux pour s'informer (RSF, 2022). Cependant, le fait que cet intérêt n'ait pas échappé à l'attention du gouvernement est évident dans les politiques de pression et d'intimidation à l'encontre de ces organisations. Selon la loi sur l'internet mentionnée dans la première section, les services turcs des organes de presse internationaux devaient avoir un représentant en Turquie et obtenir une licence par le conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (RTÜK). Cette loi, qui a ouvert la voie à l'intervention du RTÜK aux contenus publiés sur l'internet, a été officiellement mise en œuvre en juin 2022 et l'accès aux sites web des services turcs de DW et VOA a été bloqué au motif qu'ils ne répondaient pas aux exigences de la loi. En outre, parmi les pressions exercées sur les organes de presse internationaux il y a des campagnes de diffamation et de ciblage par des organisations de la société civile et des médias pro-gouvernementaux. L'exemple le plus visible est un rapport publié en 2019 par la Fondation pour la recherche politique, économique et sociale (SETA), connu avec ses liens étroits avec le gouvernement, intitulé "Türkiye Extensions of International Media Organisations" qui cible nommément des organisations médiatiques internationales et des journalistes travaillant pour ces organisations.

L'attitude et les pratiques oppressives du gouvernement AKP à l'égard des médias, ainsi que l'intérêt remarquable à l'égard des médias étrangers dans ce processus, le rôle qu'ils ont assumé et le fait qu'ils sont devenus une cible en conséquence, nécessitent une étude sur les journalistes travaillant dans les services turcs des organisations de presse internationales. Cette étude se concentre sur les activités professionnelles et les expériences des journalistes qui préfèrent travailler dans des médias étrangers dans la situation actuelle en Turquie. En conséquence, cette étude vise à discuter des opportunités et des contraintes que rencontrent les journalistes turcs lorsqu'ils travaillent dans des organisations des médias étrangères dans le cadre des politiques médiatiques du gouvernement AKP et de l'évolution des médias au cours des vingt et

un dernières années, en tenant compte de l'évolution historique et du fonctionnement des médias internationaux eux-mêmes. Conformément à cet objectif, la recherche utilise des entretiens semi-structurés en profondeur pour explorer les raisons pour lesquelles les journalistes qui travaillent ou ont travaillé dans des organes de presse internationaux préfèrent les médias étrangers, les contraintes et les défis auxquels ils sont confrontés lorsqu'ils travaillent dans les médias étrangers, et leurs points de vue et attitudes sur l'état actuel des médias turcs et la position des médias internationaux dans ce tableau actuel.

Par conséquent, le travail de terrain de l'étude consiste en des entretiens semi-structurés menés en novembre et décembre 2023 avec des journalistes qui ont travaillé ou travaillent actuellement à la BBC en turc, DW en turc, Euronews en turc, Sputnik Turquie et VOA en turc. Sur les vingt journalistes dont les coordonnées ont pu être obtenues dans le cadre de l'étude, huit n'ont pas répondu ou ont répondu négativement. Finalement, douze journalistes ont été interrogés : deux de la BBC en turc, quatre de DW en turc, un d'Euronews en turc, trois de Sputnik Turquie et deux de VOA en turc, cinq femmes et sept hommes. Huit des personnes interrogées travaillent actuellement pour ces organisations, tandis que quatre d'entre elles sont d'anciens employés qui ont quitté ces organisations. Alors que la moitié des personnes interrogées avaient déjà travaillé dans le mainstream, l'autre moitié était composée de journalistes ayant peu ou pas d'expérience de stage dans le mainstream en raison de leur âge.

Lorsque nous examinons les résultats des entretiens menés dans le cadre de la recherche, nous constatons que le gouvernement tente de placer les médias étrangers et les journalistes qui y travaillent sous son contrôle par le biais de différentes politiques de pression. Ces politiques de pression peuvent être regroupées sous les rubriques suivantes : difficultés d'accès aux sources d'information, reflet des relations diplomatiques entre les deux pays sur l'organe de presse international concerné, pression par des moyens juridiques et ciblage en tant que politique d'intimidation. En y regardant de plus près, trois dynamiques se dégagent des problèmes rencontrés par les personnes interrogées pour accéder aux sources d'information : l'accréditation accordée aux médias étrangers et aux journalistes qui y travaillent, l'anxiété et/ou la réticence des représentants du gouvernement, des fonctionnaires et de l'aile de l'opposition à parler aux médias étrangers, et enfin l'ancienneté des journalistes en fonction de leur expérience. En outre, des traces et des reflets des campagnes de ciblage peuvent être observés dans les expériences des personnes interrogées et dans leurs pratiques quotidiennes en matière d'information. À ce stade, on constate que les journalistes sont plus méticuleux en termes de confirmation et de langage journalistique lorsqu'ils préparent leurs informations et qu'ils se restreignent dans leur utilisation des médias sociaux. Alors que certains journalistes considèrent cette attention comme de l'autocensure, d'autres affirment qu'il ne s'agit pas d'autocensure, mais simplement de méticulosité. Dans ce contexte, bien que les processus de production de l'information dans les organes de presse internationaux semblent éloignés des pratiques de censure dans les grands médias, le fait que même les journalistes qui travaillent dans les médias depuis de nombreuses années aient commencé à agir plus prudemment par crainte d'être pris pour cible après avoir travaillé dans des médias étrangers peut être considéré comme un signe d'autocensure dans un certain sens.

D'autre part, il convient de noter que les personnes interrogées ont déclaré que la principale raison pour laquelle elles se tournent vers les médias internationaux est qu'il n'y a pas d'organes de presse indépendants et libres en Turquie où elles peuvent

travailler dans les médias nationaux. Les personnes interrogées déclarent qu'il n'y a que quelques organisations médiatiques en Turquie où elles peuvent travailler en tant que journalistes, et que cela est principalement dû à l'effondrement de courant dominant sous l'ère de l'AKP et à la polarisation qui en a résulté dans les médias. Toutefois, à l'appui de l'argument de la thèse, il a été déclaré dans les entretiens que les médias étrangers ont ouvert un espace pour les journalistes et sont devenus, un refuge. Les personnes interrogées affirment que les médias étrangers tentent de combler le vide de l'information dans les médias turcs sous pression et répondent au besoin d'information en Turquie dans une certaine mesure, et assument également le rôle de voix des sans-voix en parlant de ce qui n'est pas dit. Toutefois, les entretiens mettent également l'accent sur le fait que les médias étrangers ne peuvent pas remplacer le courant dominant dans un pays en affirmant que ces dernières qui ont été perdus en Turquie pour maintenant, sont nécessaires.



ABSTRACT

Faced with both an income crisis and a process of transformation due to digitalization, journalism worldwide is searching for new ways to survive. In Turkey, in addition to this global trend, journalism has been experiencing perhaps its most difficult period in recent years in the face of the AKP's policies to take over the media since the day it came to power. This thesis analyzes the transformation of the Türkiye's media during the AKP rule as a story of the collapse of the mainstream media and argues that under these circumstances, foreign media emerged as a working space for journalists in Turkey. Accordingly, this study will examine the news production processes and journalistic practices of journalists working in the Turkish services of international news organizations, and investigate how journalists working in foreign media experience the pressure and control mechanisms directed at journalists in Türkiye, both inside and outside the organization.

The 2022 report of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) states that 90% of the national media in Turkey is under government control (RSF, 2022). In parallel to this the prominent approach in recent studies on the media in Turkey is that the AKP has had an intention from the very first day of its rule and has realized this intention with the policies it has pursued over the years. In this regard, the transformations in the ownership structure of the media through the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF) in the first period of AKP rule and the resulting "AKP media", as Adaklı (2009) calls it, form the basis of this argument. Uraz Aydın argues that AKP's policy towards the media has two pillars: the liquidation of the mainstream and the strengthening of conservative media (Aydın U. , 2015). Ayan (2019), in his study on the AKP-era media, states that the AKP has conjuncturally diversified its policies towards the media in different periods of power and argues that the AKP government has conquered existing media outlets through changes in the ownership structure of the media; captured other media outlets that it could not seize ownership of by disciplining them through practices such as tax penalties; created new media outlets by encouraging capital groups close to itself; frightened through pressure and coercion practices such as threats, defamation and arrests against journalists; and finally destroyed media outlets that it could not seize and transform by closing them down, especially during the state of emergency declared after the July 15 coup attempt.

On the other hand, another important finding of RSF's report is that readers in Türkiye turn to independent media outlets, including international news websites such as BBC Turkish, VOA Turkish and DW Turkish, for information (RSF, 2022). The history of these international news organizations shows that they can serve as alternative sources of news and information in countries and periods when the media is under pressure (Price M. , 2003). For example, BBC Turkish's coverage of Türkiye after the 1980 coup d'état is analyzed in this context (Nohl, 2010; Yanardağoğlu, 2014). Today, the role of foreign media in Türkiye is not limited to being an alternative source of information. In this context, it is seen that foreign media outlets have opened a space for journalists as well as readers in Turkey. As a matter of fact, the Turkish

services of these international news organizations have expanded their staff in recent years.

Within the scope of this study, in order to understand what kind of transformation has taken place in the Turkish media during the AKP rule, why journalists have turned to foreign media, what difficulties they face and what kind of limitations they are subjected to while carrying out their journalistic activities in foreign media organizations, we will first look at the developments in the media since 2002, when the AKP came to power, and current studies on journalistic practices in Türkiye. This twenty-one-year period under AKP rule will be analyzed in four periods: the 2002-2008 period, the 2008-2013 period, the 2013-2017 period and the 2017-2023 period, both based on Ayan's classification and taking into account the turning points in the recent history of the Turkish media. The study agrees with recent studies in the literature that the transformation of the Turkish media is the result of a strategy of capture. As a result of the AKP government's conjuncturally diversified repression policies, today we are not only talking about the creation of the "AKP media" as Adaklı calls it (Adaklı, 2009), but the collapse of the mainstream media as a whole.

As mentioned towards the end of the chapter, after the sale of Doğan Media to the Demirören Group in 2018, the mainstream media was completely under the control of the AKP government, and Olay TV, which was established in 2020 and continued its broadcasting life for only 26 days, was one of the most obvious manifestations of this situation. In this context, Yanardağoğlu considers the current media situation in Turkey as a "post-mainstream" period (Yanardağoğlu, 2022). In this post-mainstream era, it is observed that independent journalism activities are mostly conducted online, resulting in a fragmented media ecosystem. Indeed, Keten and Ayan (2023) also find that at this point in Türkiye's media landscape, following the AKP government's takeover of the media, a large number of journalists have been left out of the media sphere, and journalists have turned to either opposition media, digital media or entrepreneurial journalism. According to Keten and Ayan, when new graduates are taken into account in addition to the journalists purged from the mainstream, there are currently "a large number of journalists who can work in very few media organizations" in Türkiye (Keten & Ayan, 2023). In this context, although the possibilities offered by digitalization open up a space for journalists seeking an escape in Turkey, it is seen that the AKP government is aware of this and has regulated and increased its pressure and control mechanisms on the media in a way to include online journalism. The internet law and the disinformation law enacted in recent years are the most obvious examples of this effort (Karan, 2022).

In order to understand the current role of international news organizations in the Turkish media and their internal functioning, the second part of the thesis discusses how international broadcasting was born, how it has developed in the process and with what purposes and functions it carries out its activities. In this section, it is seen that international broadcasting was made possible by the discovery of short radio waves in the 1920s, was initiated by states as a foreign policy practice and increased in number over time. During World War II, international broadcasting was effectively used as a propaganda activity, and during the Cold War it was both considered as a propaganda activity and gradually started to be defined as a part of the developing field of public diplomacy. With the entry of commercial international media organizations into the

game in the 1980s, state-sponsored international broadcasters are said to have suffered a crisis of purpose and credibility and have sought to find new purposes for themselves (Price M. , 2003; Powers & Youmans, 2012; Samuel-Azran, 2013). On the other hand, there are some examples of international broadcasters operating as alternative news sources, especially in countries where the media is under pressure (Price M. , 2003; Zöllner, 2006; Torfeh & Sreberny, 2010; Thiranagama, 2011; Umejei, 2018; Workneh, 2019; Elswah & Howard, 2020; Workneh, 2021). At this point, BBC Turkish is also evaluated within this framework with the role it played in the Turkish media after the 1960 and 1980 military coups (Nohl, 2010; Yanardağoğlu, 2014).

Similarly today, in Türkiye, where the media is under pressure, there is an increased interest in foreign media outlets and readers turn to them for information (RSF, 2022). However, this interest has not escaped the attention of the government, as can be seen in the pressure and intimidation policies carried out against these organizations. As required by the internet law mentioned in the first section, Turkish services of international news organizations are also required to have a representative in Turkey and to obtain a license from RTÜK. The law, which paved the way for RTÜK's intervention in the content broadcast on the internet, was officially implemented in June 2022 and the websites of DW and VOA Turkish services were blocked on the grounds that they did not fulfill the requirements of the law. In addition, pressure on international news organizations has included smear and targeting campaigns by pro-government civil society and media organizations. The most visible example of this is the report titled "International Media Outlets' Extensions in Türkiye" published in 2019 by SETA, a think tank known for its close ties to the government, in which it targeted international media organizations and journalists working for these organizations by name. Both the AKP government's expansion of its repressive stance and practices to include foreign media and the attention it attracted, role and targeting of foreign media in this process necessitate a study on journalists working in the Turkish services of international news organizations.

This research focuses on the professional practices and experiences of journalists who have chosen to work in foreign media in the current situation in Turkey. Accordingly, this study aims to discuss the opportunities and constraints that Turkish journalists experience while working in foreign media organizations within the framework of the media policies of the AKP government and the developments in the media in the last twenty-one years, taking into account the historical development and functioning of the international media itself. In line with this aim, the research uses semi-structured in-depth interviews to explore the reasons why journalists working or have worked for international news organizations prefer foreign media, the constraints and challenges they face while working in foreign media, and their views and attitudes on the current state of the Turkish media and the place of international media in this current picture.

Accordingly, the fieldwork for the study consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted in November and December 2023 with journalists who had previously worked or were currently working at BBC Turkish, DW Turkish, Euronews Turkish, Sputnik Türkiye and VOA Turkish. Eight of the twenty journalists whose contact information could be reached within the scope of the study either did not respond or received negative responses. In the end, a total of twelve journalists were interviewed:

two from BBC Turkish, four from DW Turkish, one from Euronews Turkish, three from Sputnik Turkey and two from VOA Turkish, five women and seven men. Eight of the interviewees are currently working in these organizations, while four of them are former employees who have left these organizations. While half of the interviewees have previous experience working in mainstream media organizations, the other half are journalists who may or may not have only internship experience in the mainstream media due to their age.

When we look at the findings of the interviews conducted as part of the research, we see that the government is trying to bring the foreign media and the journalists working there under its control through different pressure policies. It is possible to trace these oppressive policies under the categories of difficulties experienced in accessing the news source, the reflection of diplomatic relations between the two countries on the relevant international news organization, pressure through legal means and targeting as a policy of intimidation. When we take a closer look, three dynamics stand out in the problems the interviewees experienced in accessing news sources: the accreditation granted to foreign media and journalists working there, the anxiety and/or reluctance of both government representatives and state officials and the opposition wing to speak to foreign media, and finally, the seniority that journalists have in line with their experiences.

In addition, traces and reflections of targeting campaigns can be found in the experiences and daily news practices of the interviewees. At this point, it is seen that journalists are more meticulous both in terms of news sources and news language and restrict themselves in their use of social media. While some journalists consider this attention to be self-censorship, others say that it is not self-censorship, but simply being meticulous. In this context, although the news production processes in international news organizations seem far from the censorship practices in the mainstream media, the fact that even journalists who have been working in the media for many years started to act more carefully after they started working in foreign media due to the fear of being targeted can be considered a sign of self-censorship in a sense.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the interviewees stated that the main reason they turned to international media was that there was no independent and free media in Türkiye where they could work in the national media. Interviewees stated that there are few media outlets left in Türkiye where they can work as journalists, mainly as a result of the collapse of the mainstream media during the AKP era and the resulting polarization in the media. Supporting the assertion of the thesis, it is also stated in the interviews that foreign media has opened up a space for journalists and, has become a refuge for journalists. The interviewees argue that foreign media tries to fill the news gap in the Türkiye's media and can meet the need for news in Turkey to some extent, and that it also assumes the role of being the voice of the voiceless by speaking the unspoken. However, the interviewees also emphasized that foreign media cannot replace the mainstream media and that there is a need for the mainstream media in Türkiye.

ÖZET

Dünya genelinde hem gelir kriziyle karşı karşıya kalan hem de dijitalleşmeyle birlikte bir dönüşüm sürecine giren gazetecilik, kendini var etmenin yeni yollarını aramaktadır. Türkiye’de ise bu global trendin yanında, AKP’nin iktidara geldiği günden bu yana medyayı ele geçirmek için uyguladığı politikalar karşısında gazetecilik; son yıllarda belki de en zor dönemini yaşamaktadır. Bu tez, AKP iktidarı döneminde Türkiye medyasında yaşanan dönüşümü, ana akım medyanın çöküş hikayesi olarak okumakta ve bu koşullar altında yabancı medyanın Türkiye’deki gazeteciler için bir çalışma alanı olarak ortaya çıktığı iddiasına dayanmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda bu araştırmada, uluslararası haber kuruluşlarının Türkçe servislerinde çalışan gazetecilerin; bu kuruluşlardaki haber üretim süreçleri ve gazetecilik pratikleri mercek altına alınacak, Türkiye’de gazetecilere yöneltilen baskı ve kontrol mekanizmalarını yabancı medyada çalışırken kurum içinde ve dışında nasıl deneyimledikleri araştırılacaktır.

Sınır Tanımayan Gazeteciler Örgütü’nün (RSF) 2022 raporunda Türkiye’de ulusal medyanın %90’ının hükümet kontrolünde olduğu belirtilmektedir (RSF, 2022). Türkiye medyasına ilişkin yapılan güncel çalışmalarda öne çıkan yaklaşım, AKP’nin ilk günden itibaren medya alanına dönük bir amacı olduğu ve yıllar içinde izlediği politikalarla bu niyeti gerçekleştirdiği yönündedir. Öyle ki AKP iktidarının ilk döneminde Tasarruf Mevduatı Sigorta Fonu (TMSF) aracılığıyla medyada sahiplik yapısında gerçekleşen dönüşümler ve neticesinde Adaklı’nın (2009) ismini koyduğu haliyle oluşan “AKP medyası” bu argümanın temelini oluşturmaktadır. Uraz Aydın, AKP’nin medyaya dönük politikasının ana akımın tasfiyesi ve muhafazakâr medyanın güçlendirilmesi olmak üzere iki sacayağı olduğunu savunmaktadır (Aydın U. , 2015). Ayan (2019) ise AKP dönemi medyasını mercek altına aldığı çalışmasında AKP’nin farklı iktidar dönemlerinde konjonktürel olarak medyaya yönelik politikalarını çeşitlendirdiğini söylemekte ve bu uygulamaları fetih, zapt, teşkil, tahzir ve behava olarak kategorilere ayırmaktadır. Bu bağlamda Ayan, AKP iktidarının medya sahiplik yapısındaki el değiştirmelerle mevcut medya kuruluşlarını fethettiğini, mülkiyetini ele geçiremediği mevcut diğer kuruluşları vergi cezaları gibi uygulamalarla disipline ederek zapt ettiğini, kendine yakın sermaye gruplarını teşvik ederek yeni medya kuruluşları teşkil ettiğini; gazetecilere yönelik tehdit, karalama ve tutuklama gibi baskı ve zor uygulamaları ile tahzir ettiğini ve son olarak ele geçiremediği ve dönüştüremediği medya kuruluşlarını bilhassa 15 Temmuz darbe girişiminin ardından ilan ettiği olağanüstü hal döneminde kapatarak behava ettiğini öne sürmektedir (Ayan, 2019).

Öte yandan RSF’nin raporunda öne çıkan bir diğer önemli saptama, Türkiye’deki okurların bilgi almak için BBC Türkçe, VOA Türkçe ve DW Türkçe gibi uluslararası haber sitelerinin de içinde bulunduğu bağımsız medya kuruluşlarına yönelmesidir (RSF, 2022). Bu uluslararası haber kuruluşlarının geçmişine bakıldığında, medyanın baskı altında olduğu ülkelerde ve dönemlerde alternatif haber ve bilgi kaynağı olarak hizmet verebildiği görülmektedir (Price M. , 2003). Örneğin

BBC Türkçe'nin 1980 darbesi sonrasında Türkiye'de yürüttüğü habercilik, bu çerçevede ele alınmaktadır (Nohl, 2010; Yanardağoğlu, 2014).

Bugün ise Türkiye'de yabancı medyanın rolü, yalnızca alternatif bir bilgi kaynağı olmakla sınırlı kalmamaktadır. Bu bağlamda yabancı medya kuruluşlarının Türkiye'de okurların yanı sıra gazeteciler için de alan açtığı görülmektedir. Nitekim söz konusu uluslararası haber kuruluşlarının Türkçe servislerinin son yıllarda kadrolarını genişletmesi bunu destekler niteliktedir.

Bu çalışma kapsamında AKP iktidarı döneminde Türkiye medyasında nasıl bir dönüşüm yaşandığını ve gazetecilerin neden yabancı medyaya yöneldiklerini, yabancı medya kuruluşlarında gazetecilik faaliyetlerini yürütürken hangi zorluklarla karşılaştıklarını ve ne gibi sınırlandırmalara maruz kaldıklarını anlayabilmek adına öncelikle AKP'nin iktidara geldiği 2002 yılından bugüne dek medyada yaşanan gelişmelere ve Türkiye'deki gazetecilik pratiklerine dair yapılmış güncel çalışmalara bakılacaktır. AKP iktidarı altında geçen bu yirmi bir yıllık süreç, hem Ayan'ın sınıflandırmasından hareketle hem de Türkiye medyasının yakın tarihindeki dönüm noktalarını göz önünde bulundurarak 2002-2008 dönemi, 2008-2013 dönemi, 2013-2017 dönemi ve 2017-2023 dönemi olmak üzere dört periyotta incelenecektir. Çalışma, literatürde yer alan güncel çalışmaların öne sürdüğü Türkiye medyasında yaşanan dönüşümün bir ele geçirme stratejisinin sonucu olduğu fikrine katılmaktadır. Tezin ilk bölümünde ele alınan AKP iktidarı dönemi medya gelişmeleri Adaklı'nın (2009) ismini koyduğu "AKP medyası"nın nasıl oluştuğunu gözler önüne sermektedir.

Bölümün sonuna doğru değinildiği üzere; 2018 yılında Doğan Medya'nın Demirören Grubu'na satılmasının ardından ana akım medya tamamen AKP iktidarının kontrolüne geçmiş, 2020'de kurulan ve yayın hayatına yalnızca 26 gün devam edebilen Olay TV de bu durumun en belirgin göstergelerinden biri olmuştur. Bu bağlamda Yanardağoğlu, Türkiye'deki mevcut medya durumunu bir "post-mainstream" (ana-akım sonrası) dönem olarak değerlendirilmektedir (Yanardağoğlu, 2022). Bu ana-akım sonrası dönemde, bağımsız gazetecilik faaliyetlerinin çoğunlukla internet üzerinden yürütüldüğü ve ortaya parçalı bir medya ekosisteminin çıktığı gözlemlenmektedir. Nitekim Keten ve Ayan da (2023) Türkiye medyasında gelinen noktada, AKP iktidarının medyayı ele geçirmesinin ardından çok sayıda gazetecinin medya alanının dışında kaldığını ve gazetecilerin ya muhalif medyaya ya dijital mecralara ya da girişimci gazeteciliğe yöneldiklerini tespit etmektedir. Keten ve Ayan'a göre ana akımdan tasfiye edilen gazetecilerin yanında yeni mezunlar da dikkate alındığında Türkiye'de mevcut durumda "*çok az sayıda medya kuruluşunda çalışabilecek çok sayıda gazeteci*" bulunmaktadır (Keten & Ayan, 2023).

Bu bağlamda dijitalleşmenin sunduğu olanaklar, Türkiye'de bir çıkış arayan gazeteciler için bir alan açsa da AKP hükümetinin bunun farkında olarak medya üzerindeki baskı ve kontrol mekanizmalarını internet gazeteciliğini de kapsayacak şekilde düzenlediği ve artırdığı görülmektedir. Son yıllarda çıkarılan internet yasası ve dezenformasyon yasası bu çabanın somutlaştığı en bariz örnekler olarak gösterilmektedir (Karan, 2022).

Saha kısmında incelenecek uluslararası haber kuruluşlarının Türkiye medyasındaki bugünkü rolünü ve kendi içindeki işleyişini anlayabilmek adına tezin ikinci bölümünde uluslararası yayıncılığın nasıl doğduğu, süreç içinde nasıl geliştiği ve ne gibi amaç ve işlevlerle faaliyetlerini yürüttüğü ele alınacaktır. Bu bölümde, uluslararası yayıncılığın 1920'lerde kısa radyo dalgalarının keşfiyle mümkün kılındığı,

bir dış politika faaliyeti olarak devletlerce başlatıldığı ve zaman içinde sayısının arttığı görülmektedir. 2. Dünya Savaşı sırasında etkin bir şekilde propaganda faaliyeti amaçlı kullanılan uluslararası yayıncılık, Soğuk Savaş döneminde hem propaganda faaliyeti olarak değerlendirilmiş hem de yavaş yavaş gelişen kamu diplomasisi alanının bir parçası olarak tanımlanmaya başlanmıştır. 1980'li yıllar itibarıyla ticari uluslararası medya kuruluşlarının da oyuna dahil olmasıyla birlikte devlet destekli uluslararası yayıncıların bir amaç ve güvenilirlik krizi geçirdiği ve kendine yeni amaçlar edinme arayışına girdiği belirtilmektedir (Price M. , 2003; Powers & Youmans, 2012; Samuel-Azran, 2013). Öte yandan, uluslararası yayıncıların özellikle medyanın baskı altında olduğu ülkelerde alternatif haber kaynağı olarak faaliyet gösterdiği bazı örneklerden söz edilmektedir (Price M. , 2003; Zöllner, 2006; Torfeh & Sreberny, 2010; Thiranagama, 2011; Umejei, 2018; Workneh, 2019; Elswah & Howard, 2020; Workneh, 2021). Bu noktada BBC Türkçe de 1960 ve 1980 askeri darbelerinin ardından Türkiye medyasında üstlendiği rol ile bu çerçevede değerlendirilmektedir (Nohl, 2010; Yanardağoğlu, 2014).

Bugün de benzer şekilde, medyanın baskı altında olduğu Türkiye'de yabancı medya kuruluşlarına ilginin arttığı ve okurun bilgi almak için bu kuruluşlara yöneldiği gözlemlenmektedir (RSF, 2022). Bununla birlikte bu ilginin iktidarın dikkatinden kaçmadığı, söz konusu kuruluşlara yönelik yürütülen baskı ve yıldırma politikalarında kendini ele vermektedir. İlk bölümde sözünü ettiğimiz internet yasası gereğince, uluslararası haber kuruluşlarının Türkçe servislerine de Türkiye'de bir temsilci buldurması ve RTÜK'ten lisans alması zorunluluğu getirilmiştir. RTÜK'ün internette yayınlanan içeriklere müdahalesinin önünü açan söz konusu yasa, 2022 Haziran'ında resmen hayata geçmiş ve DW ile VOA Türkçe servislerinin internet sitelerine yasanın gereklerini yerine getirmediği gerekçesiyle erişim engeli getirilmiştir. Bunun yanı sıra, uluslararası haber kuruluşlarına yönelik baskı politikalarının arasında, hükümete yakın sivil toplum ve medya kuruluşları tarafından yürütülen karalama kampanyaları ve hedef göstermeler de bulunmaktadır. Hükümete yakınlığıyla bilinen düşünce kuruluşu Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı'nın (SETA) 2019'da yayınladığı ve uluslararası medya kuruluşlarını ve bu kuruluşlarda çalışan gazetecileri isim isim hedef aldığı "Uluslararası Medya Kuruluşlarının Türkiye Uzantıları" başlıklı raporu bunun en görünür örneğidir.

Hem AKP iktidarının medya alanına yönelik baskıcı tutumu ve uygulamaları hem de yabancı medyanın bu süreçte çektiği ilgi, üstlendiği rol ve neticesinde hedef haline gelmesi uluslararası haber kuruluşlarının Türkçe servislerinde çalışan gazetecilerle ilgili bir çalışmayı gerekli kılmaktadır. Bu araştırma, Türkiye'deki mevcut durumda yabancı medyada çalışmayı tercih etmiş gazetecilerin mesleki faaliyetlerini ve deneyimlerini konu almaktadır. Bu doğrultuda bu çalışma, Türkiyeli gazetecilerin yabancı medya kuruluşlarında çalışırken deneyimledikleri olanakları ve kısıtlılıkları, AKP iktidarının medya politikaları ve son yirmi bir yılda medyada yaşanan gelişmeler çerçevesinde, uluslararası medyanın kendi tarihsel gelişimini ve işleyişini de göz önünde bulundurarak tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda araştırma kapsamında yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeler yardımıyla; uluslararası haber kuruluşlarında çalışan ya da çalışmış gazetecilerin yabancı medyayı tercih etme nedenleri, yabancı medyada çalışırken karşılaştıkları kısıtlılıklar ve zorluklar ile Türkiye medyasının güncel durumuna ve uluslararası medyanın bu güncel tablodaki yerine dair görüş ve tutumları sorgulanmaktadır.

Bu doğrultuda çalışmanın sahasını BBC Türkçe, DW Türkçe, Euronews Türkçe, Sputnik Türkiye ve VOA Türkçe'de daha önce çalışmış ya da hala çalışmakta

olan gazetecilerle Kasım ve Aralık 2023'te yapılmış yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında iletişim bilgilerine ulaşılabilen yirmi gazeteciden sekizinden ya yanıt alınamamış ya da olumsuz yanıt alınmıştır. Nihayetinde BBC Türkçe'den iki, DW Türkçe'den dört, Euronews Türkçe'den bir, Sputnik Türkiye'den üç ve VOA Türkçe'den iki gazeteci olmak üzere beşi kadın yedisi erkek toplamda on iki gazeteciyle görüşülmüştür. Görüşmecilerden sekizi halen bu kuruluşlarda çalışmakta, dördü ise eski çalışan olup bu kuruluşlardan ayrılmıştır. Görüşmecilerin yarısının daha önce ana akım medya kuruluşlarında çalışma deneyimi olmakla birlikte diğer yarısı, yaşları itibarıyla ana akımda yalnızca staj deneyimi olan ya da olmayan gazetecilerden oluşmaktadır.

Araştırma kapsamında yürütülen görüşmelerde ortaya çıkan bulgulara baktığımızda, iktidarın farklı baskı politikalarıyla yabancı medyayı ve burada çalışan gazetecileri de kendi kontrolü altına almaya çalıştığını görmekteyiz. Bu baskı politikalarının izini; haber kaynağına erişimde deneyimlenen zorluklar, iki ülke arasındaki diplomatik ilişkilerin ilgili uluslararası haber kuruluşuna yansımaları, yasal yollarla kurulmaya çalışılan baskı ve bir yıldırma politikası olarak hedef gösterme başlıklarında sürmemiz mümkün. Daha yakından baktığımızda ise, görüşmecilerin haber kaynaklarına erişimde yaşadığı sorunlarda üç dinamik öne çıkıyor: yabancı medyaya ve orada çalışan gazetecilere tanınan akreditasyon, hem iktidar temsilcilerinin ve devlet yetkililerinin hem muhalefet kanadının yabancı medyaya konuşmakta kaygılı ve/ya isteksiz olması, son olarak gazetecilerin deneyimleriyle paralel sahip oldukları kıdem. Bunun yanı sıra, görüşmecilerin deneyimlerinde ve günlük haber pratiklerinde, hedef gösterme kampanyalarının izlerine ve yansımalarına rastlanmaktadır. Bu noktada gazetecilerin haberlerini hazırlarken hem haber kaynakları konusunda hem de haber dilinde daha titiz davrandıklarını ve sosyal medya kullanımlarında kendilerini kısıtladıkları görülmektedir. Söz konusu özeni gazetecilerin bir kısmı otosansür olarak değerlendirirken bazıları bunun bir otosansür değil, yalnızca titiz davranmak olduğunu söylemektedir. Bu bağlamda, uluslararası haber kuruluşlarındaki haber üretim süreçleri ana akım medyadaki sansür uygulamalarından uzak görünse de uzun yıllardır medyada çalışan gazetecilerin dahi yabancı medyada çalışmaya başladıktan sonra hedef gösterilme korkusuyla daha dikkatli davranmaya başlamaları bir anlamda otosansürün işareti sayılabilir.

Öte yandan görüşmecilerin uluslararası medyaya yönelmelerinin temel nedeni olarak Türkiye'de ulusal medyada çalışabilecekleri bağımsız ve özgür bir mecra kalmadığını söylemeleri dikkat çekicidir. Görüşmeciler; Türkiye'de gazetecilik yapabilecekleri az sayıda medya kuruluşu kaldığını, bunun esasen AKP döneminde ana akım medyanın çökmesinin ve buna bağlı olarak medyada yaşanan kutuplaşmanın bir sonucu olduğunu dile getirmektedir. Bununla birlikte, tezin ortaya çıkış savını destekler nitelikte, görüşmelerde yabancı medyanın gazeteciler için bir alan açtığı ve bir sığınak haline geldiği belirtilmektedir. Görüşmeciler, yabancı medyanın baskı altındaki Türkiye medyasında haber boşluğunu doldurmaya çalıştığını ve Türkiye'de haber ihtiyacını bir nebze de olsa karşılayabildiğini, ayrıca konuşulmayı konuşarak sessizlerin sesi olma rolünü üstlendiğini öne sürmektedir. Ancak görüşmelerde yabancı medyanın, bir ülkenin ana akım medyasının yerini dolduramayacağı da vurgulanmakta ve Türkiye'de yitirilen ana akım medyaya ihtiyaç duyulduğu fikri öne çıkmaktadır.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the study of media and journalism in Türkiye, mainly because the media is going through a challenging period and is struggling to survive. On the one hand, the income crisis for journalism caused by the decline in advertising revenues around the world, on the other hand, the effects of the internet media, which has developed with digitalization, on the nature of journalism, are reflected in journalistic practices in Türkiye. Furthermore, as a result of the policies of repression against the media as part of the political regime transformation imagined by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Türkiye, both journalism as a profession and journalists as professionals in this business are experiencing perhaps the most difficult days in Türkiye.

When we look at the revenue crisis faced by journalism, we see that it is not limited to Turkey; news organizations around the world are either closing down or downsizing due to budget cuts, working with fewer resources and journalists, and turning to digital media (Hunter, 2014; Uzunoğlu, 2018). Although falling circulation is cited as the reason for this, it is also said that increasing newspaper prices can prevent the loss in circulation decline and that the issue is more about the advertising pie and its new distribution that emerged with digitalization (Çevikel, 2020). In this respect, it is underlined that even if the digital advertising pie grows, it does not compensate for the lost revenues in print media (Demir D. , 2019). This loss of revenue in journalism means a reduction in resources allocated for both news production and labor. In this regard, the increasing number of job losses in the media sector around the world, and the fact that investigative journalism is facing extinction (Hunter, 2014) are also high on the agenda. In the face of this crisis, discussions on alternative income models in journalism have also begun. In this context, Wunsch-Vincent (2010) argues that the economic crisis has created a crisis for journalism itself and poses a threat to the accuracy, quality and diversity of news.

Now we are talking a news ecosystem worldwide in which the content becomes unqualified, journalism turns into "churnalism" due to both the lack of resources and the increasing time pressure, and news becomes more and more similar to each other

(Wunsch-Vincent, 2010, p. 36). In addition to that Türkiye's media has gone through a specific transformation and the developments in the media under the AKP government have brought journalism in Turkey to another crisis.

Currently, the political regime under AKP rule is mainly discussed in conjunction with the types of authoritarianism and authoritarian transformation. Some studies refer to it as the neoliberal authoritarianism (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018), some as the competitive authoritarianism (Özbudun, 2015; Esen & Gumuscu, 2016), some as the populist authoritarianism (Akça, 2018) etc. In this context, the media is considered as a field that plays an important and essential role in the construction and implementation of the current regime under the AKP, called as "new Türkiye" and ultimately takes on a new appearance. Indeed, freedom of expression is among the fundamental rights that have suffered the most in this process, and many violations of freedom of expression manifest themselves in the practice of press and media (Karan, 2022). This is precisely why media and journalism during the AKP era have been the subject of many debates and worthy of study. In this context, both the role and place of the media in the construction of the "new Türkiye" are scrutinized.

In AKP-era media studies, there are different approaches to analyze how this transformation occurred. Some of these focused mainly on the structural transformation of the media. In these studies, concentration of media ownership, changes in the ownership of media organizations and the role of the TMSF in this process come to the fore (Christensen, 2007; Adaklı, 2009; Sözeri ve Güney, 2011; Adaklı, 2014; Aydın U. , 2015; Çam & Şanlıer Yüksel, 2015; Sözeri, 2015). These studies are also enriched by addressing the transformation of the media by the judiciary and revealing the pressure on the media in the light of newly enacted laws, legal regulations and practices (Kurban & Elmas, 2011; Sözeri & Kurban, 2012).

There are also studies that examine the attitudes of journalists working under current conditions including discussions on censorship and self-censorship (Arşan, 2011; Arşan E. , 2013; Yeşil, 2014; Pukallus, Bradley, Clarke, & Harrison, 2020; Över, 2021). Furthermore several studies are focusing on the relationship between media and politics (Çarkoğlu & Yavuz, 2010; Kaya & Çakmur, 2011; Panayırıcı, İşeri, & Şekercioğlu, 2016; Erdoğan & Uyan-Semerci, 2018; Yıldırım, Baruh, & Çarkoğlu, 2020; Koçer & Bozdağ, 2020) and indicate that the media in Türkiye has become polarized in which it is not just press-party parallelism but press-sociopolitical camp

parallelism (Panayırıcı, İşeri, & Şekercioğlu, 2016) that people tend to follow the media outlets that reflect their political views (Erdoğan & Uyan-Semerçi, 2018).

In addition, studies examining the transformation in the media through the concepts of authoritarianism, which became widespread in the 2010s, have also increased in recent years (Akser & Hawks, 2012; Yeşil, 2016; Esen, Gümüştü, & Yavuzılmaz, 2023). Another conceptualization frequently used in media studies examining the AKP period is media capture (Finkel, 2015; Yeşil, 2018; Coşkun, 2020; Yanatma, 2021; Akser & Baybars, 2022). Ayan, on the other hand, analyzes the AKP's policies over the media with Gramsci's historical bloc theory in his doctoral thesis and argues that the AKP government has conquered existing media outlets through changes in the ownership structure of the media; captured other media outlets that it could not seize ownership of by disciplining them through practices such as tax penalties; created new media outlets by encouraging capital groups close to itself; frightened through pressure and coercion practices such as threats, defamation and arrests against journalists; and finally destroyed media outlets that it could not seize and transform by closing them down, especially during the state of emergency declared after the July 15 coup attempt (Ayan, 2019).

Among all these studies, Yeşil's book "Media in New Türkiye: The Origins of Neoliberal Authoritarian State" and Ayan's doctoral dissertation titled "Conversion of historical block and Turkey media under the rule of Justice and Development Party", which was later published as a book titled "AKP Devrinde Medya Alemi" are comprehensive and historically up-to-date sources for analyzing the AKP-era media. The books, written by journalists such as "Cenderedeki Medya Tenceredeki Gazeteci" by Ertuğrul Mavioglu (2012), "Abluka" by Mustafa Hoş (2014), "Batsın Böyle Gazetecilik" by Derya Sazak (2014), "5 Ne 1 Kim" by Mustafa Alp Dağıstanlı (2014), and "Tutuklandık" by Can Dünder (2016), are also helpful in tracing this period.

These discussions and studies reveal that during the AKP rule, the methods of pressure and control over the media have diversified in parallel with the party's conjunctural political strategies and ultimately the media in Türkiye underwent a major transformation. Thus, today we can say that the AKP government has completely transformed the media through the mechanisms it has developed over the years, leaving almost no journalistic activity in the name of the mainstream media.

As a result, we can see that the conditions and developments we have mentioned have led to some consequences for the news media in Türkiye. First of all, we can say that the transformation and developments in the media during the AKP era is the story of the takeover of the mainstream media. In this respect, this process can be seen as both the creation of the AKP media and the collapse of the mainstream media. Under these conditions, the media ecosystem for journalists is shrinking and the number of media outlets in Türkiye where independent journalism can be practiced is decreasing. In the absence of the mainstream media, which turned into a completely pro-government media after being taken over by the AKP government, we see a growing trend towards digital media to sustain journalism in Turkey on the one hand, and the emergence of a phenomenon called opposition media with organic ties to the opposition on the other. In this context, we are experiencing a polarization in the media similar to the polarization that is claimed to have taken place in society under AKP rule. Apart from these two poles, it is seen that the channels that try to carry out independent journalism, especially on the internet, are not exempt from the previously mentioned global income crisis and the problems of content quality.

On the other hand, it is observed that in recent years, foreign media's interest in Turkey has increased, and in return, Turkish readers have turned to independent media outlets, including international news websites such as BBC Turkish, VOA Turkish and DW Turkish, for receiving information (RSF, 2022).

In this new news media environment, international news organizations have opened a space not only for readers but also for journalists and have emerged as an option for journalists in Türkiye. This thesis analyzes the transformation of the Turkish media during the AKP rule as the story of the collapse of the mainstream media and argues that in the contemporary news media that emerged after the collapse of the mainstream media, the Turkish services of international news organizations have functioned as a news source on the one hand and have opened a space for journalists on the other.

Although historically rooted in foreign policy and public diplomacy, international news organizations can also function as information providers for foreign publics when local media is under pressure. Consistent with this, following the collapse of the mainstream media in Türkiye, the interest of international news organizations in Türkiye has increased, and journalists struggling to find a place to

practice their profession have increasingly turned to the Turkish services of these organizations. Consequently, the newsroom staffs of the Turkish services of international news organizations operating in Türkiye have grown.

While these organizations have provided opportunities for journalists in certain respects, it is known that foreign media in Türkiye is not exempt from the repressive policies of the AKP government. As a matter of fact, the targeting and discrediting campaigns against foreign media outlets and the journalists working there in recent years by civil society and media organizations known to be close to the AKP government are one of the most visible signs of this. The recent enacted internet law is also seen as government intervention to control over foreign media. In this respect, we can say that foreign media should also be researched as a part of the Turkish media in terms of journalistic practice and that it is important to look at how international news organizations operate under these conditions and under what conditions journalists working there carry out their journalistic activities.

When we look at how international news organizations and language services are studied, we see that, as expected, studies looking at the first period of international broadcasters associate these organizations with propaganda activities (Browne, 1982; Wood, 1993). These studies are followed by studies that consider international news organizations as a part of public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy (Cull N. J., 2006; Nohl, 2010). However, especially after the end of the Cold War and the involvement of commercial media in international broadcasting, these organizations needed to restructure and adopt new missions (Price M. , 2003). Following this, the subjects of international broadcasting studies have started to diversify. For instance, there are comparative studies on international broadcasters in terms of structure, purpose and function (Browne, 1982; Wood, 1993; Nohl, 2010; Andersson, Gillespie, & Mackay, 2010; Issawi & Baumann, 2010; Torfeh & Sreberny, 2010; Rotheray & Geniets, 2011; Thiranagama, 2011; Stewart, 2012; Fiedler & Frère, 2016). In addition to these, studies based on textual analysis of news produced are also quite common (Rampal & Adams, 1990; Cheesman & Nohl, 2011; Jaber & Baumann, 2011; Kasmani, 2014; Polonska-Kimunguyi, 2015; Kamyants, 2021; Al-Hasni, 2022; Zhang, Zhang, & Blanchard, 2022; Gharayagh-Zandi, 2022). Finally, similar to the approach of this thesis, there are studies that treat international news organizations as conducting journalistic activities. In this regard, the studies may focus on newsrooms and their operation processes, news

making processes, news culture, and journalistic autonomy in these organizations. (Browne, 1983; Yanardağoğlu, 2014; Umejei, 2018; Workneh, 2019; Elswah & Howard, 2020; Workneh, 2021) In this context, as mentioned earlier, we see that many different functions other than public diplomacy and propaganda have been addressed in these studies. Likewise, in this thesis, we will discuss the Turkish services of these organizations in terms of their journalistic practices and its place in the Türkiye's media.

On the other hand, when we look at the studies in Türkiye, we see that there are not many studies, the existing studies mostly analyze news texts (Budak, 2018; Durmuş, 2023) or social media accounts (Karaduman, 2019; Gürel, 2020), journalistic activities are less addressed (Özsoy, 2014; Narin & Ünal, 2020), and those that exist are insufficient to understand journalistic practices, how the newsrooms work and journalists' experiences. Even the newsrooms of the Turkish services of these international news organizations have not yet been systematically, comparatively, and comprehensively analyzed.

Considering all these, there is a need for a comprehensive study on how journalists in Türkiye working in international news organizations carry out their professional activities and what kind of difficulties they face inside and outside the organization during news making processes. The findings of the interviews conducted within the scope of this thesis are expected to fill this gap in the field.

Accordingly, this study aims to discuss the opportunities and constraints that Türkiye's journalists experience while working in foreign media organizations both considering the AKP government's media policies and developments in the media in the last twenty-one years, taking into account the historical development and functioning of the international media itself. In this respect, the following questions will be asked throughout this thesis, based on the claim that the Turkish services of international news organizations have opened a space for journalists and met a need in the Turkish news media following the collapse of the mainstream media in Turkey:

- Why do journalists in Türkiye prefer to work for the Turkish services of international news organizations? What are their stories of working in these organizations?

- How do news production processes take place in the Turkish services of international news organizations? What restrictions do journalists working here face inside and outside the organization and what difficulties do they experience in these processes?
- How do the Turkish services of international news organizations operate as part of the media in Türkiye? What place do they fill and what function do they play in the Türkiye's media after the collapse of the mainstream media?

Currently, the most popular international news organizations operating in Türkiye and addressing the Turkish public, in other words, having a Turkish service, are BBC Turkish, DW Turkish, Euronews Turkish, Sputnik Türkiye, VOA Turkish; therefore, the fieldwork for this thesis was conducted with journalists working for the Turkish services of these organizations in Türkiye.

In light of all this, the first part of the thesis will examine the media policies implemented by the AKP during its rule and the developments and transformation in the media as a result. In this section, we will see how the AKP has transformed the media and how the mainstream media has been destroyed. In the second chapter, we will briefly look at the history of international news organizations in the world, and their background and current presence in Türkiye to understand their structure and working principles. In this section, we will also take a look at studies on international news organization both in the world and in Türkiye. Based on the argument that these organizations have emerged as an alternative working space for journalists as a result of the collapse of the mainstream media in Türkiye, in the last chapter, we will discuss the experiences of journalists working in the Turkish services of international news organizations and their current place and function in the Türkiye's media with the help of semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 journalists interviewed for this thesis.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE AKP ERA MEDIA UP TO TODAY

The prominent approach in recent studies is that the AKP has had an intention regarding the media since its first day and has realized this intention with the policies it has pursued over the years. On the one hand, the media critical of the AKP was silenced, purged and destroyed; on the other hand, we witnessed a period in which capital close to the AKP was involved in the media sphere and businesspeople close to the government were made media bosses, thus creating the AKP era media. (Adaklı, 2009; Aydın U. , 2015; Yeşil, 2016; Ayan, 2019). In this case, mainly during the early years of AKP rule, the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF) accelerated transformations in the ownership structure of the media through seizures and played a major role in the creation of what Adaklı calls the "AKP media." (Adaklı, 2009). The political economy of the media structure in Türkiye has also been favorable to the formation of the AKP media, as cross-sectoral investments are common for media owners in Türkiye. (Sözeri & Kurban, 2012, p. 23) Kurban and Elmas also draw attention to this:

"The media sector is divided into aggregations where the owners of the big media groups are also investors and shareholders in different sectors of the economy such as health, education, construction, telecommunications and distribution; they use their power in the media sector to maximize their economic gains in other industries." (Kurban & Elmas, 2011, p. 12)

It was just in 2007 that Christensen draws attention to Turkish media environment as "a combination of the hypercommercialization of the media sector with a traditionally 'clientelist' and 'patrimonial' relationship between media and state". He states that the situation of journalists in Türkiye has been worsening mainly due to the instrumentalization of journalism, policies of de-unionization, and finally the state's legal regulations that undermine freedom of expression (Christensen, 2007).

This situation has been exacerbated by the AKP's increasingly authoritarian tendency over the years. In this context, bianet's quarterly and annual monitoring reports gives an opportunity to look at history of the AKP-era media. bianet has been publishing BIA Monitoring Reports since 2001, and these are a kind of history study

of media organizations in Türkiye (Karan, 2022, p. 4). Karan (2022, pp. 6-7), who compiled the reports between 2001 and 2021 and analyzed the developments in media of 20 years, considers freedom of the press as a special prospect of the right to disseminate and adds that it falls within the scope of freedom of expression. In this regard, state interventions in freedom of expression in Türkiye may originate from the legislative, executive or judicial spheres (Karan, 2022, p. 12). It is true that the AKP government's efforts to discipline the media and journalists have both used the existing judicial system and introduced new laws to expand its dominance in areas such as the internet. For example, most of the time, the Penal Code and the Anti-Terror Law have been used for criminal cases against media outlets and journalists (Kurban & Elmas, 2011, pp. 52-53; Sözeri & Kurban, 2012, p. 39)¹. In addition to these, the Law on Broadcast Regulations on the Internet and Suppression of Crimes Committed by Means of Such Publications, known as the Internet Law, and the Law on the Establishment of Radio and Television Enterprises and Their Media Services are new examples of the AKP's mechanisms of pressure on journalists through the judiciary (Karan, 2022, p. 13). The last judiciary-mediated intervention on media is recently enacted so-called disinformation law, discussed as censorship law, which tightens government control over online websites (HRW, 2022).

Today, in the climate of fear created by the AKP, we are talking about a media environment in which mainstream media has almost disappeared, journalists face lawsuits, are attacked, detained and even arrested for their journalistic activities, and are labeled as terrorists. In the light of all this, in order to understand the situation of journalists working for international news organizations, it is useful to first look at the developments in the media in the last 20 years of the AKP government in Türkiye and the story of the collapse of the mainstream media.

¹ Sözeri and Kurban lists legal basis for the cases as the main defamation (Article 125); setting up criminal organisations for the overthrow of the constitutional order (Article 314); encouraging military personnel to disobey the law (Article 319); discouraging individuals from military service (Article 318); insulting the Turkish nation, state, parliament, government or the courts (Article 301); incitement to crime (Article 214); praising crime or criminals (Article 215); incitement to hatred or animosity (Article 216); and publishing or broadcasting obscene material (Article 226). See more: Kurban, D., & Sözeri, C. (2012). "Caught in the Wheels of Power". **TESEV Democratization Program Media Studies Series, 3**.

1.1 The Years Between 2002-2008

The nineties in Türkiye were characterized by high inflation rates, interest rates and coalition governments; the outbreak of the 2001 financial crisis and collapse in the Turkish lira and led to the collapse of banks and the state takeover of many financial institutions (Yeşil, 2016). In the November 2002 general elections held under these conditions, the AKP, a one-and-a-half-year-old new political party founded by the "innovators" who broke away from the Welfare Party, won 34.2% of the votes in its first election. In explaining AKP's success, Aydın and Taşkın (2014) argue that voters penalized the existing political parties due to the economic crisis and coalition conflicts and turned to AKP's new and clean image. In the 2002 general elections, existing parties such as the DYP and the MHP fell below the 10% electoral threshold, while only the AKP and the CHP entered the parliament, which allowed the AKP to win 66% of the seats in the parliament, far exceeding its vote share, and reach 363 parliamentary seats. Thus, for the first time since the nineties, Türkiye became once again governed by a single party government.

The AKP's main discourse between 2002 and 2008, was characterized by the claims that "it took off its National Vision shirt" and adopted "the discourse of conservative democracy." Ayan (2019, p. 26) argues that in its first period, the AKP tended to establish hegemony by generating consent. In this period, it is seen that AKP also tried to reach out to different social segments other than its conservative base. For example, the EU accession process, which was initiated with the harmonization packages prepared under the title of democratization, paved the way for AKP to gain support from liberals (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014, pp. 464-474).

Yeşil (2016, p. 73) also argues that AKP tried to hide its conservative-religious ideology by presenting itself as a reform movement in this period. In this context, it is observed that AKP's media policies were also shaped in this style and that it abandoned not only "the National Vision shirt" but also media policies of the National Vision Movement.

"To put it briefly, neither its perspective, its period of power nor its accumulation of capital gave Erbakan the opportunity and means to establish a media organization under his control like Erdoğan. With the lessons learned from the National Vision experience, the AKP has seriously grasped the power of the media, and this experience

has been the main factor shaping the media policies of the AKP government." (Ayan, 2019, p. 50)

From this point of view, we can argue that AKP has been aware of the power of the media since the day it came to power. Accordingly, it would be useful to analyze the strategies and efforts AKP adopted to create its own media in its first period, 2002-2008, by looking at the structural transformation in the media.

1.1.1 The Trajectory in Media Between 2002-2008

In 2002, when the AKP came to power, the media industry had suffered its share of the 2001 economic crisis; advertising expenditures, which were 1.1 billion dollars in 2000, dropped by more than 50 percent to 550 million dollars in 2001 (Sönmez, 2004); media outlets of companies operating in the financial sector were either completely shut down or transferred to the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF). Under these conditions, many media organizations downsized, and 3900 journalists according to the Journalists' Union of Türkiye and 4815 journalists according to the Contemporary Journalists Association became unemployed during the crisis (Sözeri ve Güney, 2011, p. 39).

Adaklı notes that in 2003, the dominant groups in the Turkish media sector were Doğan, Çukurova, Uzan, Sabah, İhlas and Doğuş, but by 2006 this landscape had changed radically with the seizure of the media of the Uzan and Ciner groups (Adaklı, 2009, p. 561). The biggest role in this change was played by the TMSF, which carried out the seizures of media companies.

In this context, Mavioğlu mentions that after the AKP came to power, the "green capital" group, which the AKP deemed reliable for itself, on the one hand, flourished with state tenders, and on the other hand, it took over large banks and media groups that were seized through financial operations (Mavioğlu, 2012, p. 11).

Sözeri also states that thirty-five national and thirty international mergers and acquisitions took place in the media sector between 2002 and 2008, and that the companies that were taken over by the TMSF after the 2001 crisis played a role in this (Sözeri ve Kurban, 2012, p. 28). It is precisely at this point that the role and importance of the TMSF in media ownership relations during the AKP rule becomes apparent.

After the 2001 crisis, the TMSF, which was frequently used in seizures, played a leading role in the AKP's media strategies; the TMSF seized existing media outlets and sold them to pro-AKP capital groups through tenders. In this respect, what happened to the Uzan Group is cited as the first example of the transformation of ownership relations in the mainstream media through the TMSF.

1.1.1.1 Liquidation of the Uzan Group

The first group to be liquidated after the AKP came to power was the Uzan Group, which had a large market share in the banking, soccer and energy sectors (Aydın U. , 2015, p. 46). The liquidation of Uzan assets, whose name was frequently associated with corruption, started in 2003 with the seizure of the Group's Imar Bank by the TMSF and ended in 2004 with the seizure of all the Group's assets. Thus, the TMSF effectively became one of the largest media groups in Türkiye in those days. Adaklı states that the seizure of Imar Bank, which was left untouched even during the 2001 economic crisis, was associated with the success of the Young Party, whose leader was Cem Uzan, in the 2002 general elections (Adaklı, 2009, pp. 561-562).

The TMSF put the Uzan Group's Star Media Group, which it had seized in 2004, up for sale through auctions starting in September 2005, and sold the Star newspaper and Kanal 24 to TRNC businessman Ali Özmen Safa in 2006. However, Mavioğlu states that when it became clear that Ali Özmen Safa would fail, Ethem Sancak was brought in, and Star newspaper and Kanal 24 were later sold to Sancak. Ethem Sancak's closeness to Erdoğan, the prime minister of the time, is well known for the interview he gave to Nuriye Akman of Zaman newspaper, in which he said of Erdoğan: *"I am not an AK Party member. But we formed a very good friendship with him. I am a fan of the man."* In 2010, however, Sancak sold 51 percent of the shares of Kanal 24 and Star newspaper to Tevhit Karakaya, a former AKP deputy who played an active role in the founding of the AKP. (Mavioğlu, 2012, pp. 36-37) Akif Beki and Mustafa Karaalioğlu, advisors to then Prime Minister Erdoğan, also started working at Star newspaper (Aydın U. , 2015, p. 72).

In conclusion, the fact that Kanal 24 and Star newspapers owned by the Uzan Group changed hands through the TMSF during the AKP's first term in power and were taken over by pro-government figures reveals the effective role of the TMSF in the creation of pro-AKP media.

Another well-known example of a media group taken over by the TMSF between 2002 and 2007 and bought by pro-government capital is the story of the takeover of ATV and Sabah, the second largest media group of the period.

1.1.1.2 ATV-Sabah Hand in Hand

We read the story of ATV-Sabah's takeover from Adaklı. In 2000, after the TMSF seized Etibank, in which Dinç Bilgin was a shareholder, and issued a debt of \$880 million to Bilgin, Turgay Ciner signed a 15-year license agreement with Bilgin in 2003, leasing the brand and concession rights of ATV and Sabah. By 2005, the ownership of ATV and Sabah had completely passed to Ciner, who had negotiated with the TMSF. However, Dinç Bilgin, who was unable to pay off his debts with the \$433 million he received for the purchase, applied to the TMSF in 2007 and announced that he had signed a secret protocol with Ciner; upon Bilgin's application, the TMSF seized 63 of Ciner's companies, including ATV and Sabah. Although the Ciner Group submitted a "Delivery and Destruction Protocol" proving the invalidity of the document used as justification for the seizure and the judicial process was concluded in Ciner's favor, the Ciner Group ultimately gave up ATV-Sabah media (Adaklı, 2009, p. 580). Thus, neither Bilgin nor Ciner was able to keep the ATV and Sabah media group.

At the end, in 2007, after a long tender process, ATV and Sabah were awarded to the Çalık Group, which participated in the final tender as the only group (Mavioğlu, 2012, pp. 26-30; Aydın U. , 2015, p. 47). Çalık Group, known in the construction and textile sectors, is one of the new names to enter the media sector during the AKP era. It is noteworthy that the brother-in-law of Ahmet Çalık, the owner of Çalık Holding, is Ali Akbulut, the licensee of the Zaman newspaper, known as the media of the Gülen movement, and that Berat Albayrak, the CEO of Çalık Holding, is the son-in-law of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the prime minister of the time. In addition, the father of Berat and Serhat Albayrak, members of the Group's board of directors, Sadık Albayrak is the owner of the pro-government Yeni Şafak newspaper. The Çalık Group, which has been able to acquire and execute giant projects such as the Istanbul metro and the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline without going through a tender process, and quadrupled its assets in a few years, is cited as one of the Islamic capital groups that have grown under the AKP government (Adaklı, 2009, pp. 581-582; Aydın U. , 2015, p. 47).

The process of the sale of ATV-Sabah to the Çalık Group has been covered in the newspapers many times and the source of the 1.1 billion dollars promised by the Çalık Group for the purchase has been the subject of debate. At the end of the day, it was revealed that the group had received \$375 million in loans from two state banks, Halkbank and Vakıfbank (Adaklı, 2009, pp. 581-583). Ertuğrul Mavioğlu argues that under these circumstances, the loan debt from public banks could easily be repaid with the income from the operation of ATV-Sabah media and that the real cost of ATV-Sabah to the Çalık Group was 350 million dollars (Mavioğlu, 2012, p. 33).

As a result, ATV-Sabah, the second largest group in the media industry, like the Uzan Group's Star newspaper and Kanal 24, was seized by the TMSF and sold to pro-AKP capital, taking its place in the formation of the AKP media. Mavioğlu describes this takeover as "a story of media sales in which the state is directly involved", and Ayan (2019, p. 80) argues that these are only the first steps of the AKP's own media network, which already had supporting media such as Zaman, Yeni Şafak, Yeni Akit, Kanal 7 and Samanyolu TV when it came to power.

1.1.1.3 New Capital, New Media

Ayan argues that in addition to changing the ownership structure through the effective use of the TMSF, the AKP offered investment opportunities to the Islamic bourgeoisie in the media industry and encouraged capital groups close to itself to establish television channels. Islamic capital, which became stronger with the AKP government through tenders, law changes, privatizations, and tax practices, played a decisive role in the growth of the conservative media bloc that began to form in the nineties (Ayan, 2019, pp. 76, 99; Aydın U. , 2015, p. 49).

The first example in this context is TVNET, founded by Albayrak Holding, which started test broadcasting under the name ART and changed its name in 2007. As we mentioned earlier, Berat Albayrak is married to the daughter of then Prime Minister Erdoğan and is the son of Sadık Albayrak, the owner of Yeni Şafak newspaper (Eres & Yüksel, 2018). Before working at Çalık Media Group, Serhat Albayrak was the General Manager of Star Media Group controlled by Ethem Sancak in 2006. Adaklı argues that Albayrak Group's non-media investments and social capital determine its power in the media sector (Adaklı, 2009, pp. 582a, 585).

Similarly, in 2006, Haber 7 was renamed as Ülke TV. Both new TV channels are known to follow a pro-government broadcasting policy. In 2007, Ethem Sancak became a partner in Star Media Group together with Ali Özmen Safa and Kaya family and thus entered the media sector. Following this partnership, 24 TV was established. Mustafa Hoş (2014) one of the founders of the channel, states in his book *Abluka* that "the government was still in its infancy" when the channel was founded and that its founding philosophy was based on "dominating the streets without being drowned in politics." However, it is known that Hoş left the channel after a while due to pressure from the government.²

1.1.1.4 Gulenist Media

The Gülenist media, which already existed in 2002 when the AKP came to power, found the opportunity to grow both vertically and horizontally during the AKP rule (Ayan, 2019, p. 71); until the breakdown between the AKP and the Gülen movement in 2013, the media organizations of the Gülen movement displayed a pro-government stance and constituted a strong pillar of the AKP media

The Gülen media is mainly composed of the Feza Group, which began its broadcasting career in the 1980s, the Samanyolu Group, which started in the 1990s, and the Koza-İpek Group, which entered the sector during the AKP era. Feza Group consists of Cihan News Agency, Zaman and Today's Zaman newspapers; Aksiyon, Turkish Review, Yeni Bahar magazines. Samanyolu Group owns media outlets such as Samanyolu TV, Samanyolu News Radio, Dünya Radio, Mehtap TV, Yumurcak TV and Ebru TV broadcasting in the USA (Çam & Şanlıer Yüksel, 2015, pp. 75-76).

Kanaltürk is among the channels belonging to the Gülenist media that followed a pro-government broadcasting policy during this period. Founded in 2004 by Tuncay Özkan with a staff of writers and programmers known as "neo-nationalists (left-wing)"³, Kanaltürk was transferred in 2008 to the Koza-İpek Group, which is known to be close to the Gülen movement (Adaklı, 2009, p. 588). In 2005, the Koza-İpek Group bought Bugün newspaper from the Ciner Group and established Bugün TV in 2009. Having added names such as Nazlı Ilıcak, Orhan Kemal Cengiz and Yavuz

² For more details: Mustafa Hoş. "*Abluka*" (2014).

³ Ulusalçılık or Ulusalism is a secularist (laik), neo-nationalist ideology in Türkiye that is influenced by Kemalism. It can be seen as "left-wing nationalism". See more: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulusalcılık>

Baydar to its writing staff, Bugün actively supported the AKP during these years (Ayan, 2019, p. 78).

1.1.1.5 Taraf Newspaper

The Taraf newspaper, which was launched in November 2007, is also categorized among the press that supports the government's policies. Promoting itself as a new voice, Taraf adopted an anti-Turkish Armed Forces discourse and included Alper Görmüş, the editor-in-chief of Nokta magazine, which was shut down after it was published with the cover "Coup Diaries".

Since its founding, Taraf has been associated with the Gülen movement; former Chief of General Staff Yaşar Büyükanıt even implied that Taraf was financed by the Gülen movement. It is claimed that the secret military documents and coup plans published by Taraf were accessed through the Gülen movement's organization in the police force (Adaklı, 2009, p. 589; Yeşil, 2016, p. 97). The fact that the newspaper's staff includes writers with a police background, such as Emre Uslu, supports these allegations.

Ayan argues that Taraf newspaper has a special place in AKP's struggle for hegemony with the established historical bloc (Ayan, 2019, p. 78). Taraf, where names such as Ahmet Altan and Alev Er served as editor-in-chief, used provocative, sensationalist and targeting language, especially in its news about the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), and reported many "deep intelligence" information, including secret information and practices of the TSK, especially during the Ergenekon trial (Adaklı, 2009, p. 589; Mavioğlu, 2012, p. 41). Mavioğlu draws attention to the newspaper's writing staff and finds it interesting that the staff includes people of police origin with no background in journalism. He argues that with these people, Taraf is engaged in a kind of operation journalism:

"The newspaper openly supported the Ergenekon operations and paved the way for the opening of new cases by sharing the documents and information it obtained with prosecutors. For example, the Balyoz case was opened as a result of a suitcase full of documents received by Taraf." (Mavioğlu, 2012, pp. 41-42)

The breakdown between Taraf and the government occurred in 2008 when the newspaper ran the headline "The Prime Minister of his Pasha" following Prime

Minister Erdoğan's support for the Turkish Armed Forces in the aftermath of the PKK's Aktütün attack. Following this headline, Taraf was subjected to an economic embargo and entered a financial crisis (Adaklı, 2009, p. 590). When the newspaper was launched on November 9, 2008, with the headline "We are going through difficult times", the Taraf Readers Association was established to provide support, while businessman Mehmet Betil became a shareholder in the newspaper (Mavioğlu, 2012, p. 43).

Ayan emphasizes that despite their falling out, Taraf supports the government's struggle for hegemony with the AKP intelligentsia, which it contributed to the formation of with its news and staff, and that the AKP weakens the TSK in this way (Ayan, 2019, p. 79).

1.1.2 Closing an Era

In many ways, 2007 was a turning point for the AKP government and Turkish political history. The AKP nominated Abdullah Gül as its party's presidential candidate, and Republican Rallies were organized against this nomination. A total of 361 votes were cast in the first round of parliamentary elections on April 27, and Gül received 357 votes in favor. On the night of April 27, an article on the website of the General Staff reminding the duties of the Turkish Armed Forces was considered to be an "e-memorandum" against the AKP government. In the meantime, Sabih Kanadoğlu, the then Chief Public Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation, initiated a debate in the parliament on the need to reach a quorum of 367 in order to hold the presidential election; the CHP took the issue to the Constitutional Court and the Constitutional Court, in a decision that would later be highly debated, canceled the first round because the quorum of 367 was not reached. On May 6, 2007, in the second round of the parliamentary elections, the number 367 was not reached and therefore the president could not be elected. Accordingly, the AKP decided to call early elections and increased its vote share to 47% in the General Elections held on July 22, 2007. (Şık, 2014, pp. 164-166) The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which was able to enter the parliament by overcoming the threshold problem in the elections, supported Gül's candidacy with its support for the quorum in reaction to the 367 Resolution, which paved the way for Gül's candidacy and he was eventually elected as the 11th President (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014, p. 480).

All these developments, which can be seen as resistance to the AKP, did not stop the AKP's rise; on the contrary, the AKP, backed by greater popular support, began its "journeyman period" in 2007, as Prime Minister Erdoğan put it in later years. Ayan argues that AKP government has entered a period in which it has shifted its strategy from the acquisition of consent to the use of the apparatus of force and this also includes oppression on media and journalists (Ayan, 2019, p. 103). The Ergenekon process, which began with the discovery of explosive ammunition in a house in June 2007, is one of the first signs of what is to come in the AKP's new term in power (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014).

1.2 The Years Between 2008-2013

The Ergenekon process, which dates back to June 2007, and the Sledgehammer trial, which began in January 2010 with the publication of documents titled "Sledgehammer Operation Plan" in Taraf newspaper and the delivery of the documents in a suitcase to the Istanbul Courthouse on January 30, 2010, by Taraf newspaper writer Mehmet Baransu (Bianet, 2012) are known as two important political trials that marked this period.

During the Ergenekon investigation, initially announced as "a deep state investigation" and supported by many self-described liberals (Bianet, 2008), and the subsequent Sledgehammer trials, many people from different sides were arrested in connection with coup and assassination plots (Şık, 2014, p. 168).

Another important development during this period was the closure lawsuit filed against the AKP on March 14, 2008 by the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation, Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya, on the grounds that it had "become a focus for acts against secularism". The case was concluded in the AKP's favor on July 30, 2008; the AKP was not shut down but was deprived of half of the Treasury aid it received in 2008 (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014, p. 52).

In addition, Türkiye went to the polls three times during this period: a local election (2009), a referendum (2010) and a general election (2011). For the AKP, which lost 38% of its votes in the 2009 local elections, Aydın and Taşkın argue that the AKP is honed for the 2011 general elections since it lost votes compared to the previous elections (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014, p. 483). As a matter of fact, on the way to

the 2011 General Elections, Prime Minister Erdoğan announced that he had left his apprenticeship and journeyman period behind and that the period of mastery had begun (Arslan, 2011), as a result, the AKP increased its share of the vote to 49.8% and the number of its seats in parliament reached 327.

The 2010 Constitutional Referendum is characterized as a turning point for Türkiye in many respects. In 2010, the AKP submitted a 27-article constitutional amendment package to parliament, including important articles on the Constitutional Court and the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014, p. 486). Accordingly, it was decided to submit the package to a referendum on September 12, 2010.

The referendum on constitutional amendments was presented as a confrontation with the September 12 mentality; the AKP found a certain amount of support, including from those who define themselves as liberals and democrats, such as the "not enough but yes" people, and the referendum resulted in a 58% yes vote. Şık argues that with the 2010 referendum, the Gülen movement was appointed to key positions in the judiciary (Şık, 2014, pp. 176-177). Aydın and Taşkın also point out that in the Supreme Court of Appeals and the Council of State, names close to the Gülen movement are predominantly appointed and see the referendum as another case of "takeover" rather than reform (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014, p. 487). On September 13, 2010, Taraf and Star newspapers announced the results of the referendum with the same headline "People seized power". Ayan states that these headlines reveal the relationship between media and power (Ayan, 2019, p. 136).

Considering the lawsuits, detentions and arrests of journalists in the following period, it is obvious that the transformation of the judiciary is essential for the media in Türkiye.

Another important historical event is the Roboski incident, which reveals the current situation and silence of the mainstream media. On 28 December 2011, 34 Kurdish civilians were killed in an airstrike by the Turkish army on the southeastern border (Bianet, 2012), but no mainstream media reported from the region before the General Staff made a statement. Yanardağoğlu suggests that this may have been a turning point where journalists and citizens in Türkiye turned to social media for alternative news sources (Yanardağoğlu, 2019). In the debates that followed the

silence of the mainstream media during the Gezi protests in 2013, the example of Roboski constituted an important example in terms of revealing that the mainstream media was under the control of the government.

1.2.1 The Trajectory in Media Between 2008-2013

The years 2008-2013 were challenging for journalists and media workers. This period was marked by lawsuits, arrests and dismissals against journalists. The "pool media" was born in this period (Ayan, 2019, p. 111). The pro-government media's expansion and the collapse of the mainstream media reached its peak in this period.

The arrests of journalists during the Ergenekon investigation and the unprecedented tax fines imposed on the Doğan Media Group are good examples of how the AKP used the judiciary to its advantage in the media sector. On the other hand, the regulation of the internet environment through the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) and access blocks were also among the AKP's methods of controlling the media during this period (Akser & Hawks, 2012, pp. 308-309).

In this period, in which both internal position and general staff changes in media organizations accelerated, names opposing the government were dismissed, and the collapse of the mainstream media was sort of completed, there is no media group in the sector that was not affected, and the pressure of power intensified and diversified in each of them, albeit in different forms.

For instance, on February 26, 2010, in his speech at the AKP Extended Provincial Heads Meeting, Prime Minister Erdoğan called on "bosses to control the columnists they pay"⁴, in the same year, the 'Platform for Freedom for Journalists', which gathered 17 professional organizations under its umbrella, issued a statement on September 24, 2010, stating that Erdoğan's remarks embodied the state of the media⁵.

⁴ Bianet, "Cumhurbaşkanı Adayı Erdoğan'ın 12 Yıllık Medya Söylevleri", 04.07.2014
<https://bianet.org/haber/cumhurbaskani-adayi-erdogan-in-12-yillik-medya-soylevleri-156953>

⁵ Cumhuriyet, "Gazetecilere Özgürlük Platformu" 24.09.2010
<https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/gazetecilere-ozgurluk-platformu-181152>

Another example is from, Mustafa Hoş, former Editor-in-Chief of NTV, which belongs to the Doğuş Media Group, says that in 2009 all channels started to broadcast all of Prime Minister Erdoğan's speeches live without interruption:

“2009 was the year when the government made its pressure on the media felt. All Erdoğan's speeches were now broadcast live on all channels. The Prime Ministry Press Center kept a tally of which channel went live at which minute. Second-by-second notes were taken and those who were late were immediately warned. Thus the era when NTV only give place to the prime minister live on air when he was talking about the agenda was over.” (Hoş, 2014, s. 89)

Ayan states that the attitude of the media during the Ergenekon and Balyoz (Sledgehammer) trials points to a serious crisis in the journalism profession. In this process, the news about the trials in media outlets close to the AKP is almost like an indictment (Ayan, 2019, p. 130). In addition, journalists were also targeted as part of the Ergenekon investigation that began in 2008, and journalist arrests began during this period (Akser & Hawks, 2012, p. 308).

1.2.1.1 Journalist Arrests

Yeşil analyses the arrests of journalists during the AKP period basically in three waves. The first wave took place in 2008, Tuncay Ozkan who was the owner of Kanaltürk was arrested. This arrest was followed in March 2009 by the arrest of Mustafa Balbay, Ankara Representative of Cumhuriyet newspaper, who was also arrested within the scope of the Ergenekon investigation. The second wave occurred in 2011, the operation organised against the Odatv website and known as the "Oda TV operation" took place. On 14 February 2011, on the instructions of Prosecutor Zekariya Öz, journalist Soner Yalçın, the concessionaire of Odatv, editor-in-chief Barış Pehlivan, news director Barış Terkoğlu and journalist Ayhan Bozkurt were detained. And the third one came in March 2011, the houses of journalists Müyesser Yıldız, Doğan Yurdakul, Mümtaz Idil, Coşkun Musluk, Sait Çakır, Nedim Şener, Ahmet Şık and İklim Bayraktar were searched and detained (Yeşil, 2016, pp. 99-100). Today these waves could only be described as a prelude to further arrests in the later years. In addition, again during this period, Kurdish journalists were detained and arrested within the scope of KCK operations and these arrests continued in the following years.

In parallel with these developments, it is not surprising to see that self-censorship practices are also a part of the working life of journalists. In her 2011 survey of journalists from various newspapers, Esra Arsan included self-censorship in her questions, and it became more visible that self-censorship is a very common journalistic practice in Türkiye (Arsan, 2011). Likewise in the same year, Finkel wrote about self-censorship as the most effective one in Türkiye, after he was fired from Today's Zaman for criticizing the Ergenekon investigation.

“But state repression is not the only problem; the jelly-like backbone of Türkiye’s Fourth Estate is also to blame. Sadly, the most effective censor in Türkiye today is the press itself. To adopt a stance critical of current policies is to position oneself in opposition to the government — and editors only do so as a calculated risk.” (Finkel, 2011)

1.2.1.2 The Changing Face of Mainstream Media between 2008-2013

One of the early incidents in which the fact that the mainstream media is under the control of the AKP government became evident was the Roboski events. The mainstream media did not cover the issue until the announcement published on the official website of the Turkish General Staff the following day and it is social media that the news heard and spread. This was also at this time, where “Mr. Erdoğan would be angry journalism” was born (Över, 2021).

As we already mention, AKP has not only created its own media, but has also tried to discipline other media (Eres & Yüksel, 2018). In these years, we can clearly see the traces of AKP's disciplining the media critical of itself by different means. The developments in mainstream media organizations during this period is conducive to see that. On the one hand, AKP media continued to grow and became more of a mouthpiece for the AKP, while on the other hand, mainstream media outlets started to have similar content; as a result, content diversity and pluralism decreased.

1.2.1.3 Towards Destruction: Doğan Media Group

In the early years of the AKP's rise to power, Doğan Group was one of the media groups that suffered from the 2001 crisis and was forced to downsize but managed to survive. During this period, Doğan bought the Uzan Group-owned Star TV, which had

been seized by the TMSF, and later acquired Vatan, a newspaper founded by people who had left Sabah Newspaper (Adaklı, 2009).

Prior to the 2002 elections, the Doğan Group favored the Republican People's Party (CHP) which is the main opposition party and was expected to fall out with the government after the AKP won the elections, but Doğan softened its stance towards the AKP and the two did not come to blows until the Deniz Feneri case in September 2008.

When Baykal, the leader of CHP, said on NTV that the defendant in the Deniz Feneri case had transferred money to Prime Minister Erdoğan, newspapers belonging to the Doğan Media Group carried this news in their headlines the next day and the expected fight between the AKP government and the Doğan Group finally took place.

Prime Minister Erdoğan claimed that the news reports in the Doğan Group were made because the Group was unable to obtain the commercial permits it demanded and targeted the Doğan Media Group in many of his speeches.

In response, Doğan Group Chairman Aydın Doğan said, *"It is not an acceptable attitude for the prime minister of a democratic country to try to intimidate a media group by targeting it at party rallies."*⁶

Following this statement, Prime Minister Erdoğan called for a boycott of the Doğan Media Group only a few days later at an iftar program organized by the Ankara Provincial Directorate of his party⁷:

"The media in this country has lost its credibility, it has finished itself. Know this As members of my party, you should also campaign against the media that write falsehoods, continue your campaign, and do not let these newspapers into your homes. I am being very clear. They can interpret it differently. You are running such false campaigns against us and naturally and rightly we are starting our campaign against you. We will not buy them [the newspapers]."

⁶ Milliyet, "Aydın Doğan: Başbakana yakışmıyor" 13.09.2008

<https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/aydin-dogan-basbakana-yakismiyor-990706>

⁷ Gazete Vatan, "Basını boykotla tehdit etti" 19.08.2008 <https://www.gazetevatan.com/gundem/basini-boykotla-tehdit-etti-199559>

The war against the Doğan Group did not stop there; in 2009, a total of \$4.8 billion in tax penalties were imposed on the Group, including interest. Following the second tax penalty, Aydın Doğan stepped down as Chairman of the Board of Doğan Companies in January 2010 and was replaced by his daughter Arzuhan Yalçındağ. Following these fines, Doğan Media Group downsized, first selling Milliyet and Vatan newspapers to the Demirören-Karacan partnership and Star TV to the Doğu Group in 2011. By 2012, Milliyet and Vatan newspapers were fully owned by Demirören. In addition, the Doğan Group's Radikal newspaper moved to a tabloid format, and Eyüp Can Sağlık, who had worked at Zaman, a Gülenist media outlet, was appointed editor-in-chief (Mavioğlu, 2012, pp. 49-54).

The downsizing story of the Doğan Group, which had been dominating the media industry, has been interpreted as an attempt to intimidate media investors (Sözeri ve Güney, 2011). On the other hand, the outcome of the AKP's struggle with the Doğan Group was interpreted as a major victory for the AKP (Mavioğlu, 2012, p. 55). In this respect, we can see the gradual withdrawal of the Doğan Media Group from the sector as a product of the AKP's efforts to discipline and redesign the mainstream media by mobilizing the various means of the state at its disposal.

As a matter of fact, in his column dated February 5, 2012, Rasim Ozan Kütahyalı, a columnist for Sabah newspaper, which is known to be close to the government, writes that the old Türkiye has been demolished, the construction of the new Türkiye has begun and the flagship status in the media has been transferred from Hürriyet to Sabah newspaper and from the Doğan Media Group to the Turkuvaz Media Group⁸:

"The flagship of the old Türkiye in the media was undoubtedly the Hürriyet newspaper and the Doğan media. The flagship of the new Türkiye is SABAH newspaper and the Turkuvaz Media Group... SABAH newspaper is the most pioneering and powerful force of the new Turkish media. As a matter of fact, Aydın Doğan is also aware of this."

Not only did the Doğan Media Group downsize to escape the government's fury, but the downsizing was accompanied by purges of its staff writers and management

⁸ Sabah, Rasim Ozan Kütahyalı' article, "SABAH, Yeni Türkiye ve Aydın Doğan" 05.02.2012
<https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/pazar/kutahyalı/2012/02/05/sabah-yeni-turkiye-ve-aydin-dogan>

changes. In 2007, Emin Çölaşan was fired from Hürriyet, and in his book of memoirs published in the same year, he explained that he was fired due to government pressure (Demir, 2013, p. 64).

Another example of Doğan Group's purges is Bekir Coşkun, who left the newspaper in 2009 when tax fines were imposed. During the 2007 presidential elections, Coşkun sparred with Prime Minister Erdoğan through his column in the newspaper. Later, in an interview with Deniz Güçer of Akşam newspaper⁹, Coşkun stated that he quit his job due to the pressure exerted on the newspaper by the government.

Similarly, Ertuğrul Özkök stepped down as Hürriyet Editor-in-Chief in 2009, a position he had held for 20 years, and was replaced by Enis Berberoğlu. This was followed by the resignations of Oktay Ekşi in 2010, Cüneyt Ülsever in 2011, and Özdemir İnce and Rahmi Turan in 2012, all of whom were known to oppose the AKP (Ayan, 2019, pp. 161-162; Demir, 2013, pp. 63-65).

A similar process took place at Radikal, which is owned by the Doğan Group. As mentioned earlier, Eyüp Can Sağlık, a former employee of Zaman newspaper, was appointed Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper in 2010. After his appointment, Sağlık initiated a "restructuring" process and did not want to work with Radikal writers Haluk Şahin, Türker Alkan, and Mehmet Ali Kışlalı and parted ways with them. Ayan states that the fact that all the writers the newspaper parted ways with were AKP opponents shows that the matter was less about "restructuring" and more about the removal of opposition figures (Ayan, 2019, p. 162).

There is a similar purge in Vatan newspaper. Vatan columnist Necati Doğru resigned when his column on the government was not published. Similarly, writer Mine Kırıkkanat was fired from the newspaper on the grounds that she had her article published in Sözcü when her article criticizing Emine Erdoğan, the wife of Prime Minister Erdoğan, was not published in Vatan (Demir, 2013, pp. 66-68).

When we look at the situation of other media groups in the same period, we see that what happened to the Doğan Group sets an example. In the mainstream media, the

⁹ Ege'de son söz, "Bekir Coşkun Hürriyet'ten Neden Ayrıldığını Anlattı" 10.09.2009
<https://www.egedesonsoz.com/haber/bekir-coskun-hurriyet-ten-neden-ayrildigini-anlatti-/62633>

editorial policies and writing staffs of widely watched television channels and widely read newspapers have changed. From the purging of journalists critical of the AKP to conservative staff transfers (Aydın U. , 2015, p. 48), from editorial policies moderate to the government to a softer editorial language, many developments reflect the spirit of this period.

1.2.1.4 New Favorite: Demiroren Group

Demirören, a new entrant in the media sector, became the new favourite of the AKP in this period. The pro-government stance of the newspapers under the group and the purges in their staffs are therefore not surprising.

Nuray Mert, who voluntarily left Radikal after the change in management, became the first person to be fired from Milliyet, which is part of the Demirören Group. The reason given for Mert's resignation was an interview she gave to Fırat News Agency. In the interview mentioned above, Mert said of the AKP's double roads, *"Not to make a comparison, not in the sense that this will be followed by a massacre. In 1935, in the first reports, there was always talk about building roads, because roads are needed for the operation to be carried out here. Not that it will be like a massacre like in 1935, but it is the infrastructure of the violence policies in that region at the moment, to remind you of that parallel."* and she was subsequently targeted by Prime Minister Erdoğan. In his speech at an election rally in Konya, Erdoğan openly targeted Nuray Mert, saying¹⁰:

"A lady journalist, she is a columnist. In recent years she has been hysterically spewing venom. She makes a statement to the PKK's media outlet, she says 'the politics of the road and force go hand in hand'. What she says? In 1935, before the Dersim Massacre, a road was built here for the operation. This is how she interprets the AK Party's double roads. She means that we are supposedly building double roads for operations like in Dersim. This is not chivalry but dishonor¹¹."

Following Nuray Mert, the next person to part ways with Milliyet was Metin Münir, who was fired via e-mail in November 2012. Münir spoke to T24 after his

¹⁰ Habertürk, "Erdoğan'dan Nuray Mert'e çok sert sözler!" 03.06.2011
<https://www.haberturk.com/medya/haber/636690-erdogandan-nuray-merte-cok-sert-sozler>

¹¹ Nuray Mert's surname "mert" means "chivalrous" in Turkish.

dismissal and explained his situation with the words "They want a newspaper that the Prime Minister will like"¹².

"Erdoğan Demirören, who bought the newspaper, is a conservative, pro-AKP businessman. His main aim was to please the Prime Minister and make friends with the administration for his companies outside the media. He bought Milliyet with the Prime Minister's approval. He wants to make a newspaper that he [Prime Minister] will like."

In February 2013, an article by Namık Durukan titled "İmralı Zabıtları" (İmralı Minutes) caused an earthquake in Milliyet. The İmralı Minutes consist of the minutes of the meeting between the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which was the Kurdish political party, delegation and Öcalan in İmralı during the Resolution Process. The article was characterized as sabotage and conspiracy by AKP supporters and pro-government media, and Milliyet newspaper was targeted (Sazak, 2014).

Milliyet columnist Hasan Cemal addressed Prime Minister Erdoğan in an article¹³ he wrote on March 2: "Mr. Prime Minister, history is sometimes caught while living, the hand of history is on your shoulder again, don't let the opportunity for peace slip away this time!". On the same day, in his speech at an opening ceremony in Balıkesir, Prime Minister Erdoğan spoke for the first time about the İmralı Minutes and reacted harshly to the article by saying "If this is how you practice journalism, damn your journalism!"¹⁴ (Yeşil, 2016, p. 137). In response, Cemal's column was not published for two weeks, and the news of his leaving Milliyet was shared in Doğan Akın's column on T24, along with his unpublished column¹⁵.

1.2.1.4 The Others Are Taking Their Places: Doğuş Group, Ciner Group, Çukurova Group

In this period, Doğuş Group was also affected by the AKP's efforts to discipline and design the mainstream media. The dismissal of Mustafa Hoş, Editor-in-Chief of

¹² T24, Hazal Özvarış's article, "Metin Münir: Demirören, Milliyet'i Başbakan'ın oluru ile aldı" 12.11.2012 <https://t24.com.tr/haber/metin-munir-demiroren-milliyeti-basbakanin-oluru-ile-aldi,217148>

¹⁴ TRT Haber, "Batsın sizin gazeteciliğiniz" 02.03.2013 <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/batsin-sizin-gazeteciliginiz-76814.html>

¹⁵ T24, Doğan Akın, "Hasan Cemal Milliyet'ten ayrılıyor!" 18.03.2013 <https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/dogan-akin/hasan-cemal-milliyetten-ayriliyor,6360>

NTV, one of the Group's leading channels, in 2010 is considered to be the beginning of the purge of journalists in Dođuş Group (Ayan, 2019, pp. 164-166). In 2010, Hoş announced the detention of Erzincan Chief Public Prosecutor İlhan Cihaner in his office during the Ergenekon Trial with the headline "Blockade against the Chief Public Prosecutor" and was forced to resign the next day¹⁶.

What happened in the Dođuş Group just before and after the June 2011 general elections reveals the AKP government's position on the media sector and journalists. Can Dündar, Banu Güven, Ruşen Çakır and Mirgün Cabas, known for their critical stance towards the government, were "sent on vacation" by NTV management just before the elections; after the elections, some of them left the channel and others were assigned to other jobs. For example, in July 2011, Banu Güven, who had been working at NTV for 14 years, was fired and her program was canceled, while Can Dündar, who had been working at the channel since 2006 and had last presented the main news bulletin, announced his resignation on July 29, 2011. Nuray Mert's program Basın Odası (Press Room), the first name to leave Milliyet, was also taken off the air during this period. Çiğdem Anad, whose programs were canceled, was appointed editor-in-chief of Star TV; Mirgün Cabas was appointed editor-in-chief of GQ magazine, replacing his duties at NTV; both names resigned after Nermin Yurteri was appointed editor-in-chief of NTV in 2013 (Ayan, 2019, p. 164).

With the transfer of the channel from the Doğan Group to the Dođuş Group, there were also purges at Star TV. Uğur Dündar, who was the Editor-in-Chief of Star News before the channel was sold, lost his job after the sale and was unable to find a place for himself in either the Doğan or Dođuş groups (Demir, 2013, pp. 71-73). In an interview with Hande Zeyrek of Sözcü newspaper, Dündar made the following remarks about the Dođuş Group¹⁷:

"There is no Can Dündar, no Ruşen Çakır, no Banu Güven, no Çiğdem Anad on NTV. Even Mehmet Barlas and Emre Kongar, who created a school in terms of debate culture, don't have programs. The boss of a screen without these would not want either Uğur Dündar or Yılmaz Özdil."

¹⁶ Birgün, "Başsavcıya abluka' haberi istifa ettirdi" 18.02.2010
<https://www.birgun.net/haber/bassavciya-abluka-haberi-istifa-ettirdi-51113>

¹⁷ T24, Hande Zeyrek's article, "Uğur Dündar: Karar önceden verilmiş" 06.11.2011
<https://t24.com.tr/haber/ugur-dundar-karar-onceden-verilmis.179945>

Despite losing ATV-Sabah, the Ciner Group re-entered the media sector in 2007 with the acquisition of Habertürk TV, founded by Ufuk Güldemir. In 2009, Yiğit Bulut, known to be close to Prime Minister Erdoğan, was appointed as the head of Habertürk TV, and Fatih Altaylı was appointed as the Editor-in-Chief of Habertürk newspaper, which was established in 2009. It is known that Yiğit Bulut, who was terminated as Editor-in-Chief of Habertürk TV in 2012, was appointed Chief Advisor to the Prime Ministry in 2013 and Chief Advisor to the Presidency in 2014 (Ayan, 2019, p. 167).

Mavioğlu states that the Ciner Group Media has investments in other areas and that these investments have grown during the AKP era, and that the Group has avoided conflict with the AKP since the day it started broadcasting. An example of this is the dismissal of Ece Temelkuran, who was transferred from Milliyet, on January 4, 2012. Temelkuran said she was fired because of the articles she wrote just before her dismissal in which she criticized the government and Erdoğan (Mavioğlu, 2012, p. 59; Demir, 2013, p. 70). After leaving Hürriyet, Bekir Coşkun started writing for Habertürk newspaper, where he worked for only one year and was dismissed on September 20, 2010. It is known that Coşkun was asked not to write before the September 12, 2010 referendum and that one day after the referendum, his article on the referendum titled "You have passed to Advanced Democracy" was not published and his job was terminated (Ayan, 2019, p. 70).

On the other hand, it is known that Mehmet Fatih Saraç, the son of Emin Saraç, one of the Naqshbandi sheikhs with whom Prime Minister Erdoğan was introduced, became a shareholder in various companies of the Ciner Group, and in December 2012 he became Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Ciner Yayın Holding and Habertürk (Çam & Şanlıer Yüksel, 2015, p. 73).

Adaklı notes that the allegations that Mehmet Fatih Saraç, who was appointed to the management of both the media group and the holding company, was brought to these positions at the request of Prime Minister Erdoğan have been concretized in the tapes circulated on the internet. These tapes also reveal that on June 4, 2013, during the Gezi protests, Prime Minister Erdoğan personally called Saraç and instructed him to immediately remove the scrolling text on the Habertürk screen (Adaklı, 2014).

The media companies of the Çukurova Group, whose two major financial institutions were also seized in 2002 and whose most valuable investments were Turkcell and Digitürk, such as Show TV, Skytürk and Akşam newspaper, have become increasingly loss-making; employees of these loss-making media companies have not received their salaries for months (Adaklı, 2014). In May 2013, the TMSF seized the Çukurova Media Group due to its \$455 million debt to the state, and shortly afterwards sold the group's largest media outlet, Show TV, to Turgay Ciner for \$402 million (Sözeri, 2015, p. 13). It was announced that the Cengiz-Limak-Kolin construction partnership, known for winning the tender for the third airport in Istanbul, would buy the other media outlets except for Show TV, but Limak announced that they were abandoning this purchase. All companies belonging to the Çukurova Media Group, including Akşam and Skytürk, were eventually sold to the Sancak Group for 62 million dollars.

1.2.1.6 Anadolu Agency and Turkish Radio and Television

In addition to mainstream media outlets, there have been parallel developments in state news agencies. Yeşil argues that this is a process of politicization of state institutions and can be understood by looking at the changes in the Anadolu Agency (AA), Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) and RTÜK, which act as proxies of the AKP (Yeşil, 2016, p. 131).

The change in Anadolu Agency took place in 2011, when Kemal Öztürk, who served as an advisor and chief advisor to the Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Bülent Arınç for a period, then as an advisor to Prime Minister Erdoğan in 2008, and finally as Erdoğan's press advisor between 2009 and 2011 after Akif Beki, was appointed as the head of AA.¹⁸ After he took over, Öztürk retired some of his staff. The distant attitude of those who started working under Öztürk towards the Journalists' Union of Türkiye (TGS) was also noteworthy.

Mavioğlu explains that during this period there was a demand for an extraordinary general assembly at the TGS, but a new journalists' union was established before this demand was realized. As a result of pressure from the top, during the Öztürk era, most AA employees became members of Medya-İş, a union

¹⁸ Üsküdar Üniversitesi, "Akademik Kadro, Kemal Öztürk" <https://uskudar.edu.tr/akademik-personel/kemal-ozturk>

affiliated with the HAK-İŞ Confederation. Mavioğlu states that employees who were not members of Medya-İs were repeatedly subjected to investigations and were disempowered within the organization (Mavioğlu, 2012, pp. 142-144).

The Turkish Radio and Television is the national public broadcaster of Türkiye, founded in 1964 and defined the Law no. 2954, is an “impartial public entity.”¹⁹ Although TRT has always been accused of not being fully independent, the developments in the organization's staff and broadcasting policy during the AKP era have taken this to a new level. (Mavioğlu, 2012; Yeşil, 2016) For instance, Mavioğlu draws attention to the staff changes at TRT during the AKP era by referring to a press statement made by CHP MP Atilla Kart on April 17, 2009. Accordingly, a significant portion of the new staff was transferred from media outlets close to the Gülen movement and the government (Mavioğlu, 2012, pp. 137-138). In recent years, however, TRT is most often the subject of debate during election periods. In this context, in the run-up to the elections, TRT's unfair distribution of time allocated to candidates has attracted reactions (Esen, Gümüştü, & Yavuzylmaz, 2023). We will return to this issue in the next period.

1.2.1.7 A Newborn: “Pool Media”

Ayan mentions that while the AKP derives its power from the Islamist bourgeoisie, it also empowers the Islamist bourgeoisie with its neoliberal policies throughout its rule. In this direction, rising capital groups have transformed the media industry in Türkiye; new names such as Ahmet Çalık, Ethem Sancak, Akın İpek and Fettah Tamince have entered the sector; and groups such as Çalık, Sancak and Kalyon, which rose to prominence during the AKP era, have invested in the media²⁰ (Ayan, 2019, pp. 113-114).

Sözeri points out that many media companies continue to broadcast even though they are not economically profitable and some of them are even loss-making, and that

¹⁹ Media Ownership Monitor 2016, “Political Affiliations” <https://Türkiye.mom-rsf.org/en/findings/political-affiliations/>

²⁰ In his doctoral dissertation, Vahdet Mesut Ayan (2018, p.112) examines in detail the capital groups that have a direct and indirect stake in the transformation of the media industry during the AKP era. For more: Ayan V. M., (2018) Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi Döneminde Türkiye Medyası ve Tarihsel Blokun Dönüşümü, PhD Thesis, Ankara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Journalism, Ankara

although the media field itself is not a profitable investment, the importance of the role it plays between the government and capital groups can be understood when looking at public tenders. Capital groups, which have investments in many different fields and have grown through privatizations and public tenders during the AKP rule, seem to be operating in the media sector "at the request/pressure of the government" in favor of their main investments in non-media fields (Sözeri, 2015, pp. 14-15).

Sözeri (2015) says that the acquisition of ATV-Sabah media by the Çalık Group, which has investments in many sectors from energy to construction, finance to telecommunications, as mentioned in the first chapter, can serve as an example of this. Among the capital groups that grew during the AKP era and entered the media sector, Çalık was followed by Ethem Sancak, who has investments in many fields such as health, education, energy, construction, real estate, logistics, agriculture as well as animal husbandry. Sancak Group, which entered the media sector by acquiring Star Media Group and Kanal 24, but sold out after a short period of time, returned to the media sector in 2013 by purchasing the media companies belonging to Çukurova Group, except Show TV, through the TMSF for 62 million dollars.

On the other hand, Zirve Holding, which bought ATV-Sabah from the Çalık Group in 2013, has become a new actor in the media sector. It was not even announced how much Zirve Holding bought ATV-Sabah media. It was revealed that Zirve Holding was registered with the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce in 2013²¹; In tapes circulated on the internet after the December 17-25 operations, it was claimed that a pool was created with the contribution of many investors and that the acquisition was realized through this pool (Sözeri, 2015, p. 12). It was later revealed that the name behind Zirve Holding was Orhan Kemal Kalyoncu, the owner of the Kalyon Group, a construction giant that grew during the AKP era. The Kalyon Group is known for the large tenders it won during the AKP era.

Ayan argues that some conglomerates such as Cengiz Holding, İÇ Holding, Kiler Holding, Kuzu Holding which have investments in the construction, energy and infrastructure sectors and have risen during the AKP era, have played a role in the transformation of the media through their contributions to the pool, even though they

²¹ Hürriyet, "Sabah ve ATV Kalyon'a satıldı" 20.12.2013 <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/sabah-ve-atv-kalyona-satildi-25407253>

do not directly own the media (Ayan, 2019, p. 120). Thus, the concept of "pool media" was brought into the Turkish literature.

1.2.1.8 Gülenist Media

The Gülenist media, which has followed a pro-government editorial policy and supported the AKP's policies since the day the AKP came to power, played an important role in the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials and supported the AKP by engaging in what Mavioğlu calls "a kind of operation journalism" (Mavioğlu, 2012, p. 41).

We have already mentioned that the Gulenist media was already in existence when the AKP came to power, but that it grew with the Koza-İpek group owned by Akin İpek, who entered the media as a new actor during the AKP era. This growth continued in the 2008-2013 period. For example, Zaman newspaper, owned by the Feza Group, increased its circulation from around 200,000 in 2001 to over 1 million by the end of 2012, making it the newspaper with the highest circulation in Türkiye. However, unlike other newspapers, the newspaper has a subscription system and sends free newspapers to its members, which makes this controversial (Çam & Şanlıer Yüksel, 2015, p. 75).

New channels and newspapers continued to be launched at the beginning of this period. An example is Bugün TV, established in 2009 by the Koza-İpek Group, which entered the media sector by purchasing Bugün newspaper from the Ilıcak family. Similar to Taraf, Bugün newspaper is also known for its news reports based on information leaked by the police and prosecutor's office during the Ergenekon investigation. Bugün TV was followed by Ses TV, which was founded in 2010 by Osman Gökçek, the son of then Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Melih Gökçek, and later renamed Beyaz TV. Beyaz TV has started to be effective in the media field since 2012 by including popular celebrities such as Seda Sayan on its channel (Mavioğlu, 2012, p. 40).

On the other hand, the media of the Koza-İpek group is very favorable for observing the changing relations between the AKP and the Gülen movement. Following the rift between the Gülen movement and the AKP, anti-government rhetoric began to feature prominently on the front pages of Bugün newspaper.

However, the newspaper's anti-government discourse did not go unpunished. Shortly after Prime Minister Erdoğan's remarks against Koza Altın, one of Koza Altın's mining operations, Çukuralan, was suspended by the İzmir Special Provincial Administration on the grounds that it did not have an environmental permit²²

1.2.1.9 Taraf Newspaper

We have already mentioned the allegations that the Taraf newspaper was associated with the Gülen movement and that it had access to secret military documents through the Gülen movement's organization in the police force. The newspaper, which supported the Ergenekon process by carrying confidential information in its headlines, also played a major role in the opening of the Sledgehammer Trial; the trial process began when Taraf writer Mehmet Baransu delivered a suitcase full of documents to the Istanbul Courthouse.

In late 2012, following the rift between the AKP and the Gülen movement, Taraf's editorial policy changed, supporting allegations that it was close to the movement. Like the Koza-İpek group-owned Bugün newspaper, Taraf newspaper started to develop anti-AKP rhetoric, first targeting National Intelligence Organization (MIT) and then, after Prime Minister Erdoğan's defense of MIT, directly targeting Erdoğan (Mavioğlu, 2012, p. 44). Taraf's March 6, 2012 article titled "Stratfor has given Erdoğan a life expectancy" angered Erdoğan; at the opening of his party's Expanded Provincial Heads Meeting, Erdoğan described Taraf newspaper as a coin-operated jukebox²³:

“(...) Whatever you choose, you listen to it for a lira. Right now, just like those jukeboxes that work with a lira, there are people who publish headlines and columns. They take the coin and publish headlines. They take the coin and publish columns.”

Mavioğlu argues that it cannot be a coincidence that Taraf adopted an anti-AKP discourse precisely during the MIT crisis (Mavioğlu, 2012, p. 47). Furthermore, Taraf, one of the newspapers that most frequently reported on corruption allegations, was

²² Evrensel, “Koza Altın’ın madenlerinden biri durduruldu” 31.12.2013
<https://www.evrensel.net/haber/75343/koza-altinin-madenlerinden-biri-durduruldu>

²³ Anadolu Ajansı, “Bize ömür biçenler cüretkardır” 02.03.2012
<https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/bize-omur-bicenler-curet kardir/378430>

fined 5.5 million liras in 2014. This is the first time such a fine has been imposed on a newspaper (Sözeri, 2015, p. 29).

1.2.2 Closing an Era

By 2013, the media in Türkiye had reached a maturity that could be characterized as "AKP media". On the one hand, many mainstream media outlets were handed over to businesspeople close to the government, and on the other, the "pool media" was born. In 2013, the Gezi protests would reveal the extent to which the mainstream media had become corrupt, and in the same year, the split between the AKP and the Gülen Movement would lead to the Gülenist media breaking away from the AKP media.

1.3 The Years Between 2013-2016

The years 2013-2016, perhaps the longest three years in Türkiye's recent history, have been host to many social and political events. The Gezi Resistance, which started in May 2013, is regarded as the most widespread civil protest in Türkiye. The protests that started in Gezi Park in Istanbul spread to other cities and millions of people participated in the protests, which were met with harsh police intervention.

By the end of 2013, the rift between the Gülen Movement and the AKP had widened and reached an undeniable scale with the 17-25 December operations. In the same period, Can Dündar and Erdem Gül from Cumhuriyet newspaper were arrested for reporting on the MIT trucks in 2014. In the local elections held in March 2014, AKP once again received a majority of the votes in many provinces and maintained its local power. In August 2014, AKP leader and then prime minister Erdoğan, who ran for the presidency, won the election and became the 12th president²⁴.

In the general elections held in 2015, the AKP suffered its first electoral defeat since coming to power. Following the AKP's failure to secure enough votes to form a government on its own, coalition efforts were initiated but remained inconclusive. During this period, Türkiye began to experience its darkest period and terrorist attacks and explosions became the sole agenda of the public. In the meantime, the general elections were held again in November 2015, the AKP regained majority and received enough votes to form a government on its own and became the ruling party once again.

²⁴ Anadolu Ajansı, "YSK kesin seçim sonuçlarını açıkladı" 15.08.2014
<https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/ysk-kesin-secim-sonuclarini-acikladi/131114>

In the 18-month period from June 2015 to December 2016, 497 people lost their lives²⁵.

1.3.1 Trajectory in Media Between 2013-2016

1.3.1.1 A Milestone: Before and After Gezi Resistance

With the Gezi Resistance, the attitude of the media has become visible, and the government-driven editorial policies of the widely read and watched mainstream press and broadcasting organizations have reached an undeniable level with all its clarity. Esra Arsan (2014, p. 353) states that there was a Gezi-ish awakening in the media and a Gezi-ish transformation in the perception of the media during the Gezi process; especially when people living in big cities and witnessing the resistance realized that what they saw was not covered in the media, they started not to buy the newspapers they always read and not to watch the television channels they always watched.

During this process, while the pro-government media published unfounded allegations and fictitious interviews, Prime Minister Erdoğan's speech in Tunisia was published in seven newspapers the next day with the same headline, "Demokratik taleplere can feda" (for the sake of democracy). Milliyet Editor-in-Chief Derya Sazak resigned during the Gezi days and was replaced by Milliyet writer Fikret Bila;²⁶ Milliyet columnist Can Dündar's job was terminated. Program "Heberler" which was broadcasted on Türkmax by Mehmet Ali Alabora, who was targeted by Yeni Şafak and Yeni Akit for his support to the resistance and against whom an investigation was launched on the grounds that he committed the crime of "armed rebellion against the Government of the Republic of Türkiye", had taken off the air during this period. The NTV History magazine was closed down due to its July issue, which was published with the cover "History written while living" and covered the Gezi resistance. TRT1 also canceled the TV series Leyla and Mecnun because its actors supported the Gezi resistance.²⁷ Similarly, during Gezi, Yeni Şafak writer Işın Eliçin was dismissed from the newspaper; Yavuz Baydar, Bilge Eser, Tuluhan Tekelioğlu were dismissed from

²⁵ BBC Türkçe, İrem Köker's article: "Türkiye'de Haziran 2015-Aralık 2016 arası düzenlenen saldırılarda 500'e yakın kişi hayatını kaybetti" 21.12.2016 <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-38365351>

²⁶ Hürriyet, "Milliyet'in başına Fikret Bila geldi" 30.07.2013 <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/milliyetin-basina-fikret-bila-geldi-24424885>

²⁷ Bianet, "Medyanın Dört Aylık "Gezi" Güncesi" 23.10.2013 <https://bianet.org/bianet/ifade-ozgurlugu/150727-medyanin-dort-aylik-gezi-guncesi>

Sabah; Murat Toklucu, Burcu Doğan, Onur Yazıcıoğlu and Özkan Güven resigned from NTV. In an interview with Tuğba Tekerek from Taraf newspaper, former NTV Program Editor Özkan Güven explained the reason for his resignation in the following words²⁸:

“When small children were shot in the eyes with gas canisters, when they were treated like insects and subjected to tear gas even though they had never been violent, the television was mute and deaf. After the Prime Minister, television channels claiming to be news channels received the biggest reaction in this whole process. During the day people were protesting against NTV, and at night people working at NTV were taking to the streets to protest against someone else. This was a sick situation. As a group of friends, we were very uncomfortable. We made our decision, we did the only thing we could do; we resigned.”

The Istanbul branch of the Journalists' Union of Türkiye also announced that 59 journalists were either fired or forced to resign during the Gezi resistance and branch chair Gökhan Durmuş stated: "The media, which serves the government rather than the people and usurps the public's freedom of information with its editorial policies based on censorship and disinformation, is going through one of its darkest periods²⁹.

Ayan argues that with the Gezi resistance, the government lost its external support and became increasingly locked into a narrower discourse (Ayan, 2019, p. 183). This situation deepened with the war between the AKP and the Gülen movement in the end of 2013.

1.3.1.2 Parting Ways with Gülen Movement: December 17-25 Operations

On the morning of December 17, 2013, in the "bribery and corruption operation" launched on the instructions of Public Prosecutors Celal Kara and Mehmet Yüzgeç and coordinated by then Istanbul Deputy Chief Public Prosecutor Zekeriya Öz, 89 people, including children of ministers, were detained on charges of bribery, abuse of office, bid rigging and smuggling, and 26 were arrested. On December 25, 2013, a new operation was organized. In the investigation planned to be conducted by Prosecutor

²⁸ Medyaradar, "Gezi İçin Kovulan 6 Gazeteci Taraf'a Konuştu!" 20.07.2013

<https://www.medyaradar.com/gezi-icin-kovulan-6-gazeteci-tarafa-konustu-haberi-102676>

²⁹ Bianet, Elif Akgül's article, "Gezi Direnişinde 59 Gazeteci İşten Çıkarıldı, İstifaya Zorlandı" 22.07.2013 <https://bianet.org/haber/gezi-direnisinde-59-gazeteci-isten-cikarildi-istifaya-zorlandi-148636>

Muammer Akkaş, 96 people were charged with 'establishing and leading an organization with the aim of committing a crime, bid rigging and bribery' and Bilal Erdoğan, the son of Prime Minister Erdoğan, was called to testify as a suspect; however, the police did not follow Prosecutor Akkaş's instructions and Bilal Erdoğan gave his statement on February 5, 2014 after a new prosecutor was appointed³⁰ (Hamsici, 2014).

On December 17, the day after the investigation began, there was a massive reshuffle in the police force, which enabled the government to prevent the investigation from deepening. It is estimated that around 6,000 police personnel were replaced after December 17. Ayan (2019, pp. 185-186) argues that these government measures determined the course of the December 17-25 corruption and bribery operations.

With the December 17-25 operations, the AKP-Gülen movement coalition completely disintegrated, the split that began to make itself felt in the media's news language and editorial policies with the MIT crisis in December 2012 deepened, and a war between the AKP and the Gülen movement began.

Arsan says that in the power struggle between the pro-AKP media and the Gülen movement media after the December 17-25 operations, documents were served from "the media fronts". (Arsan E. , 2014, p. 356), Sazak, on the other hand, comments that as a result of this war, new divisions have emerged in the media with the comment "the pro-government media has disintegrated". (Sazak, 2014, p. 281)

1.3.1.3 New Outlook of Media

When we look at all the developments in the mainstream media, we can say that by 2013, the changing roles in the media had settled on its new rails. On the one hand, the media organizations owned by the pro-government conglomerates such as Albayrak and Kalyon became the AKP's propaganda tool. On the other hand, the Ciner, Demirören, Doğan and Doğuş groups took their place in the AKP's media through clientelist relations, and lastly, the Gülenist media that worked in favour of the AKP

³⁰ BBC Türkçe, Mahmut Hamsici's article, "10 soruda: 17-25 Aralık operasyonları" 16.12.2014 https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/12/141212_17_25_aralik_operasyonu_neler_oldu_10_soruda

until the 2013 operations started to shift its position and took its place among the opposition media after the breakdown between the Gülen Movement and the AKP (Yeşil, 2016, pp. 115-116).

In this period, new press and broadcasting organizations also continued to add to the AKP media. Examples include the newspapers *Diriliş Postası* and *Yeni Söz*, which began publishing in 2015, and *İstiklal*, which was re-published in 2016 after acquiring the name rights. *Yeni Akit TV* was also launched in April 2015 and took its place in the AKP media (Ayan, 2019, p. 216).

On the other hand, TRT's broadcasting policy and the unfair distribution of its broadcasts to different parties started to become evident in this period. The reports published by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have revealed this situation (Esen, Gümüşçü, & Yavuzyılmaz, 2023). For example, in the run-up to the 2014 presidential elections, 51% of TRT broadcasts focused on AKP leader Erdoğan, while opposition candidates İhsanoğlu and Demirtaş received 32% and 18% of TRT airtime, respectively (OSCE, 2014). A similar situation was observed in the run-up to the June 2015 general elections, with TRT 1 news program adopting a pro-government stance for 46% of the broadcast time (OSCE, 2015a). During the November 2015 elections, which were repeated the same year, three of the five TV channels observed, including TRT, were found to follow a pro-AKP broadcasting policy (OSCE, 2015b). We will see this attitude continue in the next election periods.

As the AKP media continued to grow, the repression against independent media and journalists was increasing and new criminal cases and arrests of journalists were being added. This is particularly evident in the developments following the AKP's victory in the November 2015 general elections (Yeşil, 2016, pp. 144-145). What happened to Can Dündar, the Editor-in-Chief of *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, and Erdem Gül, its Ankara Representative, reveals the atmosphere in the media during this period. For reporting on intelligence agency trucks carrying weapons in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, President Erdoğan said, "Those who report the news will pay a high price" and both journalists were arrested in the end of 2015³¹ (McKernan, 2020).

³¹ The Guardian, Bethan McKernan's article "This article is more than 3 years old Turkey sentences journalist Can Dündar to 27 years in jail" 23.12.2020
<https://theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/23/turkey-sentences-journalist-can-dundar-27-years-jail>

In parallel with these developments, studies conducted in this period reveal how widespread self-censorship as well as censorship had become in the media³² (Dağıstanlı, 2014; Över, 2021). For instance, relying on 62 semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with journalists between 2012 and 2014, Över states that it is nothing but “Mr. Erdoğan would be angry” journalism. She argues that even if self-censorship is not a new phenomenon, recently, it has reached its peak to create a new trend which is “Mr. Erdoğan would be angry journalism”. She explains the reason for this as follows:

“For journalists, who experienced status loss, self-censorship, a form of unwilling submission, was the differentiating feature of journalism in the mainstream media, and this was a given consequence of the atmosphere of anxiety and fear.” (Över, 2021, p. 353)

Accordingly, Yeşil explains the reasons behind the normalization and strengthening of self-censorship as police and judicial response, wiretapping, the possibility of detention and arrest, and finally the financial risk of confronting the government. She adds that the effectiveness of the disciplinary mechanism increases as journalists adopt more self-censorship (Yeşil, 2014, pp. 169-169).

Meanwhile, under these circumstances, journalists purged from mainstream media organizations have turned to alternative media tools, established online media outlets or started to take part in these newly established media outlets. T24, one of the first examples of online journalism in Türkiye, founded in 2009, started to add experienced names to its staff in the wake of the purges in mainstream media organizations. Hasan Cemal and Şirin Payzın are some of these names. Among the new media outlets broadcasting on the internet, Diken newspaper was established in 2014, Medyascope in 2015 and Gazete Duvar in 2016.

Another turning point in recent Turkish history was the coup attempt on 15 July 2016. The state of emergency declared on 20 July 2016 immediately after the coup attempt became one of the effective instruments of the new phase of the AKP government. Ayan states that immediately after the coup attempt, the AKP government targeted the media in a manner not unlike military governments and that the pressure

³² In his book, 5 NE 1 KİM, Dağıstanlı gives different examples of censorship and self-censorship stories from Türkiye.

on the media manifested itself from the very first days of the coup attempt with the Decree Laws issued one after the other (Ayan, 2019, p. 234).

1.3.2 Trajectory in Media After 15 July 2016 Coup Attempt

Ayan (2019, p. 202) interprets the developments after the coup attempt as a process in which the Turkish media and journalism were eliminated in every respect. According to Bianet, the number of imprisoned journalists increased from 31 to 131 in 2016, at least 201 journalists and media workers were detained, 56 journalists and media workers were attacked, 118 journalists and 5 media organizations were threatened³³.

Ayan mentions that the state of emergency declared after the 15 July coup attempt facilitated the government's design of the media sphere, that the AKP "conquered" both the Gülenist media and the opposition media with the state of emergency decrees, and that it distributed the media outlets it seized to pro-government groups using the TMSF.³⁴ The formation of the AKP media continued with the media organizations sold by the TMSF without tenders and announcements, and the purge of the media from opposition voices has reached its final stage (Ayan, 2019, pp. 209-211). Among the media organizations transferred to the TMSF by the State of Emergency Decree Laws, there are not only Gülen movement media such as Cihan News Agency, but also leftist and Kurdish media organizations such as Jin News Agency, IMC TV etc. In this context, it would not be wrong to say that the government uses the means of the State of Emergency to silence all opposition to itself.

1.3.2.1 The Media Under State of Emergency

Declared on 20 July 2016 after the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016, the State of Emergency in Türkiye lasted for 2 years, extended seven times, and was lifted on 19 July 2018. In these two years, Türkiye was de facto governed by decrees with the force of law. A total of 32 decrees with the force of law were issued during this period. In this case, how RTÜK had been instrumentalized for media control has replaced by

³³ Bianet, Erol Önderoğlu's article, "2016: Gazeteciliğin OHAL Kısılcasına Alındığı Yıl" 17.02.2017 <https://bianet.org/haber/2016-gazeteciligini-ohal-kiskacina-alindigi-yil-183487>

³⁴ Ayan states that the relevant provisions of the Decree Law No. 668 dated 27.07.2016 and the Decree Law No. 674 dated 01.09.2016 enabled the transfer of media organizations to the TMSF, and that the transfers to the TMSF took place with the decision of the Council of Ministers without criminal investigation.

emergency decrees (Akser & Baybars, 2022) and this also applies to the TMSF, which is used for media takeovers in which AKP government can do what it wants with emergency decrees without the need for other means.

A total of 204 media organizations were ordered to be shut down by emergency decrees issued but 25 of them were cancelled and ultimately, 179 media outlets, including 3 newspapers, 34 TV channels, 37 radio stations, 20 magazines, 6 news agencies and 29 publishing houses, were closed down during the State of Emergency.³⁵

For instance, the AKP government appointed trustees to Koza-İpek Media Group and Feza Media Group. The appointed trustees closed down the newspapers Bugün and Millet, and Türksat, the sole communications satellite operator in Türkiye, terminated the broadcasting of channels such as Bugün TV, Kanaltürk TV, Samanyolu TV, S News TV, Mehtap TV and Irmak TV.³⁶

Another newspaper that came under the radar of the AKP government during the State of Emergency was Özgür Gündem, “a symbol of the Kurdish media and the first newspaper to publish daily in Turkish”, which has been published sometimes under different names since 1992³⁷. It was temporarily closed down on 16 August 2016 on the grounds of "making PKK propaganda and being a media organ of the organization". Özgür Gündem Editor-in-Chiefs Zana Bilir Kaya and İnan Kızılkaya, writers Aslı Erdoğan and Necmiye Alpay were arrested in August 2016. Prior to the closure of the newspaper, a "Co-Editorship-in-Chief Campaign" was launched in May 2016 in support of Özgür Gündem, and 50 out of 100 people who participated into campaign were investigated. On 29 October 2016, Özgür Gündem newspaper was completely shut down with a decree law issued.³⁸

1.3.3 Closing an Era

The state of emergency declared in the aftermath of the July 2015 coup attempt has pushed Türkiye over a new threshold. The repressive regime that the AKP government has been building both directly and indirectly through strategic steps was

³⁵ Bianet, “Media Ownership Monitor Türkiye 2016” <https://Türkiye.mom-rsf.org/tr/bulgular/el-koyulan-medya/>

³⁶ Bianet, “Media Ownership Monitor Türkiye: El koymalar” <https://Türkiye.mom-rsf.org/tr/bulgular/el-koyulan-medya/>

³⁷ Bianet, “Özgür Gündem Newspaper Shut Down” 16.08.2016 <https://bianet.org/haber/ozgur-gundem-newspaper-shut-down-177853>

³⁸ Evrensel, “Özgür Gündem” <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/405723/ozgur-gundem-gazetesi>

now in all its nakedness. From now on, the AKP will use the emergency decrees as an instrument to silence dissenting voices, and will increase the dose of repression, often without even trying to disguise it.

1.4 The Years Between 2017-2023

During the state of emergency, Türkiye held a referendum on 16 April 2017 on the transition from a parliamentary system to a presidential system, which resulted in the adoption of a "presidential system of government", described as a "Turkish-type presidency", with 51% yes votes. In June following the referendum, main opposition party leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu organized a march for justice to protest the twenty-five-year prison sentence and arrest of CHP Istanbul MP Enis Berberoğlu, who is on trial for allegedly giving the MIT trucks footage to former Cumhuriyet newspaper editor-in-chief Can Dündar. Next year, the government decided to hold a snap election on June 24 and the state of emergency was extended again and reorganized to cover the election period (Esen, Gümüşçü, & Yavuzylmaz, 2023, p. 187). With the 24 June 2018 elections, the Presidential Government System was put into practice. In the 2018 elections, the alliance system was also implemented for the first time and the AKP and MHP announced the formation of the "People's Alliance" and the CHP, SP, İyi Party and DP announced the formation of the "National Alliance"³⁹. The alliance system was essentially seen as a tactic to overcome the 10% electoral threshold. On the other hand, in the run-up to the elections, the use of state resources for President Erdoğan's campaign was a hotly debated topic. This is illustrated by the fact that 70% of the paid political advertisements aired on TRT1 were allocated to Erdoğan and the AKP, while 9% were allocated to the CHP and İnce, the candidate of the National Alliance. In the elections, the People's Alliance candidate Erdoğan was reelected as president with 52% of the vote, while the AKP lost its majority in parliament (Esen, Gümüşçü, & Yavuzylmaz, 2023, pp. 187-191).

In the spring of 2019, local elections took place. According to the results of the local elections, AK Party, which won the mayorships of 48 provinces in the previous local elections, won 39 provinces in this election, as a result, the share of the total population governed by the AK Party declined from 68.1% after the 2014 local

³⁹ Doğruluk Payı, Bengi Cengiz's article, "Seçim Öncesi İttifaklar" 09.05.2018 https://www.dogrulukpayi.com/bulten/secim-oncesi-ittifaklar?gclid=Cj0KCQIAAsburBhCIARIsAExmsu74QmfBDYOGSxBKHzUflJ4GTWdEQeCHvXkOjjvU2xhxUAK-ljiP35IaAhmLEALw_wcB

elections to 37.8% after the 2019 elections.⁴⁰ Among the provinces won by the CHP were Ankara, Istanbul, Adana, Mersin and Antalya, which are among the biggest cities in Türkiye.⁴¹ However, as a result of the Supreme Electoral Council's objection, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality elections were held again on Sunday, June 23, 2019. In the repeated election, Imamoğlu, the candidate of the Nation's Alliance, was elected as the Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, surpassing Yıldırım, the candidate of the People's Alliance, by a margin of approximately 806,415 votes.⁴²

1.4.1 Trajectory in Media Between 2017-2023

When we look at the reflection of these developments in the media, we see that many media outlets in the mainstream media have taken a pro-government stance, and that there has been a lack of fair campaigning during election periods, which can be seen in the duration of broadcasting. As we have already mentioned, TRT's pro-government stance continues to be blatantly obvious. The 2017 referendum process was no different. Again, according to the OSCE report, the 'Yes' and 'No' sides did not have equal access to the media during the campaign and TRT was one of the TV stations that supported the “Yes” campaign (OSCE, 2017).

According to OSCE, the 2018 presidential elections were also held in the presence of “numerous, but polarized media outlets” (OSCE, 2018). OSCE reports indicate that 70% of the political advertisements aired on TRT 1 were devoted to Erdoğan and AKP, while 9% were devoted to İnce and CHP (Esen, Gümüşçü, & Yavuzylmaz, 2023, pp. 190-191). At this point, it is worth recalling the sale of Doğan Media Group to Demirören Group shortly before the 2018 elections. We will take a closer look at the details and developments regarding this sale.

This also applies to the 2019 local elections. Esen et al. (2023, pp. 191-192) explain that while no politician from the ruling bloc was criticized, names from the opposition bloc were subjected to smear campaigns in the media. The media's bias was on display not only in the run-up to the election but also on the election night itself. A

⁴⁰ Doğruluk Payı, Emincan Yüksel, “Yerel Seçimler Sonrası Nüfus Dağılımı Nasıl Değişti?”, 05.04.2019 <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com/bulten/yerel-secimler-sonrasi-partiler-nufusun-ne-kadarini-yonetecekler>

⁴¹ Doğruluk Payı, Emincan Yüksel, “Yerel Seçimlerde El Değiştiren Belediyeler”, 02.04.2019, <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com/bulten/yerel-secimlerde-el-degistiren-belediyeler>

⁴² Doğruluk Payı, İrem Doğanışık, “23 Haziran İstanbul Seçimleri Sonrası Durum”, 25.06.2023, <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com/bulten/23-haziran-istanbul-secimleri-sonrasi-durum>

striking example of the state of the media is the unfortunate statement made by Anadolu Agency on the night of the 2019 local elections. Anadolu Agency announced that People's Alliance candidate Binali Yıldırım, who previously served as prime minister and minister of transportation, had won in Istanbul despite losing (Esen, Gümüüşü, & Yavuzyılmaz, 2023, p. 193). Thus, Yildirim's so-called victory was even announced on billboards all over the city of Istanbul.

A noteworthy development in terms of media in this period was the attempt to launch an independent television channel in the mainstream media after a long period of time. Founded on November 30, 2020, Olay TV was only able to continue broadcasting for 26 days due to political pressure and went off the air on December 25. The channel's staff included Nevşin Mengü, Özlem Akarsu Çelik, Duygu Demirdağ, Ali Ekber Aydın, Şafak Ongan, Nazlı Bolak, Gökhan Kayış, Ünal Kaya, Kenan Şener and Alican Uludağ, journalists previously known from mainstream media or other independent media outlets.⁴³ Following the closure, Cavit Çağlar, the owner of the channel's broadcasting rights and license, claimed that Olay TV was close to the line of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and that this made him unsettled. However, Süleyman Sarılar, the channel's editor-in-chief, stated that Çağlar had made statements that he was under pressure from the government.⁴⁴ It is possible to say that Olay TV was the last attempt on behalf of the traditional mainstream media.

Another oft-cited example of the death of the mainstream media is the resignation of Albayrak, President Erdogan's son-in-law and Minister of Treasury and Finance, announced on his personal Instagram account, which was not reported by any news channel. According to the BBC Turkish, mainstream news channels waited for a response from the Presidency to report on the resignation, despite having confirmed it.⁴⁵

⁴³ Bianet, "Olay TV yayın hayatına başladı", 30.10.2020 <https://bianet.org/haber/olay-tv-yayin-hayatina-basladi-235220>

⁴⁴ BBC Türkçe, "Olay TV kapatıldı: Muhalefet partilerinin liderleri iktidarı suçladı" 26.10.2020 <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-55452171>

⁴⁵ BBC Türkçe, "Berat Albayrak'ın istifası sonrası haber merkezlerinde neler yaşandı?", 09.10.2020 <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-54873430#:~:text=Haber%20kanallar%C4%B1na%20istifa%20teyit%20edildi&text=%C3%96yle%20ki%3B%20Berat%20Albayrak%C4%B1n,KRT%20ve%20FOX%20TV%20oldu.>

Before moving on to the current state of the media in Türkiye and current debates, let's take a look at the sale of Doğan Media to Demirören, which is seen as the loss of the last bastion of the mainstream.

1.4.1.1 An Era Coming to End: Doğan Media Group

We have already mentioned what happened to the Doğan Group when it went to war with the AKP government. As it was forced out of the sector through tax fines and downsizing, it continued to be targeted by the government, and it was also during this period that the Doğan Group was completely erased from the media.

Radikal newspaper owned by Doğan Media Group, began publishing in tabloid format in 2010, ceased its print publication in 2014 due to losses, began publishing only online, and was finally shut down completely by Doğan Group in April 2016.⁴⁶ Ayan (2019, p. 204) evaluates this process at Radikal as a gesture of Aydın Doğan to the government. With the closure of the newspaper, many names such as Cengiz Çandar, Altan Öymen, Fuat Keyman, Murat Yetkin, Tarhan Erdem, Ayşe Hür, Ezgi Başaran, Ümit Kıvanç, Tuğrul Eryılmaz, Fehim Taştekin, Gönül Tol, Cem Erciyes, Yekta Kopan lost their jobs (Ayan, 2019, p. 206).

In addition, Hürriyet, a Doğan Group newspaper, underwent a staff change. Ankara Representative Deniz Zeyrek was replaced by Hande Fırat in 2016.⁴⁷ Fırat is remembered for her FaceTime conversation with President Erdoğan on live TV on the night of the 15 July coup attempt. However, Fırat's article published in Hürriyet on 25 February 2017, which included an anonymous source's responses to seven criticisms of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), caused a crisis; then Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım commented, "They are trying to fix the government by making headlines"; and Bakırköy Chief Public Prosecutor's Office initiated a "junta" investigation into the

⁴⁶ T24, "Radikal tarihe karışıyor, internet sitesi de kapanıyor" 22.03.2016
<https://t24.com.tr/haber/radikal-in-internet-sitesi-de-kapaniyor,333135>

⁴⁷ Medyatava, "Hürriyet gazetesinin Ankara bürosunda önemli değişiklik..." 21.12.2016
https://www.medyatava.com/haber/flas-hurriyetin-ankara-temsalcisi-degisti-peki-deniz-zeyrekin-yerine-hangi-isim-getirildi-medyatava-acikliyor_141818

news article.⁴⁸ (bianet.com.tr, 2017) President Erdoğan said "they will pay a high price" for Hande Fırat's article.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, another management change took place at Doğan Group, and former Milliyet Editor-in-Chief Fikret Bila replaced Sedat Ergin who was appointed Hürriyet Editor-in-Chief in August 2014.⁵⁰

The last major development in the Doğan Group was the transfer of the Doğan media group to the Demirören Group, a pro-government conglomerate with interests primarily in energy and construction (Yanatma S. , 2018) In 2011, Demirören had entered the media sector by purchasing the newspapers Milliyet and Vatan from Doğan Media Group, and he is also known for crying in a phone conversation with then Prime Minister Erdoğan, which was circulated on the internet during the İmralı Minutes crisis.⁵¹ The sale took place just before the President elections. Erol Önderoğlu, Turkish representative of Reporters Without Borders says that “The sale of Türkiye’s largest secular media group to a businessman with close ties to the government circle is the end of criticism and investigative reporting among the mainstream media in Türkiye.”⁵²

Prior to the takeover, Doğan Media Group owned well-known television channels such as Kanal D, CNN Türk, Tv2; most-read newspapers such as Hürriyet, Posta, Fanatik, Hürriyet Daily News and publishing brand such as Doğan Kitap. Demirören's purchase of the Doğan media group was widely discussed; for example, journalist Kadri Gürsel commented on this transfer that Demirören has made the AKP government, which he represents, 'the single biggest media boss in Türkiye'.⁵³

⁴⁸ Bianet, “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan’dan Hürriyet’e: Bedelini Ağır Ödeyecektir” 28.02.2017 <https://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/184036-cumhurbaskani-erdogan-dan-hurriyet-e-bedelini-agir-odeyecektir>

⁴⁹ Cumhuriyet, “Erdoğan'dan 'Karargah rahatsız' haberine tepki: Bedelini ağır ödeyecekler” 28.02.2017 <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/erdogandan-karargah-rahatsiz-haberine-tepki-bedelini-agir-odeyecekler-687155>

⁵⁰ T24, “Hürriyet’te Sedat Ergin dönemi bitti, yeni Genel Yayın Yönetmeni Fikret Bila” 28.02.2017 <https://t24.com.tr/haber/hurriyette-sedat-ergin-donemi-bitti-yeni-genel-yayin-yonetmeni-fikret-bila,391261>

⁵¹ T24, “Başbakan 'rezillik, namussuzluk' dedi, Milliyet'in patronu telefonda ağladı!” 06.03.2014 <https://t24.com.tr/haber/basbakan-rezillik-namussuzluk-dedi-milliyetin-patronu-telefonda-agladi,252758>

⁵² Financial Times, Selin Bucak’s article, “Dogan Media sale to Erdogan ally is blow to press freedom” 30.05.2018 <https://www.ft.com/content/3273aafc-4317-11e8-97ce-ea0c2bf34a0b>

⁵³ T24, "Demirören, Doğan Grubu'nu satın aldı ve iktidarı 'Türkiye'nin tek büyük medya patronu' olarak tescilledi" 21.03.2018 <https://t24.com.tr/haber/demiroren-dogan-grubunu-satin-aldi-ve-iktidari-turkiyenin-tek-buyuk-medya-patronu-olarak-tescilledi,586845>

Gazete Türkiye columnist Cem Küçük⁵⁴ announced the sale on his personal Twitter account, and said, "Our native and national friends working at Doğan Medya can rest easy. Other friends should not be upset either. They will receive a satisfactory level of compensation,". His tweet was almost foreshadowing the purges that will take place after the sale of the Doğan media group to Demirören.⁵⁵ It was revealed that Demirören Holding received a loan of USD 800 million from Ziraat Bank in 2018 to acquire Doğan Media Group, but it was also learned that it paid only 3.2 per cent of the loan debt.⁵⁶

Following Demirören's acquisition, resignations and dismissals took place one after another. Melis Alphan was the first to resign from Hürriyet, which is part of the Group, followed by Editor-in-Chief Fikret Bila, who was replaced by Vahap Munyar.⁵⁷ Ercüment İşleyen, who was in charge of hurriyet.com.tr, received the news "do not return until the end of the elections" while being treated in hospital, and Bülent Ayanoglu, Editor-in-Chief of milliyet.com.tr, replaced İşleyen.⁵⁸ In July 2018, economics columnist Uğur Gürses also parted ways with Hürriyet on grounds of censorship.⁵⁹

In addition, Süleyman Sarılar, Editor-in-Chief of Kanal D, and Ahmet Hakan, who hosts the main news bulletin, were also suspended from their duties. A similar process took place at the Group's CNN Türk channel, where General Manager Erdoğan Aktaş and Doğan TV Ankara Representative Hakan Çelik lost their jobs, and İsmail Saymaz, who had been working on the programme "Gece Görüşü" moderated by Hande Fırat, was dismissed.⁶⁰ Duygu Demirdağ, who has been anchoring the main news bulletin at CNN Türk since 2010; anchor Ahu Özyurt, who has been working at

⁵⁴ Cem Küçük is described as one of the dis-informative trolls in the form of TV commentators of the new media in the article "**Repressed media and illiberal politics in Türkiye: the persistence of fear by**" Akser & Baybars (2022)

⁵⁵ T24, "Cem Küçük: Türk medyasında artık barış zamanı" 21.03.2018 <https://t24.com.tr/haber/cem-kucuk-turk-medyasinda-artik-baris-zamani,586951>

⁵⁶ T24, Eray Görgülü's article, <https://www.t24.com.tr/haber/milyar-dolar-ne-olacak-bes-yil-gecti-demiroren-ziraat-bankasi-na-borcunun-yalnizca-3-2-sini-odemis,1101004>

⁵⁷ Medyadar, "Hürriyet Gazetesi Genel Yayın Yönetmenliği görevine kim getirildi?" 27.04.2018 <https://www.medyadar.com/hurriyet-gazetesi-genel-yayin-yonetmenligi-gorevine-kim-getirildi-medyadar-acikliyor-haberi-1098273>

⁵⁸ T24, "Demirören yönetiminden hurriyet.com.tr direktörü Ercüment İşleyen'e tedavi sırasında operasyon" 26.04.2018 <https://t24.com.tr/haber/demiroren-yonetiminden-hurriyetcomtr-direktoru-ercument-isleyene-tedavi-sirasinda-operasyon,614628>

⁵⁹ T24, "Hürriyet yazısını sansürledi, Uğur Gürses gazeteyle yollarını ayırdı!" 18.07.2018 <https://t24.com.tr/haber/hurriyet-yazisini-sansurledi-ugur-gurses-gazeteyle-yollarini-ayirdi,670930>

⁶⁰ Birgün, "CNN Türk, İsmail Saymaz ve Nevzat Çiçek'in işlerine son verdi" 15.05.2018 <https://www.birgun.net/haber/cnn-turk-ismail-saymaz-ve-nevzat-cicek-in-islerine-son-verdi-215403>

CNN Türk since 2001; CNN Türk Programmes Coordinator Aslı Öymen; CNN Türk Economy Manager and host of the "Parametre" programme Ebru Baki; and CNN Türk News Programmes Manager Cansel Poyraz were among the names purged after the sale of Doğan Media⁶¹.

In 2019, Demirören Media Group acted exactly as expected, dismissing 45 journalists working at Hürriyet and not paying them their compensation. The journalists claimed that they were dismissed because they organized in the Journalists Union of Türkiye and in 2021, they were found right by the court.⁶²

In conclusion, as journalist Kadri Gürsel wrote in Cumhuriyet⁶³, with the sale of Doğan Media, we can say that the destruction of the mainstream media in Türkiye is complete.

1.4.1.2 “Post-mainstream Media”

It is now possible to say that we have come to the end of this story. With the AKP's strategies to take over the media since the day it came to power and the accompanying repressive policies and the major transformation that has taken place in the media, from ownership relations to editorial policies, we see that today Türkiye does not have a "mainstream" media. Indeed, this is exactly what the debate sparked by journalist Kadri Gürsel's statements about the mainstream and journalism in 2018 was telling us. In a TV program he participated in, Gürsel said that "the mainstream is as necessary for Türkiye as bread" and continued as follows:

"I have always and still considered and define myself as a mainstream journalist because I grew up in that culture. Although I criticize that culture, I argue that it needs to be defined and reproduced in the right way. I believe that every country needs independent, professional and honest journalists. This is a quality that can only be found in the mainstream for a country."

Gürsel's remarks drew harsh responses from many names writing for independent news websites, and the debate that started on the mainstream media

⁶¹ Medyabey, “İşte Kanal D ve CNN Türk’te görevlerine son verilen isimler”, 18.05.2018 <https://medyabey.com/iste-kanal-d-ve-cnn-turkte-gorevlerine-son-verilen-isimler/>

⁶² gazete duvar, “Hürriyet davasını gazeteciler kazandı” 23.12.21

<https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/hurriyet-davasini-gazeteciler-kazandi-haber-1546565>

⁶³ Cumhuriyet, Kadri Gürsel, “Doğan Grubunun imhası, ana akım medyanın sonu” 23.03.2018 <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/kadri-gursel/dogan-grubunun-imhasi-ana-akim-medyanin-sonu-947137>

evolved into a debate on journalism in Türkiye. Fatih Polat (Polat, 2018) and Banu Güven (Güven, 2018) argued that there are independent, honest and professional journalists working outside the mainstream and that there are examples of good independent journalism, Ragıp Duran (2018) claimed that the difference between the mainstream media and the peripheral media is not whether they engage in activism or not, but what kind of activism they engage in. Mehveş Evin (2018) contributed to the debate by remarking on the former mainstream's relationship with capital ownership and politics. İrfan Aktan (2018) argued that the independence of a journalist, regardless of where s/he works, is revealed in the language s/he chooses and the way s/he conveys the truth, and that the mainstream media in Türkiye, which claims to be independent, has been interfering with the language of journalists and even the words they choose for years. In this direction he argues that:

"If we want to protect journalism, we can do so not on the basis of mainstream-activism classifications, but on the basis of whether or not journalists are truth tellers." (Aktan, 2018)

On the other hand, Güventürk Görgülü said that today we should not talk about mainstream media organizations, but about the journalists who represent the mainstream (Görgülü, 2018). Ceren Sözeri, another participant in the discussion, drew attention to the structural biases inherent in the longed-for mainstream media, and particularly its attitude in favor of the power, she responded to Gürsel as follows:

"If the mainstream is dead, it turns out it's not so eager to live. Should we deal with CNN or make our own way?" (Sözeri, 2018)

Gürsel, on the other hand, wrote an article in response to all the criticism, underlining that the media that the debaters see as mainstream is not mainstream but the ruling media, and said that there is no mainstream media in Türkiye anymore. What is also noteworthy in Gürsel's article is that he stated that the mainstream media functions to *"break the echo chamber effect as it is the sum total of channels that can address large and different audiences"*. Accordingly, Gürsel explained the loss of the mainstream media as follows:

"Do you realize why the mainstream media was eliminated? To lock the country's readers and audiences in 'echo chambers'. The debaters write and draw in their own

little echo chambers. They listen to the echo of their own voices. They have no chance or opportunity to reach the readers and audiences of the government." (Gürsel, 2018)

In this discussion that lasted for weeks, questions such as what the mainstream is, how it should be, what journalism is, where and how journalism can be practiced were asked and answers were sought, but the one thing that was common to all the articles was that all the names agreed that there is no mainstream media in Türkiye anymore. Meanwhile, there was also a debate about whether alternative media could replace mainstream media.⁶⁴

Let us also remember that at the time of this debate, following the collapse of the mainstream in Türkiye, there were many online news media outlets, and many journalists who had been purged from the mainstream, and new graduates started working in these new media outlets. Indeed, Ayan and Keten argue that three main trends emerged in the Turkish media in the 2010s: First, journalists purged from the mainstream media turn to the opposition media, which is numerically and financially less powerful; second, journalists fired from the mainstream continue to work as journalists on digital platforms; and third, the entrepreneurial journalism model has become widespread (Keten & Ayan, 2023, p. xiv).

It should be noted here that discussions on alternative media have also increased over time and questions have been raised about how much of the "alternative media" practice emerging in Türkiye is "alternative" and how much of it is a continuation of the destroyed mainstream.

For example, noting that alternative media defines itself by comparing itself to the mainstream, Arıkan (2023) argues that alternative media, which sets out with the intention of being the "voice of the voiceless", eventually reaches the founding values of liberalism such as universal rights, journalistic ethics, accurate information, the fourth estate and he adds that:

"Changing the established order and wanting the established order to do its job are two different things." (Arıkan, 2023, p. 28)

⁶⁴ In the article by Terje Sollie of Pexels published in Inside Türkiye, Tunca Öğreten mentions about the debate. For more: Inside Türkiye, Turkish journalists turn to alternative media 26.09.2019 <https://insideTürkiye.news/2019/09/26/turkish-journalists-turn-to-alternative-media/>

In parallel to this, discussing alternative media in the context of journalistic ethics, Yıldız (2023, p. 36) underlines that alternative media defines itself according to the antagonistic relationship it establishes with the mainstream and says that we are facing a hybrid type of journalism in Türkiye:

"On the one hand, the alternative media defines itself by criticizing the mainstream media for not practicing responsible journalism; on the other hand, it practices journalism that violates ethical codes, as the mainstream media already does." (Yıldız, 2023, p. 48)

In addition, Keten (2023, p. 63) states that digital transformation in Türkiye does not claim to be a technological transformation of the essence of journalism, but is seen as a tool to sustain journalistic activities that cannot be carried out in the destroyed mainstream media. Çevikel, on the other hand, argues that this shift towards digital is not exempt from the political and economic pressures imposed on the Turkish media, and that the AKP is also trying to control, regulate and bring the digital sphere under its control (Çevikel, 2023, p. 93).

In the face of all these conditions, journalists are trying to survive and keep their journalistic activities. In fact, the media environment formed by journalists exiled from the mainstream media practicing journalism over the internet is also characterized as "post-mainstream" media (Yanardağoğlu, 2022).

These discussions also stem from by increased power and effectiveness of social media. Though independent media organizations demonstrate a fragmented media landscape, it is found that the digital reach of independent media in Türkiye has caught up with the pro-government media and these organizations reached 16.5% more interactions on social media than pro-AKP media (Kızılkaya & Ütücü, 2021). But it is important to keep in mind that while journalists who have been forced to leave mainstream media or have been laid off may continue to work on online platforms, they do not have the same rights as those working for traditional media outlets (Karan, 2022).

Now, we are speaking of the "new Türkiye" where the takeover of mainstream media organizations has been completed and these organizations have been completely purged of critical voices.

When we look at the last period of the AKP-era media, we see that data on the media in Türkiye consists of the number of lawsuits filed against journalists, the number of journalists detained, arrested, threatened, attacked and left unemployed, the length of sentences imposed on journalists, the number of blocked online news, the number of media outlets shut down, the number of fines imposed by RTÜK, and the international indexes of freedom of the press and freedom of expression, in which Türkiye has always ranked at the bottom. In fact, according to RSF reports, Türkiye is one of the world's largest prisons for journalists.

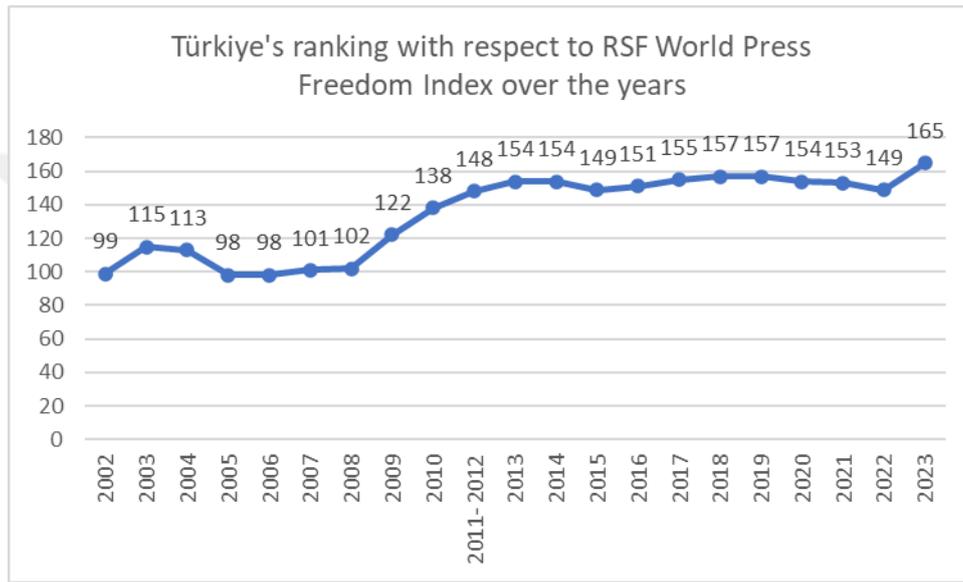


Figure 1 Türkiye's ranking with respect to RSF World Press Freedom Index

On the other hand, polarization is also cited among the problems related to the media in Türkiye. It is a fact that the media in Türkiye is now completely fragmented, and the audience choose their media according to their political affiliation. Analyzing the digital news environment in Türkiye, Barış Kırđemir (2020, pp. 2-5) draws attention to the problem of polarization in Turkish society and argues that polarization triggers disinformation. In this context, the Turkish media has become fragmented due to both the increase in alternative news sources in the online information environment, and polarization.

In this fragmented media environment, under the current polarization, apart from the pro-government media, we also see the phenomenon of "opposition media" becoming prominent. Accordingly, television channels such as Halk TV, KRT, Tele 1, Fox TV, Szc TV and newspapers such as Sözcü, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Yaşam are cited as

examples of opposition media organizations. Some of these organizations are seen as media close to the opposition not only because of their editorial line but also because of their financing. For example, it is known that former CHP Chairman Deniz Baykal was among the founders of Halk TV and that it was announced that a protocol had been signed between the channel and the CHP in exchange for the channel broadcasting the CHP's group meetings and the statements of its spokespersons⁶⁵.

In fact, this polarization can also be observed in the levels of trust in news organizations. Referring to the data in the Reuters Institute Report, Kırdemir (2020, p. 6) underlines that although the respondents gave low trust scores to Ahaber and Sabah, the trust level of these two organizations among their own readers is much higher. In short, even if media organizations do not achieve a high trust score among the general audience, they are considered trustworthy by their own audiences. According to Reuters' current data (2022), we see that this situation continues, while trust in news overall was 36%, people's trust in the news they use was 44% (Newman, 2022, p. 108).

In light of all this, today, in a fragmented media ecosystem where the mainstream media has collapsed and independent journalism is mostly conducted online, the importance of online critical media outlets is once again evident. The AKP government is well aware of this and has regulated and increased the mechanisms of pressure on the media to include online journalism. In this context, the so-called "social media law" or "internet law", which requires social network providers with more than 1 million daily users such as Twitter and Facebook to have a representative in Türkiye, was passed in July 2020. According to the law, social network providers that do not have a representative are subject to heavy fines, advertising bans and bandwidth restrictions.⁶⁶ For instance, with the expiration of the deadline given to the relevant social network providers under this law, access to the websites of DW Turkish and VOA Turkish, which had not applied for a license to RTÜK, was blocked. Peter Limbourg, General Manager of DW, pointed out that licensed media in Türkiye are

⁶⁵ Halk TV, "Halk TV herkesin merak ettiği 'CHP ile olan sözleşme'yi açıklıyor 23.07.2023 <https://halktv.com.tr/gundem/chpden-halk-tvye-sansur-756586h>

⁶⁶ Bianet "Sosyal medya yasası yürürlüğe girdi" 01.10.20 <https://bianet.org/haber/sosyal-medya-yasasi-yururluge-girdi-231917>

obliged to delete online content that RTÜK deems inappropriate and said that they could not accept such editorial censorship.⁶⁷

Another one is the disinformation law, known as the censorship law, which came into force in October 2022.⁶⁸ According to this law, which criminalizes disinformation, the offense of "publicly disseminating misleading information" can be punished with imprisonment from 1 to 3 years. The law also transfers the distribution of press cards to the Directorate of Communication, which was established by presidential decree in 2018. In addition to that, representatives of social network providers, as mandated by the social media law, must now be Turkish citizens residing in Türkiye.⁶⁹

1.4.1.3 The Funding Crisis of Journalism and Its Reflections on News Production

In addition to the pressure exerted by the political power through the legislative, executive and judiciary, the economic sustainability of independent media is one of the main problems of independent media. In this regard, the question of how online independent media organizations and platforms will survive under these conditions has also become a major topic of discussion. It is a fact that revenue crisis is not specific to Turkish critical media. In recent years, one of the main problems facing journalism is the financial crisis and loss of revenue sources in journalism. It is popularly discussed that whether the 2008 financial crisis or death of the paper and digitalization, or the change in reader practices cause the economic crisis of journalism (Cage, 2016).

We see that news organizations around the world are either closing down or downsizing due to budget cuts, working with fewer resources and journalists, and turning to digital media (Hunter, 2014; Uzunoğlu, 2018). Although circulation decline is cited as the reason for this, it is argued that increasing newspaper prices can compensate for losses due to circulation decline. In this context, Çevikel argues that the reason why journalism is suffering financially is the advertising pie and its new distribution as the consequences of digitalization (Çevikel, 2020, pp. 22-25). This is

⁶⁷ Euronews, "DW ve VOA'nın Türkçe yayınları neden engellendi, Türkiye'den nasıl erişebilirsiniz?" 01.07.2022 <https://tr.euronews.com/2022/07/01/dw-ve-voanin-turkce-yayinlari-neden-engellendi-turkiyeden-nasil-erisebilirsiniz>

⁶⁸ Medyascope "Erdoğan, sansür yasası olarak bilinen dezenformasyon yasasını onayladı, yasa Resmi Gazete'de yayımlanarak yürürlüğe girdi" 18.10.2022 <https://medyascope.tv/2022/10/18/erdogan-sansur-yasasi-olarak-bilinen-dezenformasyon-yasasini-onayladi-yasa-resmi-gazetede-yayinlanarak-yururluge-girdi/>

⁶⁹ Doğruluk Payı, Simge Akkaş's article, "Dezenformasyon Yasasının Öngördükleri", 08.06.2022 <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com/bulten/dezenformasyon-yasasi-nin-ongordukleri>

mainly due to changes in the way advertising works and the distribution process that advertising uses in digital (Siegert, 2013) In this context, digital platforms such as Google and Facebook are seen as game changers. These intermediaries have the lion's share of the digital advertising market, and with these intermediaries, editorial content, which is important in reaching the target audience for advertising, is losing its former value, and accordingly, advertising revenues that used to go to content producers now go to intermediary actors, namely digital platforms (Çevikel, 2020, pp. 29-30). In this respect, even if the digital advertising pie grows, it does not compensate for the lost revenues in print media (Demir D. , 2019). This loss of revenue in journalism means a reduction in resources allocated for both news production and labor. All of this is leading to increasing job losses in the media sector around the world and a decline in investigative journalism (Hunter, 2014).

In this regard, since media independence is vital for public access to accurate information, creating independent sources of revenue for media outlets is vital to prevent media capture (Enikolopov & Petrova, 2015). In the face of this crisis, there have been different attempts to find solutions to ensure the sustainability of journalism and its independence. One of the most widely discussed solutions is to move to a finance model that is not profit-oriented for newspapers. Government funding, national funding, philanthropy, public (citizen) funding and public-interest commercial funding are among sources of funding for non-profit news organizations (Almiron-Roig, 2011). However, the extent to which these solutions can ensure journalist autonomy and press freedom is also questionable due to the possible ethical concerns and potential intervention and influence on editorial autonomy (Scott, Bunce, & Wright, 2019).

On the other hand, it is also stated that the financial crisis in journalism is also reflected in the quality of the news produced and, in this respect, it has caused a professional crisis. Wunsch-Vincent (2010) argues that this crisis poses a threat to the accuracy, quality, and diversity of news. In other words, journalism is therefore in danger of turning into "churnalism" due to both the lack of resources and the increasing time pressure, and news becomes more and more similar to each other (Wunsch-Vincent, 2010, p. 36).

Returning to the case of Türkiye, once the AKP's destruction of mainstream media reached irreversible proportions and the media takeover was complete, the self-

sustainability of online platforms for journalism was another matter. In Türkiye, sources of advertising revenues consist of official announcements distributed by Directorate General of Press Announcements (BİK) and the others, namely private advertisers. Yanatma states that BİK has become much more powerful in recent years due its dramatic increase in advertising allocation and the decline in the share of private advertising in newspapers (Yanatma, 2021, p. 8). Looking at the allocation of newspaper advertisements between 2002 and 2020, i.e. during the AKP rule, Yanatma underlines that the AKP, with its increasing political power, used advertising allocation much more effectively as a control mechanism over the media. In fact, the role of the state in advertising allocation has reached such a point that the state has become the largest advertiser (Yanatma, 2021, pp. 3, 20). On the other hand, in Türkiye, there is a high concentration of advertisers which facilitates control and politically motivated distribution of advertising allocation. As a result, the distribution of advertising revenues also contributes to media capture (Yanatma, 2021, pp. 18, 20).

In addition to the loss of revenue for the media and newspapers, the fines imposed on nonpartisan media also put media organizations in Türkiye in an economically difficult situation. The AKP government started to use institutions such as RTÜK and BİK as mechanisms of pressure and control over the media. When analyzing the AKP-era media, we mentioned the tax fine imposed on the Doğan Media Group as the most prominent example of this. In recent years, fines distributed through BİK and RTÜK have similarly put newspapers and media organizations under financial strain. For instance, media ombudsman Faruk Bildirici stated that 88 percent of the fines imposed on newspapers by BİK in 2020 were imposed on Cumhuriyet, Birgün, Evrensel, Korkusuz and Sözcü, known as opposition newspapers. On the other hand, RTÜK imposed 158 fines, 48 program suspensions and broadcast suspensions on audiovisual media, including television channels, with a total of 31 million 629 thousand 996 TL in 2021. (Media Monitoring Database Report , 2021).

In sum, the current crisis in newspaper financing is exacerbated by the characteristics of the AKP era media in Türkiye, and newspapers that are not pro-government are struggling even more to survive. In the meantime, foreign foundations and NGOs became more interested in Türkiye and digital media platforms started to benefit from their funding, and we have witnessed these media platforms being targeted both by the government and its circle and by nationalists. At this point, international broadcasters are also among the foreign organizations that have increased

their interest in Türkiye, it is possible to say that in recent years, state-sponsored foreign media organizations play a significant role for journalists in terms of sustainability and survival in the Turkish media. These organizations have opened space for journalists to continue their professional activities. In this context, we can argue that international broadcasters have emerged as a work environment option for Turkish journalists a barren media landscape. Unsurprisingly, however, journalists working in the Turkish services of these international broadcasters have also been similarly targeted.

Before looking at the international broadcasters currently operating in Türkiye and the situation of journalists working there, it is important to take a look at the history of international broadcasting and broadcasters to understand working principles, structures and journalism approach of these organizations.

CHAPTER 2: THE PAST OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE WORLD, AND THEIR EXISTENCE IN PRESENT IN TÜRKİYE

In this chapter, we will first briefly touch upon the emergence and historical development of international news organizations in the world and have a look at the existing studies examining international news organizations, then briefly review their history in Türkiye and the current situation regarding the five institutions we will examine. At the end, to better demonstrate the importance and necessity of the study conducted within the scope of this thesis, we will take a look at the studies on international news organizations operating in Turkey.

2.1. The Brief History of International News Organizations in The World

When we look at the history of the international news organizations, we see that it dates back to the 1920s. In fact, these organizations are referred to in the literature as international broadcasters, as shortwaves first made these international activities possible (Wood, 1993, p. 2). In this regard, international broadcasting is essentially the practice of broadcasting to foreign publics. Thus, it is defined as “the elegant term for a complex combination of state-sponsored news, information, and entertainment directed at a population outside the sponsoring state's boundaries.” (Price M. , 2003, p. 53). and international broadcasters are “state-sponsored news media that rely on journalism and information to both inform foreign audiences and promote goodwill to the sponsoring countries” (Powers & Youmans, 2012, p. 3).

Although different types of international broadcasting are described today (Zöllner, 2006)⁷⁰, as can be understood from the fundamental definitions, the concept

⁷⁰ Zöllner classifies international broadcasters according to their types of operation and foundations. According to him, international broadcasters are operated or funded by 1) states/governments, 2) non-governmental public bodies, 3) commercial enterprises, 4) religious/political groupings. In this context, international broadcasters' function may also differ such as 1) journalistic information 2)

of international broadcasting, by its origin, primarily refers to state/government-sponsored international broadcasters, unless otherwise stated. Therefore, in this section, "international broadcasting" will refer to state-sponsored international broadcasters.

In addition to that, let us bear in mind that the literature on international broadcasting is mostly intertwined with the literature on propaganda and public diplomacy. Indeed, Cull defines public diplomacy as "international actor's attempt to conduct its foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics" and sees international broadcasting as one of the five core elements of public diplomacy (Cull N. J., 2008, p. xv). In this context, it is precisely a part of the practice of "soft power" conceptualized by Nye (2004). Therefore, it is not surprising when Philip Seib, then director of USC Center for Public Diplomacy (CPD), describes international broadcasting as the heart of public diplomacy (USC CPD, 2013). The history of international broadcasting tells us that since its birth, it has developed and been shaped according to the conditions of the times it has passed through.

Historically, the beginning of international broadcasting goes hand in hand with the use of radio for foreign policy. (Wood, 1993, pp. 2-3) Nye notes that the advent of radio in the 1920s enabled governments to broadcast to foreign publics.

"The advent of radio in the 1920s led many governments into the arena of foreign-language broadcasting, and in the 1930s, communists and fascists competed to promote favorable images to foreign publics" (Nye J. S., 2008, p. 97)

Browne cites the Soviet Union's propaganda campaign against Romania in 1926 as the first, albeit short-lived, example of international radio broadcast. The Holland followed in 1927, Germany in 1929, France in 1931, Great Britain in 1932 and Japan in 1934, broadcasting to their overseas citizens as "colonial service stations" (Browne, 1982, pp. 48-49). On the other hand, similarly, Wood (1993, p. 2) states that it began in mid-1920s as a broadcast activity to distant colonies, changed direction in 1936 and began to be used for political propaganda.

promotion of national image, 3) financial profit, 4) political/religious propaganda or campaigning 5) religious proselytizing.

See more: Zöllner, O. A quest for dialogue in international broadcasting: Germany's public diplomacy targeting Arab audiences. **Global Media and Communication**, 2(2), 160-182, (2006).

The British Broadcasting Company (BBC) which was founded in 1922 as a limited company and became a Corporation under a Royal Charter in 1926 was one of the first examples of the international broadcasting companies. In this regard, Wood claims that Great Britain was one of the first countries to realize the global communication potential of short waves. Previously broadcasting only in English, the BBC increased its propaganda broadcasts during the Second World War and by the end of the war was broadcasting in 43 different languages (Wood, 1993, pp. 31, 32, 49). On the other hand, the United States, which had initially used shortwave broadcasting for commercial purposes, also entered international broadcasting for political propaganda in 1942 after its involvement in the Second World War. Accordingly, the Office of War Information (OWI) is considered as the predecessor of the Voice of America (VOA) which became the United States Information Agency's (USIA) international broadcaster in 1953 (Wood, 1993, pp. 51, 108). Similarly, Deutsche Welle and Radio France International are too first examples of international broadcasting in the sense of public diplomacy (Yanardağoğlu, 2014, p. 14).

International broadcasting, which spread rapidly during the Second World War, did not disappear with the end of the war, on the contrary, it gained even more importance during the Cold War (Browne, 1982, p. 53). Wood even credits (1993, p. 104) the BBC's (in 1946) and VOA's (in 1947) broadcasting to the Soviet Union as the beginning of the Cold War. By the 1950s, it was known that more than 30 countries were engaged in international broadcasting (Wood, 1993, p. 107). A milestone for international broadcasting in those years was the launch of satellites. Compared to shortwaves, satellites made transatlantic communication easier and more reliable. That allowed many international broadcasting organizations such as VOA, BBC and DW to place radio transmitters not on their own territory but close to the target countries (Wood, 1993, pp. 115-120). During the Cold War, Western international broadcasters such as the BBC and VOA expanded their activities, particularly in freedom of expression and press freedom, to promote "democracy" against the "threat of communism" (Mcphail, 2010, p. 21)

As a result of both technological and political developments, by the time of the Cold War, the power of international broadcasting had already been recognized, and throughout this period it was seen and systematically used as a far more effective tool than weapons (Wood, 1993, p. 106). The power of broadcasting was seen as so important that it is widely thought to had helped win the Cold War:

“Nelson asks rhetorically, “Why did the West win the cold war? Not by use of arms. Weapons did not breach the Iron Curtain. The Western invasion was by radio, which was mightier than the sword.” (Price M. , 2003, p. 54)

Thus, it would be fair to say that international broadcasting was born as a part of a foreign policy and in a short period of time it manifested itself as a propaganda activity.

On the other hand, Samuel-Azran argues that in 1980s and 1990s, international broadcasting entered a new era due to the birth of privately owned global news networks (Samuel-Azran, 2013, p. 1294). This time, non-state actors started to be also involved in international broadcasting. Thus, by the 1990s, we see that developments in the media brought international broadcasting activities into question and state/government-sponsored international broadcasting began to be seen less credible than privately owned ones (Samuel-Azran, 2013). In a similar vein Price (2003, p. 57) argues that in the 1990s international broadcasting needed restructuring after the end of the Cold War and suffered "a crisis of purpose and credibility". Powers and Youmans (2012) explain this by arguing that with the rise of global private media networks, the lack of access to information diminished, thus reducing the need for international broadcasting. In this regard, O’Keeffe and Greene emphasize that international broadcasters need to offer something distinctive, and that the depth and breadth of their coverage of international issues is one of their hallmarks (O’Keeffe & Greene, 2019, p. 6).

This debate is also related to the so-called "CNN effect" after CNN managed to attract international public attention during the Gulf War by broadcasting for 24 hours. (Livingston, 1997; Robinson, 1999; Gilboa, 2005; Samuel-Azran, 2013) Fundamentally, the growth and public reach of global commercial media called into question the need for state-sponsored international broadcasting.

“In the mid-1990s the institutions of international broadcasting were under pressure from the great private media moguls and their political counter parts. They argued that international broadcasting was unnecessary in the “age of CNN.”” (Price M. , 2003, p. 60)

Price argues that in addition to that, budget concerns and new technologies influenced the re-structuring process and to gain credibility, international broadcasters

have proclaimed new missions, such as helping to transform authoritarian societies and contributing to the prevention or resolution of conflicts (Price M. , 2003, pp. 57-62). At this point, it is worth mentioning that international broadcasting has different functions and opens different fields that must not be reduced to being seen directly and solely as a propaganda and/or public diplomacy activity, albeit again with political motives. We see that such functions and contributions of international broadcasting have also been cited as providing journalistic information (Zöllner, 2006, p. 162), compensating for the lack of media supply (Rızanaj, 2022, p. 139).

Price (2003, p. 58) for example, cites the BBC Burmese service as an example of filling a gap where reliable news sources were inaccessible under a repressive government. Likewise, Yanardağoğlu (2014, p. 24) argues that the BBC Turkish service was vital for access to news in Türkiye after the 1980 coup d'état. The situation of the Serbian media in 1999 under President Milosevic was also a case in point. Many international broadcasters became an alternative source of information for the Serbian media during this period. (Price M. , 2003, p. 75)

In general, the 1990s are remembered as a period when international broadcasting lost its former appeal, except for the media under repressive regimes. However, in the 2000s, especially the events of 11 September 2001 brought international broadcasting back to the agenda and it regained importance as a "soft power". Since then, international broadcasting has been revisited in both practice and theory, and its limits and scope as a public diplomacy tool have been the subject of renewed debate both in academia and among practitioners (Price M. , 2003; Zöllner, 2006; Yanardağoğlu, 2014; Price, Haas, & Margolin, 2008).

Finally, the 2000s have been also a period in which the technical capabilities of international broadcasters increased with technological developments, and with the widespread use of the internet, international broadcasters were able to reach different target audiences faster and easier through new channels. In fact, Price (2009, p. 204) argues that this gives broadcasters the opportunity to bypass state gatekeepers and speak directly to foreign publics. This is true that today, most international broadcasters broadcast on the internet and interact with foreign publics through social media, even though they are not allowed by host country. Ultimately, with the help of all these technological developments, it can be said that we live in a world where

international broadcasting has developed, spread, encompassed, and shaped world politics since its birth.

2.2 Studies on International News Organizations in The World

We have taken a brief look at when international news organizations emerged and with what purposes and functions they have operated over the years. Before moving on to the history and activities of these organizations in Türkiye, it is useful to look at what kind of case studies have been conducted on public international broadcasters around the world and what kind of outputs have come to the fore.

2.2.1 Examining Historical Development and Evolving Roles of International News Organizations

When we look at academic studies on international news organizations, we see case studies that examine both world services and language services. In parallel to the story of the emergence and development of international broadcasting and broadcasting organizations, some studies focus on the evolving and changing purposes, roles and functions of these organizations over the years (Browne, *International Radio Broadcasting: The Limits of The Limitless Medium*, 1982; Wood, 1993; Nohl, 2010; Andersson, Gillespie, & Mackay, 2010; Issawi & Baumann, 2010; Torfeh & Sreberny, 2010; Rotheray & Geniets, 2011; Thiranagama, 2011; Stewart, 2012; Fiedler & Frère, 2016). As mentioned in the first section, there are studies that consider international broadcasters and news organizations as a direct propaganda activity in the early years of their emergence, and later as an element of public diplomacy. While early studies mostly focus on the activities during the two world wars and the Cold War period that followed, recent studies discuss the transformation of international broadcasting after the 1980s and especially in the 2000s in the context of public diplomacy with the developments in the international arena and the opportunities provided by the internet.

More recent studies also examine the different functions of international organizations beyond propaganda and public diplomacy. For example, Rotheray and Geniets (2011) review the historical development and current portrait of international broadcasting in eight different countries, while Fiedler and Frere (2016) examine the development and current position of the African services of Radio France International and Deutsche Welle over time. These studies may focus on language services operating

in different countries and specific periods and look at how international broadcasters are situated in these contexts. For instance, Torfeh and Sreberny (2010) shed light on BBC Persian's activities during the 1979 Islamic revolution and the tension between BBC Persian and the Iranian government. Similarly, analyzing the current state of the BBC Persian and Arabic services, Andersson, Gillespie and Mackay (2010) reveal why the Persian and Arabic services are followed and what their functions are. In this context, While BBC Persian is more about keeping the diaspora in touch and creating a space for dialogue and cultural exchange, it is noticeable that BBC Arabic is used by the Arab world as a non-Arabian media to follow developments in the Middle East (Andersson, Gillespie, & Mackay, 2010).

In addition, Thiranagama (2011) who analyzes the BBC's two language services, BBC Tamil and BBC Sinhala, in Sri Lanka, where the media is under pressure, examines where both services stand and what they mean for the people of Sri Lanka. In this regard, his study reveals that Sri Lankan people turn to the BBC as an 'arbiter independent news provider' and BBC Tamil considers itself as a 'public forum' and BBC Sinhala sees itself as 'truth producer'.

2.2.2 Examining News Content of International News Organizations

As can be seen, there are comparative studies that examine the activities of different organizations in the same country or different language services of the same umbrella organization. Some of the studies are methodologically content based (Rampal & Adams, 1990; Cheesman & Nohl, 2011; Jaber & Baumann, 2011; Kasmani, 2014; Polonska-Kimunguyi, 2015; Kamyants, 2021; Al-Hasni, 2022; Zhang, Zhang, & Blanchard, 2022; Gharayagh-Zandi, 2022). For example, Gharayagh-Zandi (2022) looks at news during the Syrian conflict through content published on the BBC and Sputnik Persian services, while Zhang, Zhang and Blanchard (2022) discuss the communication styles of China and Russia by examining the sources and frames CGTN and RT use in their coverage of international conflict. On the other hand, Rampal and Adams (1990) examine the credibility of the BBC and VOA's Asian services by analyzing their radio broadcasts through discourse analysis.

Among the content-based studies, there are also some that focus on how translations are carried out between the central newsroom and language services. For instance, Cheesman and Nohl (2011) look at different language services of BBC Arabic, Persian,

Tamil and Turkish by analyzing editorial and translation processes. Kamyants (2021) similarly examines how BBC English news headlines are translated in the Ukrainian and Russian services.

Besides, looking at the content created by these organizations, some researchers examine the editorial policies and attitudes of international organizations on specific themes. For example, Al-Hasni (2022) discusses the approach of the BBC, Al Jazeera, Al-Arabiya, Russia Today and France 24 to women's rights in the Arab world, while Polonska-Kimunguyi (2015) questions DW's appeal to African women audiences and its claimed role as a "development actor".

2.2.3 Examining Newsroom Practices of International News Organizations

Furthermore, there are studies that focus on the organizational structure of these institutions and look at the processes, actors and power relations in newsroom operations (Browne, 1983; Umejei, 2018; Workneh, 2019; Elswah & Howard, 2020; Workneh, 2021). At this point, since our study will focus on newsroom practices, it is useful to take a closer look at these studies.

The first systemic and comparative study to examine the newsroom is Browne's study published in 1983, which comprehensively examines and compares the operational processes of the BBC, VOA and DW. In this study, Browne looks at the operation of the central newsrooms and the newsroom structures and examines the news production processes from newsroom sources to preparing newscasts (Browne, 1983).

On the other hand, current studies on international news organizations by examining organizational structure address newsroom dynamics by focusing on the concept of journalistic autonomy. For instance, Umejei (2018), examines newsroom practices of Chinese media operating in the Africa and looking at routine and organizational levels conceptualized by Shoemaker and Reese (1996) to understanding these practices and the power relations. Based on semi-structured interviews with African journalists working in Chinese media organizations based in Nairobi, Kenya such as CGTN, Xinhua News Agency and China Daily, he examines editorial practices and working structure between African and Chinese editors and argues that in the African services of Chinese media, there is a hierarchical structure manifested in the two levels of journalistic agency and of gatekeeping processes.

In addition to that, applying a hybrid methodology, Workneh discusses VOA (2019) and DW (2021) Amharic services in the context of newsroom autonomy. In this context, when analyzing the VOA Amharic service, he benefits from monthly reports, reviews, documents including electronic communication and conducts semi structured interviews with journalists working there. In his analysis, Workneh categorizes the factors affecting journalistic activities into two layers, namely host and home political factors as primary pressure sources. The secondary pressure sources on the other hand, consist of personal factors stemming from pressures from families and friends and of diasporic political factors (Workneh, 2019).

Workneh's other work is on DW Amharic, this time drawing on interviews with journalists working there as well as audience letters and observations of editorial meetings. On the one hand, he deals with news production processes, on the other hand, he looks at the professional experience of journalists, their relationship with the host government and their relationship with the audience, and opportunities and challenges they face while working at DW. He evaluates host and home countries' influence on Amharic newsroom as ideological determinants (Workneh, 2021). Apart from that he also makes categories as geographic, and audience generated determinants to understand the influences on newsroom practices.

Analyzing organizational behavior of Russia Today, Elswah and Howard (2020) also look at newsroom practices at Russia Today by benefiting from in-depth interviews with and newsroom ethnography. They find out that in RT, news coverages are in accordance with the diplomatic relations of Russia. In this respect, authors argue that RT has a rapid adaptation to its contents in response to political events. In this respect, the relations between Türkiye and Russia and RT's changing attitudes in response is a good case in point.

2.3 International News Organizations Operating in Türkiye

The historical development of international news organizations in Türkiye is parallel to that of the world. BBC Turkish, the first international broadcaster established in Türkiye, started its broadcasting life in 1939 with its propaganda activities during the Second World War (Nohl, 2010, p. 172). Likewise, VOA Turkish was established in 1942-1945 period, after America got involved in the war. Nohl states that radio broadcasts in Türkiye were dependent on information from the news

bulletins of international news organizations until the 1960s, and that this became institutionalized with the 1971 agreement between the BBC and TRT, which stipulated that BBC Turkish would send news to TRT (Nohl, 2010, p. 179).

On the other hand, we have already stated that international news organizations can emerge as an alternative source of information when the media is under pressure and BBC Turkish was an example of this. Similarly, in Türkiye today, following the collapse of the mainstream media, both journalists are turning to these outlets for work and readers are increasingly interested in international news organizations. At this point, before looking at the present position of these organizations, I think focusing on the past experience of BBC Turkish will shed light on the current role of international news organizations in Türkiye.

As the oldest international broadcaster operating in Türkiye, BBC Turkish is remarkable for its broadcasts in different periods, especially in critical times for journalists. The "Impressions from the Past" section of the BBC's web archive reveals the place and meaning of BBC Turkish in the media in Türkiye. For example, Andrew Mango, who was the director of the BBC Turkish Department from 1958 to 1972, describes in his memoirs how BBC Turkish's journalism was received as follows:

"It was the summer of 1960. I had travelled to Ankara as the director of BBC Turkish broadcasts for two years. I was staying at the old Ankara Palas Hotel. Opposite me, in the old Parliament building, there was a meeting of National Unity Committee (MBK) which seized power. Through a friend in the press office, Yavuz Karaözbeğ, one of the BBC Turkish announcers doing his military service, I met the youngest member of the MBK. His first words were "Congratulations, you provided the most accurate news before 27 May. How did you achieve this?" "It was easy," I said, "British correspondents were sending news from Türkiye. The whole point was to determine the degree of credibility of these reports and then publish the ones we found to be true, regardless of political influences."⁷¹

⁷¹ BBC web archives:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20081218033034/http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/institutional/aboutus.shtml>
1

In fact, in his letter for the 70th anniversary, Mango underlines the reputation the BBC gained during this period and states that TRT, which was established with the 1961 constitution, took the BBC as an example.⁷²

The BBC's role in critical periods can also be observed after the 1980 coup d'état. Before the military coup, the Commonwealth Office was planning to take BBC Turkish off the air, but at the request of the British government, the broadcasting time was increased by 50 per cent (Nohl, 2010, pp. 183-184). McLellan, who was the director of BBC Turkish between 1979 and 1988, states that during this period BBC Turkish became an indispensable news source for political circles.⁷³ Referring to her interview, Yanardağolu also quotes McLellan as pointing to the 1960 and 1980 coups as the two periods in which BBC Turkish was “particularly valid” in Türkiye (Yanardağolu, 2014, p. 24). During that time, BBC Turkish also changed its practice of journalism from translation to production of its own news. In this context, one of Yanardağolu's interviewees claims that following the 1980 military coup, the BBC Turkish service has started to do “real journalism” for the first time:

“Nevsal Baylas, who was the producer on duty on the night shift when she received the news that the army took control of the government in 1980s coup. According to her, the “real journalism at the Turkish service began after the coup” because they were interviewing politicians, journalists etc. who were banned from state television and radio during the military government period.” (Yanardağolu, 2014, p. 24)

At this point, we may argue that the collapse of the mainstream media during the AKP rule have a similar effect and international news organizations once again have emerged as alternative news sources at a time when journalism is going through very difficult times in Türkiye. In this respect, it can be said that BBC Turkish's past function in the Turkish media during the 1960 and 1980 coups started to be carried out together with other international news organizations. Thus, the 2022 report of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) provides support for this argument. According to RSF, 90% of the national media in Türkiye is under government control and that the

⁷² BBC Türkçe, “Andrew Mango'nun 70. Yıl mektubu,”

https://www.bbc.com/turkce/multimedya/2009/11/091115_anni_mektup_mango

⁷³ BBC web archives

<https://web.archive.org/web/20081218033034/http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/institutional/aboutus.shtml>

public has turned to independent media outlets for information in the last five years, including international news websites such as BBC Turkish, VOA Turkish and DW Turkish. In fact, the AKP government is also aware of this interest and has been trying to keep the activities of these organizations under control with the internet and disinformation laws it has enacted in recent years and to move them to a ground where it can intervene. In this regard, Reuters (2022) draws attention that international news organizations in Türkiye are also under increasing political pressure. For example, DW Turkish and VOA Turkish, which rejected the obligation to obtain a license and appoint a representative office introduced by the Internet Law and saw this as a move that would pave the way for RTÜK's content intervention, were blocked from accessing their websites.

Besides, we also see that as long as the AKP government is unable to maintain this control, it tries to discredit these organizations and the journalists working in them. For instance, journalists working for international news organizations are sometimes directly targeted in pro-government media and sometimes on social media. In this context, the SETA report is the most obvious example of this. In 2019, SETA, known as pro-government think tank, published a report titled "International Media Outlets' Extensions in Turkey" where Turkish and foreign journalists working for international news organizations operating in Türkiye were 'profiled' name by name and their professional background and social media posts listed.⁷⁴ In its very first pages, the report emphasizes that Türkiye is attracting more and more attention of international media outlets and this is evident in the increased number of news they produced, especially after the sale of Doğan Media Group to Demirören Holding (SETA, 2019, pp. 7-10). The report accused international news organizations of bias, questioned the journalistic ethics of journalists and even suggested that they had links to terrorist organizations (IPI, 2019, s. 44). Murat Nişancıoğlu, the then editor of BBC Turkish, states that the word "extension" in the title of the report indicates the purpose of the report.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Bianet, "SETA Report on Journalists to be Taken to Court, SETA Says It is a 'Scientific Study'" 08.07.2019 <https://bianet.org/haber/seta-report-on-journalists-to-be-taken-to-court-seta-says-it-is-a-scientific-study-210168>

⁷⁵ BBC Turkish, Murat Nişancıoğlu's article, "SETA raporu - BBC Türkçe Editörü Murat Nişancıoğlu: BBC ilkelerine göre, hiçbir siyasi baskıya maruz kalmadan gazetecilik yapıyoruz", 08.07.2019 <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-48909154>

In conclusion, it is possible to say that international news organizations had previously emerged as alternative sources of information for the Türkiye's public, and, that today, their effectiveness and role in the Türkiye's media has increased following the collapse of the mainstream media, both in terms of providing a working space for journalists and providing alternative information to the public. On the other hand, we observe that the AKP government wants to dominate these organizations in the same way as it has taken over the mainstream media, and acts through various control and pressure mechanisms.

Finally, before we move on to the fieldwork, let us take a look at the information and available data on the five international organizations we will discuss.

2.2.1 BBC Turkish

The British Broadcasting Company, the first name of the BBC, was founded on 18 October 1922 by a group of leading radio manufacturers.⁷⁶ It was established by a Royal Charter, and it is principally funded through the license fee paid by UK households.⁷⁷ The BBC's operating principles were set out in 1942 as part of the BBC Charter and License Agreement. (Yanardağoğlu, 2014)

Broadcasting in 29 languages, BBC Turkish, part of the BBC World Service, was established on November 20, 1939. Radio broadcasts, which began in 1939, were terminated on May 27, 2011. Currently, BBC Turkish reaches its readers in Türkiye and around the world through its website and social media. It currently has 4.3 million followers on twitter.

2.2.2 DW Turkish

Currently engaged in journalism in 32 languages, Deutsche Welle (DW) is a public broadcaster funded by the German federal tax budget and one of Germany's international media outlets. DW states that it has more than 4,000 employees in more than 140 nationalities worldwide. DW Turkish started its broadcasting life with radio broadcasts on July 1, 1962, and continues its broadcasts on the internet today.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ BBC, History of BBC – timelines: <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/timelines/>

⁷⁷ BBC, “about the BBC” <https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc>

⁷⁸ DW, “Almanya'nın medyadaki sesi: Deutsche Welle”

<https://www.inspiredminds.de/tr/almanyan%C4%B1n-medyadaki-sesi-deutsche-welle/a-2452082>

According to its website, DW emphasizes the role of its strategy of broadcasting on digital platforms, especially in countries where press freedom is restricted, and states that this strategy has been vital in the cases of Türkiye, Iran and Russia.⁷⁹ On June 30, 2022, access to DW Turkish's website was blocked at RTÜRK's request on the grounds that they had not applied for a license. It currently has 971 thousand followers on twitter.

2.2.3 Euronews Turkish

Euronews started its operations in Lyon, France, after established by the European Union in 1993 as “the only international news media with a European perspective”. Euronews introduces itself as "Europe’s leading international news channel, providing global, multilingual news with a European perspective to over 400 million homes in 160 countries." It has a global newsroom that includes around 400 journalists from 30 different countries, reaches 145 million people every month, has 11 offices around the world, operates in 17 languages including Turkish and has more than 21 million social media followers.⁸⁰

In February 2009, the Turkish public broadcaster TRT became a shareholder in the channel and joined its supervisory board. After that Euronews Turkish had become the ninth language service in January 2010.⁸¹ However, after the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) terminated the partnership by a decision of the Council of Ministers in 2017, Euronews Turkish channel ceased broadcasting in 2018 in accordance with licence agreements.⁸² Today, Euronews Turkish broadcasts on the internet. It currently has 777 thousand followers on twitter.

2.2.4 Sputnik Türkiye

Moscow-based Sputnik is, according to its website, "a modern news agency with an international audience, offering products such as news streaming systems, websites, social media accounts, mobile applications, radio broadcasting and multimedia press

⁷⁹ Unbiased information for free minds <https://corporate.inspiredminds.de/en/unbiased-information-for-free-minds/a-52364943>

⁸⁰ Euronews, “about us”, <https://tr.euronews.com/about>

⁸¹ World Bulletin, “Türkiye's TRT joins Euronews supervisory board” 15.09.2009

<https://www.worldbulletin.net/archive/Türkiyes-trt-joins-euronews-supervisory-board-h47271.html>

⁸² Sözcü, “Euronews Türkçe'nin yayını durduruldu”, 31.01.2018

<https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2018/dunya/euronews-turkcenin-yayini-uydudan-kaldirildi-2197176/>

centres".⁸³ With regional offices in many different parts of the world, from the USA to China, France to Egypt, Sputnik currently works in more than 30 languages.

Sputnik Turkiye was established on November 10, 2014, under the umbrella of the Russian state agency 'Rossiya Segodnya'. Sputnik Turkiye started broadcasting as a radio and news agency on its website on December 26, 2014.⁸⁴ It currently has 1 million followers on twitter.

2.2.5 VOA Turkish

Voice of America (VOA) is broadcast in more than 2,350 media outlets around the world via satellite, cable, shortwave, FM, mediumwave, audio and video to a weekly global audience of more than 326 million in 48 languages. The Voice of America is funded by the U.S. Congress through USAGM.⁸⁵

VOA Turkish service, which started its broadcasting life in 1942-1945, continues its broadcasts from its Washington office through its website as well as programs broadcast from its Washington office on EKOTÜRK TV channel.⁸⁶ VOA Turkish currently has 304 thousand followers on twitter. Like DW Turkish, VOA Turkish does not have a representative in Türkiye and therefore its website cannot be accessed from Türkiye.

2.4 Studies on International News Organizations Operating in Türkiye

We have briefly looked at the contexts in which international news organizations are studied worldwide. In addition to this, it will be useful to look specifically at the studies on the Turkish services of international news organizations operating in Türkiye in order to understand the importance, originality and contribution of this study to the literature.

When we look at the studies in Turkey, we see that there are not many studies, the existing studies mostly analyze news texts or social media accounts, journalistic activities are less addressed, and those that exist are insufficient to understand

⁸³ Sputnik "about us" <https://sputnikglobe.com/docs/index.html>

⁸⁴ Sputnik Yayın Yönetmeni Boztepe: Mücadeleden kaçmayı düşünmüyoruz, *Journo*, 23.04.2016 <https://journo.com.tr/sputnik-yayin-yonetmeni-boztepe-mucadeleden-kaçmayi-dusunmuyoruz>

⁸⁵ VOA statement on Turkish media regulator's 'Internet broadcasting license' <https://www.usagm.gov/2022/02/22/voa-statement-on-turkish-media-regulators-internet-broadcasting-license/>

⁸⁶ VOA Broadcasting in Turkish <https://www.insidevoa.com/p/6460.html>

journalistic practices, how the newsrooms work and journalists' experiences. Even the newsrooms of the Turkish services of these international news organizations have not yet been systematically, comparatively, and comprehensively analyzed. Let us now take a closer look at the studies on Turkish services of international news organizations.

Studies based on news content investigate how international news organizations are treated as a public diplomacy tool and how the host country's attitude is reflected in the news (Budak, 2018; Durmuş, 2023). For example, Budak argues that there is a relationship of economic dependence between international news organizations and the host countries that fund them and analyzes the news texts on Syria between September 1, 2018 and October 5, 2018 with van Dijk's critical discourse analysis method. Likewise, in his doctoral thesis, Durmuş investigates the place of international news organizations in public diplomacy and examines the news about the Middle East published in these organizations.

Çınar (2023) on the other hand, questions whether the activities of DW Turkish can be considered within the scope of alternative media. In this respect, Çınar compares the coverage of the Kahramanmaraş earthquake by both Hürriyet newspaper's website and DW Türkçe's website to see whether there is a difference between them (Çınar, 2023).

Apart from that there are studies looking at social media outlook and activities of international news organizations. For instance, Karaduman (2019) compiles current information such as the number of followers, following and posts on the social media accounts of the Turkish services of BBC, DW, Euronews, Independent, Sputnik and VOA. Gürel (2020) on the other hand, looks at social media analytics of international news organizations to measure their social media performance and to understand how effective the use of local journalists as international broadcasters in foreign media.

In addition to these, there are studies based on interviews with employees of international news organizations. In his study based on semi-structured interviews with five editors in 2013, Özsoy mainly investigates the structure of DW Turkish and holds DW Turkish as a Turkish media in Germany (Özsoy, 2014).

Finally, in a recent study examines international news organizations Narin and Ünsal (2020) conduct interviews with four foreign media employees, two of whom

were executive editors and the other two were journalists. In their analysis, based on Bebawi's theme of inequalities in working conditions they analyze state control, access to information, social pressures and cultural factors as challenges faced by foreign media and economic and technological opportunities as the advantages of working in foreign media (Narin & Ünal, 2020). While their work is important and noteworthy, it is insufficient to systematically and comprehensively analyze and discuss journalistic practices in foreign media in terms of the scope of the study, the number of interviews and the profile of the interviewees.

Throughout chapter 2, we took a brief look at how international news organizations emerged, how they have developed historically and for what purposes they operate, as well as their history, activities and current situation in Turkey. Considering both the functions of international news organizations beyond the purpose of their emergence and their growing place and expanding activities in the Türkiye's news media, it is necessary to study international news organizations as journalistic activities in Türkiye. In this respect, it remains to be answered what foreign media means for both the journalism profession and journalists in the media landscape that has emerged in Türkiye as a result of the transformation of the media during the AKP rule. Therefore, in order to understand these practices and the working structure of the Turkish services of international news organizations and the challenges and opportunities faced by journalists working there, more comprehensive research is needed, including news production processes and the experiences of journalists.

CHAPTER 3: TURKISH SERVICES OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS ORGANIZATIONS: WHY, HOW AND UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS

3.1 Methodology

This thesis is built upon a qualitative case analysis, which is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with twelve journalists working or formerly working at BBC Turkish, Deutsche Welle Turkish, Euronews Turkish, Sputnik Türkiye, and Voice of America Turkish.

I contacted a total of 20 journalists but received either no response or a negative response from 8 of them. Of the 12 journalists I interviewed, 5 are women and 7 are men, and 2 journalists from BBC Turkish, 4 journalists from DW Turkish, 1 journalist from Euronews Turkish, 3 journalists from Sputnik Türkiye, and 2 journalists from VOA Turkish.

The names of the journalists who participated in the research are withheld in case of possible targeting and to provide a degree of security, and the participants are coded from J1 to J12. The statements of the interviewees are their personal opinions and do not represent their institutions.

International News Organization	Interviewee
BBC Turkish	J1
BBC Turkish	J2
Deutsche Welle Turkish	J3
Deutsche Welle Turkish	J4
Deutsche Welle Turkish	J5
Deutsche Welle Turkish	J6
Euronews Turkish	J7
Sputnik Turkiye	J8
Sputnik Turkiye	J9
Sputnik Turkiye	J10
Voice of America Turkish	J11
Voice of America Turkish	J12

Eleven of the interviews were conducted online via Zoom and one was conducted face-to-face, based entirely on the preference of the interviewees. Although it varied from person to person, the interviews lasted 45-50 minutes on average. Interviews took place during November 2023.

Semi-structured interviews were designed to understand journalists' daily news routines, why they prefer to work for the Turkish services of international news organizations, what challenges they face while working there, and where they currently position the mainstream and international media in Türkiye.

Eight of the interviewees (J1, J2, J3, J4, J5, J6, J11, J12) are still working in the Turkish services of these international news organizations. Of the remaining four, J7 has recently started working for a mainstream media outlet, J9 for another international news organization, J8 for a digital newspaper and J10 is unemployed. In this regard, it is important to note that in July 2023, the Journalists' Union of Türkiye (TGS) announced a strike in response to the failure of labor contract negotiations at Sputnik and in August 2023, Sputnik management fired 24 journalists, all union members, and the TGS went on strike. J9 and J10 were among the journalists laid off during the ongoing strike at Sputnik Türkiye

Half of the interviewees had previously worked as full-time and permanent staff in mainstream media outlets including newspapers such as Akşam, Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, Sabah, Vatan, and others like Anadolu Agency, ATV, CNN Türk and NTV. Most journalists in the other group, who are younger, have internship experience at mainstream media organizations, but no full-time work experience at these organizations. In this respect, it is possible to say that the interviewees consist of both those who have experienced the mainstream media and those who have not had this opportunity due to their age.

When we look at the journalists' working style, we see that it is determined by organizational and/or personal factors. For example, the journalists retired seem to prefer freelancing because as they argued it is more comfortable for them. Besides this, there is a special situation for DW Turkish and VOA Turkish journalists. Under the aforementioned internet law, because Deutsche Welle and Voice of America refused to get licenses and appoint representatives, arguing that this would pave the way for

RTÜK's interference in content, both companies were shut down and their employees are no longer able to work for these organizations as permanent and insured. Therefore, journalists working in DW Turkish and VOA Turkish officially work as freelance journalists. At the same time, these journalists can also work for other organizations to meet their needs such as insurance. In this regard, those working at DW Turkish mention an increase in their wages as compensation for this loss.

3.2 Findings and Discussion

In this section, we will present the findings from the interviews under five main categories: First, we will look at why journalists working in international news organizations choose to work there and their own stories; second, we will focus on their daily news routines in these organizations. Then, we will examine the challenges faced by journalists working in foreign media outlets. After considering all these, we will discuss the current state of the mainstream media in Türkiye and the place of the international media organizations we examined in this picture.

3.2.1. The Reasons for Working in International News Organizations

When I ask the journalists about their stories and reasons for starting to work for an international news organization, we hear that almost all of them started working for these organizations because, in their own words, there was no more space for them to work freely in mainstream media. At this point, it is possible to say that what makes journalists turn to foreign media overlaps with both the story of the AKP's takeover of the mainstream media, which we discussed in the first chapter, and the emergence of international media as an alternative information source where the media is under pressure, which we mentioned in the second chapter (Price M. , 2003; Nohl, 2010; Yanardağoğlu, 2014; Workneh, 2019; Workneh, 2021). Accordingly, in the stories of the interviewees, we see the story of the collapse of the mainstream media on the one hand, and how foreign media has opened a space on the other.

It is important to note here that beyond the examples in the international broadcasting literature and the past practices of foreign media in Turkey, in today's repressive media environment, foreign media functions not only as a source of news but also as a working environment for journalists. The main reason for the shift towards foreign media not only by readers but also by journalists is, again, the AKP

government's complete takeover of the mainstream media in Türkiye and the enormous pressure it has exerted on the entire media space.

When we look at how the interviewees started working in foreign media outlets we see that while the first contact of senior journalists with these organizations is upon receiving an offer, the younger/newly graduated journalists usually join the foreign media through their acquaintances working in these organizations. Now, let's take a look at the journalistic story of each of them.

Among my interviewees, J5 is the first journalist to start working in international media. As recalled from the first chapter, in 2011, Kemal Öztürk, then Prime Minister Erdoğan's press advisor, was appointed as the head of the Anadolu Agency and the agency underwent a significant change. J5, who had worked at Anadolu Agency for years, resigned in the process that followed the appointment of Öztürk and started working at Reuters by coincidence. J5 argues that the problems experienced at Anadolu Agency at that time were also experienced by other organizations in the mainstream media, so it was no longer possible to work in most national media outlets, and then adds that foreign media emerged as an option in this respect:

“But after Anadolu Agency and after being unhappy there, there was very little space for me to work. I am leaving a journalistic environment where I am already unhappy. Why would I enter a similar environment again? Because if I was going to go to A Haber or CNN Türk, I would have stayed at Anadolu Agency anyway. I wouldn't have wasted that much experience. Therefore, I should have gone to a very different (media) outlet. And this is most likely to be an international media organization.”

On the other hand, J1 and J4, who worked at Cumhuriyet, a well-known national newspaper known for its critical approach to the AKP government, left Cumhuriyet newspaper after a change in management and preferred international media. J1 says that when she received an offer from the BBC within a short time, she accepted, saying that the BBC's news language and journalistic approach matched her own. We learn that she had already been writing on the BBC's website before, albeit not very often.

“Why there? Frankly, it was very suitable for the way I write news. It was also well suited to my news language at Cumhuriyet. It was also very suitable for my understanding of journalism.”

After leaving Cumhuriyet newspaper, we learn that J4 had experience with Olay TV before crossing paths with DW. In the first section, we have seen that Olay TV was the last attempt in the context of mainstream media and that it was only on air for 26 days before it was shut down under government pressure. After this adventure was short-lived, J4 produced news for his website for a while and then started working for DW as a freelancer in March 2021 upon an offer and joined the permanent staff at DW in June 2021. When I ask him why he chose to work at DW, he explains his decision as follows:

“There are no national media organizations left to work for in Türkiye. If you can't even work at Cumhuriyet, one of the last few organizations, after the change of management, there is nowhere else to work.”

Drawing attention to the conditions in the independent media as well as the mainstream media, J4 says that he was offered a job by some websites such as T24 at the time, but he preferred to work at DW due to economic reasons:

Also, when I left at that time, I had been a journalist for 12 years, and with this seniority, your salary expectations are high, and you want your news to be valued.”

Similarly, J3's reasons for moving to DW include both editorial and economic working conditions. J3, who himself transferred from mainstream media, explains that it was no longer possible to work as a journalist in the mainstream media and that he started working at DW Turkish in 2021 upon the offer he received because it provided a comfortable and free working environment, and that the economic opportunities it provided also played a role in this decision:

“First of all, I love the profession, I love doing journalism. This is no longer possible in national media, central media, holding media, and capitalist media. This is the first reason. The second reason is of course economic. I mean they can provide much better conditions. If the conditions were the same, I would still transfer, but would you transfer if the conditions were worse? OK, we want to do our profession, but on the other hand, we have to make a living in Türkiye's economic conditions.”

In addition, J3 says that working for an international organization brings with it opportunities such as being connected to media outlets abroad and working there.

“There is a possibility that you might go there. This is also an option, working there. This is also an additional reason for me.”

We also hear from other journalists about the opportunity to have an international network as an advantage of working for a foreign media. For example, J5 describes this opportunity as follows:

“I have gotten this both at Reuters and DW Turkish. Your circle is also a bit more global. Because, when you work in the national press, your circle is only limited to that national press, both in terms of your fellow journalists and your news sources. But in an international news organization, you have the opportunity to work with more different people, more different countries and their journalists.”

J9 whose field is foreign news and closely follows the world news media, also mentions this opportunity. He thinks that working for an international media organization has given him a different experience in his field. He states that he had not planned to work in international media but started working at Sputnik Türkiye upon an invitation from an acquaintance. Even if working here wasn't exactly on his mind, he thinks that foreign media is favorable in terms of acquiring an international network, especially in the foreign news:

“I think it's prestigious, you can meet a lot of people from the international arena, and it opens doors. I mean in terms of foreign news, it is an important place, an important experience. It is not journalism as we know it in Türkiye. But it gives you another experience. It teaches diplomacy, it gives you experience in international relations.”

We also hear once again from J12, who had worked in the mainstream media for many years, that foreign media provides a better working environment than mainstream media. His international media adventure started at Al Jazeera, and he took part in the establishment process and worked there for about four years. When I ask him why he started working at Al Jazeera, he says that he liked its editorial policy and that there was no other organization he could work for at the time. He explains why he is working at VOA in similar terms.

“After that, since we couldn't find a place in the mainstream media, I decided to continue working there because I felt more comfortable in foreign media.”

In addition to VOA Turkish, J12 also writes for other foreign media outlets such as AFP and Al-Monitor.

J8, an experienced journalist who had worked in the mainstream media for many years, explains that he started working at Sputnik Türkiye after receiving an offer when he was unemployed. He says that while working as a news coordinator at Radikal newspaper, he found himself fired after the website was shut down and merged with Hürriyet's website. He worked at Artı Bir TV for a short period, but after leaving in 2014, he was unemployed for about a year, and he says it was due to the lack of a place in the national press that suited his journalistic stance.

“After all, you have a world view, a journalistic stance. So, you pay a price by being unemployed. There is a reason for this. So, this is about your stance. Otherwise, of course, you can work. Otherwise, you know, you can accept this and act accordingly.”

J8 says that when he left CNN Türk in 2011, Aydın Doğan, the media boss of the channel, told him, *“Bâb-ı Âlî is an apartment building, one day you look from one window, another day from another window, if you want to look through the same window again, our door is always open to you.”* But when he was unemployed, he called Doğan Media Group but received no response.

“When I had a very difficult time after I left there, I called CNN and other channels. I couldn't get a proper response from any of them and one of them offered me a job as a night editor at the place where I was working as a news coordinator. After that, I said I was done with it. I mean, it was a very unfair industry. Anyway, when I got an offer from Sputnik, I immediately continued from there.”

On the other hand, J7, who started her career at IMC TV, explains that after IMC TV was shut down by a state of emergency decree, she had worked as a freelance journalist for a while to produce her documentary project, and that this is when she crossed paths with Euronews. She had worked as a freelancer both at Euronews and Habertürk for a while and then became a permanent employee at Euronews. When I ask her why she chose to work for Euronews, we learn that it is again about editorial autonomy. She says that when she was freelancing, she had a team that she enjoyed working with and this influenced her decision to work there.

“The freedom to make the news I wanted was the main criterion for me. As an anchor, you read the texts given to you, but as a reporter, it's all your signature, your image, your perspective. There was a very good, very successful team that I

experienced during that freelancing process. That's why I left my freelance job at Habertürk and started this journey with Euronews.”

J7 said that her active reporting during the earthquake had worn her out that she thinks it is right to make a change after working for a certain period in each organization, and that she left Euronews in 2023 and is currently working for Habertürk.

Besides, among the younger journalists who have not had the opportunity to work in the mainstream media but have internship experience, we learn that J2 and J11's contacts with international news organizations were established through their professors at their universities.

J2, who had internships at mainstream media such as Milliyet, Radikal, and Artı Bir TV while studying at university, applied for a BBC Erasmus internship with the reference of her professor, a former BBC employee, and had the opportunity to intern in London for six months, and then returned to Türkiye to work as a freelance reporter for BBC Turkish.

When I ask J2 why she preferred to work at BBC, she says that in Türkiye it is not entirely up to the journalist's choice and that the monopolization in the mainstream media has limited opportunities. Although she does not have experience working for a long time, she says that she would like to work in the mainstream media if she could.

“I mean, it was a period when Radikal was shut down. You know, there is no more explicit example in this respect. With monopolization and shrinking resources, there was not much choice for any of us. Of course, the BBC is a place that can always be the first choice. But I see Radikal as the place where my career started. If there was Radikal in Türkiye at that time, I would have loved to be at Radikal. I mean, but there was no Radikal. It is that clear.”

Similar to J2, J11 started working at VOA through one of his professors at the university. Initially hired as an assistant at VOA, he started working as a freelance reporter after a second reporter position opened in his city. When I ask him why he decided to work at VOA, he explains that he wanted to work in the mainstream when he graduated, but this was not possible:

“After school, my dream was to work in the mainstream. I had a job interview at CNN Turk. I mean, I was called for a job there, but I had to go back with my suitcase

on the same day. I mean, this happened right during the transition from Doğan to Demirören. That is why I couldn't work in the mainstream media. I mean, I applied for different jobs after that, but my idea of working in the mainstream did not come true.”

In this regard, he says that the Turkish media had changed a lot even between the time he started school and the time he graduated and that it was because of these conditions that he decided to work at VOA.

“Of course, the conditions when I was doing my internship, and even the conditions when I started school, when I decided to become a journalist, and the conditions when I left school were completely different. So, there has been a very rapid change in Türkiye.”

When I ask J10 about her story, she tells me that she had wanted to be an announcer since childhood, so she started working at a radio station while studying at university. She got in touch with Sputnik Türkiye through the people she met there during her university years and started working at Sputnik Türkiye as an intern.

J6, another name with neither internship nor work experience in the mainstream media, started his journalism journey by presenting a news bulletin at Radio METU while studying at university. After graduation, he started working as a permanent staff member at Medyascope, where he worked as an intern for a year. While working at Medyascope, he saw DW's video journalist job advert and wanted to take his chance. When I ask him why he wanted to work at DW, he says this is both a material and moral decision.

“Medyascope to DW for two reasons. First of all, it was better in terms of wages. Secondly, it had a larger audience. And I liked the videos they (DW Turkish) made, you know, the documentary-style videos I mentioned. I thought, "I can do these too, why wouldn't I do it?" It was both a financial and a moral decision.”

After the application process, he started working as a freelancer at DW Turkish in July 2020. In the meantime, he was offered a diplomacy correspondent position at Olay TV, and he accepted it. However, after Olay TV's broadcasting life lasted only 26 days, he was offered by DW Turkish, and he started working there again in April 2021 on the condition that he would work as a permanent staff. He has been working at DW Turkish ever since.

When I ask him why he came back to DW, given his experience at Olay TV, he explains that if it was the mainstream media 10 years ago, he would still prefer to work there rather than on the internet. However, he thinks that the internet is more effective under these conditions:

“After Olay TV, I received offers from other TV channels, but I didn't want to take them up. Since it didn't work out, I went back to DW so that I could do it the way I knew how without fear or favor. One of the reasons is that, in addition to objectivity, I find the work on the internet more valuable. Even if television is very impartial... I think the work on the internet is a little bit more forward-looking.”

When we look at the stories of the interviewees in general, we see that for both senior and young journalists, the lack of independent working space in mainstream media is a prominent reason for working in foreign media. In this context, editorial and economic freedom provided by these organizations are cited as the most important factors in their choice. The editorial process in these organizations will be discussed more extensively in the next section, where we examine news production processes and newsroom structures. However, in terms of economic opportunities, almost all interviewees underline that salaries in the international media are much higher than in the national media in Türkiye. This is the case for both senior and young journalists. However, among these organizations, we hear that Sputnik has more limited opportunities than the other four. For example, J10 says that she was not able to experience the advantage of working in international media in this respect, that salaries differed from employee to employee within Sputnik Türkiye, and that they even learned about this through an accidental e-mail. Journalist J9, who had also worked for Sputnik Türkiye, says that Russian and Chinese media cannot compete with Western organizations in this sense and that Sputnik lags behind its counterparts in terms of both wages and rights. However, he adds that Sputnik Türkiye is not bad when compared to local news websites in Türkiye. J8, who had worked exclusively for Sputnik's radio station in exchange for royalties, says that his salary was not high when he first started working, but over time, as the program became a hit, Sputnik had to raise it. However, it is also important to note that Sputnik Turkey is not the only organization where journalists have problems with wages. In January 2022, BBC Turkish employees went on strike due to the failure to reach an agreement between BBC Turkish and TGS on wage increases, but an agreement was reached after a 15-day strike. Although both interviewees from BBC Turkish did not directly experience

the process as they were freelancers at the time and were not directly involved in the process, J2 says that BBC Turkish did not act as a facilitator in this process and that journalists achieved gains because they struggled.

In addition, as J3, J5, and J9 have already mentioned, the opportunity to gain a global network while working in foreign media is also cited as a plus. Both J1 and J9 highlight the prestigious reputation of these organizations. Furthermore, J6 states that, unlike other media organizations in Türkiye, they do not have to worry about being fired for the news they report here. In this context, J9 agrees that working in a foreign state media creates a safe environment for journalists in Türkiye.

We now know why these journalists work for foreign media. In the last section, we will discuss the place of international media organizations in Turkish media and the space that foreign media opened for journalists, so let's take a look at the daily work routine and newsroom structures in these organizations.

3.2.2 The Process of News-Making in International News Organizations

When we look at the news production processes, we see that BBC Turkish, DW Turkish, Euronews Turkish, and VOA Turkish have similar operations, but Sputnik Türkiye differs from them in this respect. All four organizations do not have a newsroom in Türkiye, but there is a direct communication and working relationship between the central newsroom abroad and the reporters here. At Sputnik Türkiye, on the other hand, the journalists have no relationship with the newsroom in Moscow and their daily routine is entirely run by managers from Türkiye. Although the news processes in the four organizations are similar, it would be more appropriate to look closely at the newsroom operation of each organization separately.

3.2.2.1 BBC Turkish

First of all, as we said before, at BBC, the reporters work directly with the BBC Turkish central newsroom in London. From discussions on the daily agenda to the selection of the news topic, from the editing process to the publication of the news, the entire process takes place between the reporters in Türkiye and the BBC Turkish editors in London. Most of the editors working in the central newsroom of BBC Turkish are journalists from Türkiye. J1 explains this as:

“There are journalists from Türkiye working in the Turkish service. Therefore, it is not that difficult to communicate. For example, some of them we already know from the past, (some of them) are my friends, we know them from Türkiye. So, working (with them) is not much of a problem.”

Both journalists interviewed by BBC Turkish say that they mostly determine the news topics themselves, but that they also receive topic suggestions from their editors in London from time to time. J2 says that the news topic is determined through the mutual exchange of ideas, considering dynamics such as news value, impact, and accessibility to sources, and explains the process:

“Of course, we have a routine meeting every morning, a meeting we enter together with London. I generally present the agenda of Türkiye, what is happening, whether are there any pre-arranged meetings of certain institutions, etc. These are already listed as routine topics. Apart from that, I list my suggestions on which issues we can work on. 90 percent (of the agenda) is determined by me.”

For J1, her news routine at the BBC is similar to her routine at Cumhuriyet newspaper, except that in BBC Turkish she does not follow the daily news like in the national news agencies, but here she mainly focuses on special news production. Even though she says there is no time pressure as in the mainstream media, J1 adds that her style of newsmaking is a little out of the BBC's slow journalism and that she writes differently as she pursues more hot news. She works in that way mainly because:

“Because BBC Turkish service broadcasts for Türkiye. In other words, its readers are not British or American. Its readers are Turks, people living in Türkiye. Therefore, this news are read a lot. Frankly speaking, I think the reason I'm in a good position at the BBC is because I write the news that is widely read.”

On the other hand, J2 also works as a video journalist and says that the entire production process was carried out by her. She says that they are expected to be able to take photographs, set up technical facilities, conduct interviews, write, and edit the news stories.

When both journalists prepare the story, they send it to the editors of BBC Turkish at the central newsroom in London for publication. Both say that they feel editorially free and that there is no direct interference in the publication process, but

that the BBC's editorial guideline is expected to be always adhered to. J2 even mentions that there is a BBC unit called Editorial Policy:

“For some cases, there is a service called Ed-pol. Editorial Policy is a unit whose sole job is to give editorial advice, such as whether the news is in accordance with editorial policy, and in which aspects it may not be appropriate. It is not a decision-maker. But it gives advice.”

Likewise, J1 emphasizes that the BBC has *Türkan Şoray* rules⁸⁷ in journalism and in this context, it draws ethical boundaries for journalists working for it:

“The BBC is an organization that is committed to its principles. We can say that there are certain Türkan Şoray rules in terms of journalism. For example, they don't want us to go on TV and make comments. I used to do it in the past. They don't want that. They say that our impartiality can be questioned. There is a restriction only in that sense. Other than that, they don't want us to share visible or personal tweets. This is to avoid being targeted. As you know, people can be targeted very easily in Türkiye. It can also create problems in terms of questioning your impartiality.”

Both journalists say that the only reason for rejecting a story in the BBC Turkish would be this editorial policy and that there can be no other reason for that.

3.2.2.2 DW Turkish

Similar to the operation of the BBC Turkish, the journalists of DW Turkish do not have a newsroom in Türkiye and have a direct relationship with the DW Turkish newsroom in Germany.

Explaining the news production process at DW Turkish, J3 says that there are two structures for DW news: written news on the online website and a video bulletin like a TV news bulletin every day at 18:15. In this regard, both J3 and J6 are working for this bulletin and J4 and J5 are working for website.

Both J3 and J6 say they focus on specific issues rather than daily or last-minute news. For instance, J3 states that in the news they prepare for the bulletin, they do not

⁸⁷ Türkan Şoray is one of the most popular movie stars in Türkiye. On the IMDb website, the rules of Türkan Şoray are explained as some principles that she dictated to her producers thanks to intense interest of the producers in Türkan. See more: IMDb Türkan Şoray biography <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0814734/bio/>

mainly ask "What happened in Türkiye today?", but rather focus on specific issues and cover them in different dimensions.

“This is a system where we focus on specific issues, such as child labor, Alevi rights, gay rights, more details of the Fatih Terim investigation, for example, why people want to make easy money rather than the legal aspect of it, and cover different aspects of it.”

Both J3 and J6 say that the journalists working for this bulletin have meetings every morning where they discuss the topics on the agenda. They say five reporters are working on the bulletin and each bulletin consists of four stories. J6 says that they are usually expected to suggest the news and describes his daily routine as follows:

“You know, sometimes there is something that comes out on social media, a topic that is talked about a lot. Sometimes, there is a need to get an expert opinion on it. So, I'm always on social media, on Twitter, (to) follow what's happening, and I also visit shopkeepers from time to time.”

J4, on the other hand, had worked for the bulletin for a while, but because it made him disconnected from the field, he now works only for the written news section of the website. He says that his daily routine has not changed much since he joined DW, that he looks at newspapers and the internet in the mornings, continues with the news he was already following, or contacts his sources to find out if there is a new case file. He states that there is a two-sided process on what he will report on:

“We have morning meetings with them (DW Turkish editors). Of course, they also have suggestions for us on similar current issues. News planning is not unilaterally mine or unilaterally theirs. We combine the news they suggest with the news in my agenda and proceed with planning or even weekly news planning. We prioritize whichever is more urgent and current.”

Like J4; J5, who writes news for the website, has a similar daily routine. She says that when she wakes up in the morning, she reads the newspapers, checks the internet, and then talks to her online editor in Germany to set her agenda. Like the news produced for the bulletin, both J4 and J5 emphasize that the news written for the website is also expected to be special and in-depth.

“There is not a continuous flow of news on the page like other websites. They (DW Turkish editors) don't want that kind of news. They want more of the news file,

the kind of news that goes a little deeper, that chases the agenda but at the same time compiles and gathers everything (related). Therefore, if I have a news story, I can work on it for a day or two. I have such an opportunity.” (J5)

In this regard, J4 argues that the news in DW differs from the news in the national press:

“In the national media in Türkiye, you know when an event happens, they immediately pick it up and publish it. Therefore, there is no depth. In foreign agencies, especially DW Turkish, we expect a written news report to cover an event in depth, with all its dimensions. This is an approach to journalism that I have always wanted.”

All the DW Turkish reporters explain that after preparing the story, they send it directly to the DW Turkish editors in Germany. The bulletin team sends the images and texts they have gathered for the story to the central newsroom in Germany, and the story is finalized there.

In this context, J3 states that the DW Turkish team in Germany does not intervene in the content of the news item but makes adjustments to ensure that it is in an appropriate length and format. At this point, J6, who also works as a video journalist, says that if he is doing his own special story, he edits the video himself.

When I ask J3, who had previously worked in many newspapers and a television channel, whether the news process in DW Turkish is different from the processes in the mainstream media, he says that there are many differences between them. For instance, he explains that in the mainstream media, journalists are not sure whether their stories will be published or not. This is something that J1 also touches upon. Both of them point out that there is always a possibility that their news will not be published in the national media. On the other hand, J3 notes that the production process in mainstream media involves discussions about how the story will offend whom, and editorial intervention on what to say, how to ask questions, and to whom. At this point, J3 argues that any newsworthy content can be reported in DW Turkish and that there are no interventions as in the mainstream media.

“There is nothing like that here. Here, you suggest it, and they say okay, let's do it, or it would be good if we do this, but always within the framework of news content. We discuss it to enrich it. We work more news-oriented here. There is no such thing as ‘Let's not go into that topic, if we mention this, they will get angry’. It is

German public media. If it is news, they say OK, let's do it. There is no such thing as not reporting on certain topics. We cover every topic.”

3.2.2.3 Euronews Turkish

Before moving on to the news production process at Euronews Turkish, it should be noted that there is only one permanent reporter in the Turkish service, while the other reporters are freelancers. J7, the only Euronews Turkish journalist I interviewed, worked as a full-time permanent journalist for almost four years, including two years as a representative of the organization.

Similar to the Turkish services of the BBC and DW, Euronews does not have a newsroom in Türkiye and correspondents work directly with the newsrooms in Lyon and Brussels. J7 says that they have a meeting at the beginning of every week and editorial teams from Türkiye and Belgium attend this meeting. When I ask her how news content is determined, she says that both her and the editors' suggestions were discussed at the meetings they held every Monday. She underlines that their concern was to do public journalism and that she and her teammates were in harmony in this respect.

She says that they prepared both written news and video and that she worked as a video journalist where she was responsible for all processes of news production and carried out the entire process from shooting to finding relevant contacts and creating the content for the story. In this context, we see that video journalists work in a similar way, no matter which organization they work for. Then she sent it to the editorial team abroad and the final version of the video news is given by the video editor and the editing team.

She states that throughout all stages of the news story, from topic discussion to sharing on social media there was no interference in her news and that she was consulted whenever any changes were made:

“Even for a punctuation or title edit, there is an editorial process where the editor of the day turns to you and asks, ‘This is what I think for this title, what do you think?’”

She explains that although in theory there was a news quota, in practice, they did not work in this way, and that the number of news items they covered depended on the agenda.

“As I said, there is no quota. Whatever the agenda brings, for example, there were times when I didn't do any news for two weeks, and there were times when I did four stories in a week. In other words, I can say that it's a tempo that is completely determined by us, and we were neither subjected to mobbing nor did any of us have the rush or panic of trying to catch up with the work. It was an experience for me where the team lightened each other's burden.”

In this context, we observe that Euronews Turkish does not operate as a national news agency, it works like the BBC and DW Turkish services and focuses mainly on the production of special news.

3.2.2.4 VOA Turkish

When we look at the news production at VOA Turkish, we see that, like the Turkish services of the BBC, DW, and Euronews, VOA Turkish reporters work directly with its newsroom in Washington DC and there is no newsroom in Türkiye. However, due to the time difference, we learn that VOA Turkish reporters conduct their daily routine with DC via e-mail. In this context, J12 notes that he also has an editor in Türkiye with whom he is in even more contact. But at the end of the day, both journalists have a direct working relationship with editors in DC.

When I asked how news topics are determined at VOA Turkish, J12 explains that this is a two-sided process, both he proposes a news item, and the editors in management request news. After discussing the newsworthiness of the topic and reaching an agreement, the agenda is set.

J11, on the other hand, states that there are two VOA reporters in his city, and they work together and make separate schedules on a weekly, monthly, and even yearly basis. He says that they decide on the news topics together with the editors in DC.

“Generally, we sit down and talk about our agenda every week. Then we write it as a proposal and send it to the center. Our friends in Washington DC either agree or disagree, saying do this or do it in that way, add this to the story, don't do that in this story. With their agenda suggestions, our plan for that week is determined.”

In this regard, J11 works as a video journalist and is responsible for each part of the news production process. He says that he and his VOA correspondent friend are both on the writing and video side. Here, once again, we see that the Turkish services of international news organizations share commonalities; like BBC, DW, Euronews; VOA Turkish focuses on special news rather than routine news.

“We do not only cover a local agenda but also special news on Türkiye's general agenda. What VOA Turkish wants from us is special news, not routine. No one opens and reads VOA Turkish to follow the routine.”

J11 explains that after preparing the story, they send it to the editors in DC, and after the editorial process there, DC puts it on the website. But at this point, he says, there is no serious intervention, no "altın makas"⁸⁸ as he puts it in Turkish. J11 also adds that they have a purely journalistic relationship with the editors in Washington DC and that they feel editorially safe because everyone in charge is a journalist, there is no patronage relationship.

Like J11, J12 sends the story to his editor after it is done, and if the editor thinks a revision is needed, s/he talks to J12, and after they decide together on the editing part, the story is posted on the website.

“There is no editing without our knowledge. At least I have never encountered such a thing during my time at VOA. Of course, there are times when editing is necessary. This happens in the ordinary course of life. But it is done in consultation with us.”

Finally, when talking about the news production process, we hear that the time difference between the central newsroom in DC and Türkiye creates a disadvantage for journalists working in Türkiye. J11, for example, says that during working hours in Washington DC, they have to be available and on-call from Türkiye.

3.2.2.5 Sputnik Türkiye

When we look at the daily news routine at Sputnik Türkiye, we see that the working styles of J8, who had worked on the radio program, and J9 and J10, who had worked for the Sputnik website, were different. However, what they all have in common, and what differentiates Sputnik Türkiye from the Turkish services of other

⁸⁸ In English “golden scissors”, he means that there is no significant editorial interference.

foreign media outlets, is that the journalists working in Sputnik work with managers from the Türkiye office in their daily routine. In other words, unlike how it works at the BBC, DW, Euronews, and VOA; there is no direct relationship between Sputnik's head office in Moscow and journalists in Türkiye. All three say they do not know the Russian administration and have never worked together. J10 says that later a general manager came from Russia, but he was only interested in technical work.

Another important detail that distinguishes Sputnik Türkiye from other Turkish-language services is that agenda meetings are not held with the same frequency and necessity of other organizations. For instance, working for the website, J9 says that the news process at Sputnik Türkiye works differently from Western organizations and that they do not hold news discussions like other news organizations. He says that there are also agenda meetings at Sputnik, but the frequency varies. He adds that the news process goes completely in parallel with the agenda of the editor in charge and that even if there is no meeting, he knows what news he will and will not cover during his working hours. According to J9, these meetings are usually held for show in all organizations and the agenda and to-dos are more or less already clear.

At this point, when I ask how the news topics are chosen, both J9 and J10 say that each editor can choose the topic of the news according to their interest and field of work. For example, J10, who was working as an assistant to the editor-in-chief, says her job was to prepare internal reports, transcribe radio programs to maintain the relationship between the website and radio programs, as well as translate news and work on news files. She says that she usually decided on the news topics, but that she had to get approval from Turkish managers beforehand. She says that she could choose topics according to her interests because Sputnik Türkiye is not concerned about the number of clicks. Similarly, J9 notes that Sputnik Türkiye works like a standard online news portal, focusing on gaining engagement, especially on social media, without falling into clickbait.

Although we learn that they prioritize their interests and fields of study in their topic selection, it seems that there is no clarity on how a news proposal is accepted or rejected. In this regard, J9 argues that there are certain red lines in all international media outlets and that journalists working there are expected to work in line with these red lines and the policies of host countries.

“Here, if you say I want to do this news, I want to focus more on this field, the way is open. You can do it as you wish, except for those red lines I mentioned at the beginning.”

Although J9 mentions red lines when talking about the editorial policy, it gives the impression that these red lines do not refer to editorial principles as in the BBC.

On the other hand, when I ask what kind of news is covered at Sputnik Türkiye, we learn that journalists do not report on Türkiye's domestic politics, but editors do, and Turkish executives supervise them.

“What they pay attention to is the perception of the country they represent in Türkiye. I need to open a parenthesis for Sputnik. For example, Sputnik does not report on the Turkish agenda in a direct, organic way like other Western media outlets such as DW and BBC.” (J9)

In this context, J9 explains how they report news on Türkiye's agenda and says that Sputnik Türkiye does not produce news directly on Turkish domestic political crises but takes this news from other media organizations and publishes it on the Sputnik website with quotations.

“For example, it was a law for us, for example, there is a topic on Türkiye's agenda, a news item worth reading, about a cult or a political crisis. We have a policy of (for publishing it) citing the source after it has been published elsewhere.”

However, we hear that Sputnik Türkiye's editorial approach was not always this way and has changed over the years.

For example, J8, who began working for Sputnik in 2015, says that when he received the offer from Sputnik Türkiye, he went and met with Sputnik and there was a conversation between them that there would be no editorial interference. He states that between the years 2015-2019, he and the program team ran the entire operation of the radio program, and that the program's topic and guests were completely determined by that team. He describes that period as follows:

“I spent probably the most productive five years of my professional life there. The Russian plane crashed, I was there, a huge crisis. Imagine, you were working for Russia's state channel during that crisis.”

However, he argues that as Turkish-Russian relations slowly began to change and since the two countries began to get closer, the editorial policy of Sputnik Türkiye also began to change. He says that because of that change, in 2019, Sputnik Türkiye executives intervened in his radio program by preventing him from having a name as a guest on his program and they had a fight and he parted ways with Sputnik Türkiye.

In this context, J10, who also worked at Sputnik Türkiye and among those fired during the strike in 2023, draws attention to the change in news language and news types because of the change in diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Russia. She explains that Sputnik Türkiye used to do not only foreign reporting but also backstage news from Türkiye, but decided not to do so anymore, especially when the Sputnik Ankara office was about to open.

"However, when the Ankara office was about to open, we found out that we were no longer receiving backstage news. As you know, we were no longer going to do backstage news about the ruling party. Thinking of self-censorship, we started to follow them a little more carefully. For instance, we started not to have a sharp tongue in the news."

Supporting the words of J8 and J10, J9 explains this situation by arguing that the relations between Türkiye and Russia have an impact on the language and approach of Sputnik Türkiye. He notes that when relations between the two countries were bad, Sputnik was one of the largest opposition media outlets. Still, as relations between the two countries improved, its editorial policy became more balanced, and Sputnik Türkiye even began to praise the Turkish government in the context of relations with Russia. In this regard, all three journalists mention the impact of diplomatic relations in their interviews. Therefore, we learn that in order to understand the news routine at Sputnik, we must also take into account the relations between Turkey and Russia at the time.

In conclusion, when we look at the working routine and the newsroom structure at Sputnik Türkiye, we see that journalists work in different routines according to their duties, that the selection of topics is based on the suggestions and requests of journalists, and that discussion meetings are not held as frequently and necessarily as in the BBC, DW, Euronews and VOA Turkish services. In this context, there is an ambiguity about how news proposals are accepted or rejected. Although J9 mentions red lines when talking about its editorial policy, there is no clarity on this issue. While

J8 was able to manage his radio program without any editorial interference during his working period, we see from both J8's own words and the statements of other interviewees that this was about the spirit of the time, and that Sputnik Türkiye's editorial policy might be shaped according to diplomatic relations between Russia and Türkiye.

3.2.3 Challenges of Working in Foreign Media Under the AKP Rule

In the first chapter, we saw how the takeover of the mainstream media took place through the TMSF, how the AKP government brought capital groups close to itself into the media sector, and how it ultimately left no mainstream media institution that could criticize it. As a result of all this, we know that the AKP government has almost complete control over the mainstream media, with layoffs, staff changes, and changes in editorial policy. Under these circumstances, the question remains to be answered as to what kind of pressure and control mechanisms the political power exerts on foreign media, which, in the words of J9, has become a "refuge" for journalists in Türkiye.

This is why I ask my interviewees whether there is a direct pressure from the government in the international news organizations they work for, and if so, how it manifests itself. Among the most frequently cited AKP government crackdowns on foreign media are new internet and disinformation laws, the granting of accreditation, and difficulties in accessing news sources in general. In addition to these direct pressure mechanisms listed by the interviewees, I think that many of the things that each of them experienced, from the news production processes to the reactions they received after the news was published, from being considered as spies to being targeted, can also be addressed within the scope of the AKP government's pressure policies.

Accordingly, in this section, we will first examine the challenges that journalists face in their news making processes while working for an international news organization, secondly, we will look at the AKP's efforts to control these organizations through new laws, thirdly, we will address the impact of the relationship between host and home countries, then we will look at how they experience targeting and discrediting campaigns against them and discuss how all these experiences affect the daily practices of journalists.

3.2.3.1 Difficulties in Accessing News Sources

One of the questions I directly ask the journalists during the interviews is whether they have problems accessing news sources. Both in response to this question and when I ask them about the disadvantages of working for a foreign media organization, their answers are similar. In this context, J8 states that all media organizations outside the mainstream media, have problems accessing information sources, but adds that we can also talk about a special hesitation towards foreign media.

When we look at the problems in accessing news sources, three dynamics stand out for journalists working in foreign media: the lack of accreditation granted to these organizations and the journalists working there, the anxiety and reluctance to speak to foreign media, and finally the seniority of journalists.

For journalists working for international news organizations, the first obstacle to access to news sources is the issue of accreditation. As mentioned in the first chapter, the Directorate of Communications, established by a Decree Law issued in 2018, was authorized to issue accreditation and press cards. Thus, the access of media outlets and journalists to a wide range of information sources is directly controlled by an institution under the AKP government.

On the other hand, accreditation issues vary from organization to organization. In this context, it should be noted that DW Turkish and VOA Turkish, which refused to appoint a representative, are particularly disadvantaged. For example, J1 says that the BBC is accredited by the presidency, while J3 says that DW is not accredited by the presidency and that they can only reach government representatives in places like the parliament, which is open to the press. Similarly, J4 says that after he started working at DW, he is no longer invited to meetings that he had previously been able to attend in the national media. Thus, the accreditation distributed by the Directorate of Communication is the most prominent mark of the AKP government's control over foreign media organizations. Indeed, J1 thinks that similar sanctions might be imposed on the BBC if the relationship between Türkiye and the UK deteriorates.

Moreover, the denial of accreditation to these organizations affects journalists' fieldwork to varying degrees, and the obstacles imposed by the AKP government through the Communications Directorate are reflected in the mindset of state institutions and officials. For example, J12 and J11, who work in cities different from

Istanbul and Ankara, emphasize that the government's attitude is also reflected in the local context. Both explain that they can neither get an appointment, an opinion, nor a proper response from official institutions. However, J12 also adds that:

“It would not be correct to say that the government has completely closed the doors to foreign media. It is not closing the doors completely, but it is not opening them either.”

In addition to the official attitude towards foreign media, we learn that there is hesitation and reluctance to talk to foreign media. One of the main reasons for this hesitation is the perception that journalists working in foreign media outlets are working on behalf of the host country.

J1 says that especially when reaching out to the ruling party, they may face prejudice and be seen as spies. In this context, J2 talks about being treated as if she has a different purpose other than journalism.

“I often encounter people who think that you reach news sources, those people, bureaucracy, politicians with different agendas. In other words, they think that I approach them not as a journalist but for different purposes, or some limit themselves with that thought.”

In this regard, it is noticeable that talking to foreign media is considered dangerous and therefore avoided. For instance, J7 says that in some places their reporting is highly appreciated, while in others it is seen as dangerous. She emphasizes that it is not considered very safe to speak to international media. J4 makes similar statements on this issue, stating that speaking to the national press is different from speaking to the international press, as there is a higher risk of being investigated in one's institution for providing information to foreign organizations.

At this point, there is a common view shared by interviewees that it is more difficult to establish and maintain relationships with news sources when working in international media than in national media. For example, J3 explains that even if some speak to foreign media, they do not want to give their names, they do not make direct open statements, and in such cases, they say, "formulate it somehow". J5 sees the main reason for this as the direct appeal of these foreign media outlets to the Turkish public. She, who previously worked at Reuters, underlines that things were more relaxed there

compared to DW Turkish because Reuters does not broadcast in Turkish and therefore does not seem to "interfere in internal affairs" unlike DW.

Indeed, the allegation that journalists are working on behalf of the host state goes even further at this stage and journalists can be labeled as spies. For example, J10 remembers that when she first started working as a reporter at Sputnik, she was asked "Are you a spy?" by her interviewee. Similarly, J9 refers to the accusations of spying and points out that when working at a foreign state media, they are perceived as an agent, not a journalist:

"When it is a state media, you are not going there as a journalist in any way. It's like you are going there as someone representing Russia. Therefore, even those who have a positive view always approach these countries or these policies with such a reserve. People have the perception that I am speaking to Russia, whereas Russia may not even know about it."

Difficulties in accessing news sources are not limited to the ruling party and state officials. We hear that the opposition has adopted a similar approach, and although they do not consider the journalists working here as spies, they hesitate to speak to foreign media and prefer to speak primarily to media close to them.

Although this time it is not a case of being treated as a spy, interviewees say that the opposition also prefers to provide information to opposition media and that foreign media has never been a priority. For instance, J1 says that a CHP member may prefer to provide news to Cumhuriyet or Sözcü newspapers, or a İYİP member to Yeni Çağ newspaper. In this respect, she stresses that when working in foreign media organizations, one does not receive news from an information source without making an effort as in national media, and that effort is always required in foreign media.

"You are not the first choice. Sometimes it bothers me, I know that if I were at Cumhuriyet, that CHP member would talk to me more easily. Then, of course, you can reach them through personal contacts, but you are not the first one that comes to mind. Especially for a source you have just met, you are not the first one."

On the other hand, based on her own experience, J7 says that the doors are closed not only by the ruling party but also by the opposition, and sometimes it is even more difficult to get an interview from the opposition than the ruling party. For example, she was able to get a response from the AKP politician Numan Kurtulmuş

within a few days, but she has not received a response from an opposition leader for a year.

“Although we quote every sentence they say without interruption. But because they are afraid that they will be misunderstood or targeted for speaking to a foreign organization, these doors are closed to us too. We joke among ourselves that we would get an easier response if we went to the President.”

J7 says here that although the opposition parties complain that the media does not cover them but at the same time they do not respond to international organizations that do cover them. In this context, J3 also points out that the opposition has started to behave like the government and sometimes demands questions in advance, as the AKP government does in the mainstream.

When we look at the problems of access to news sources that we have discussed so far, we see that while journalists are dealing with the repressive policies of the AKP government, they also face problems arising from the characteristics of the current media in Türkiye. They say that media is divided into two poles: the ruling and the opposition. We will discuss this bipolar national media situation further.

The last decisive factor in accessing news sources is the journalist's own experience and seniority. We see that the doors that are closed when working in foreign media can be opened thanks to the contacts and networks that journalists have acquired in their past experiences. However, for journalists who do not have much experience in mainstream media, especially those who do not specialize in a particular field, there is no such accumulation of contacts. Therefore, it is possible to say that the disadvantages of working in international media are greater for young journalists than for senior journalists.

In this context, both J6 and J11 think that seniority can be useful in opening doors when working in a foreign media organization. For example, J6, who only has experience working at Medyascope and DW Turkish, states that he is behind senior journalists in accessing news sources. Here, the disadvantage of being junior reinforces the disadvantage of being in a foreign media organization. For journalists with mainstream experience in this regard, J6 says the following:

“If one person doesn't answer, they find the second person. If the second person doesn't answer, they find the third person. Because they know the system there, but

since I am a newcomer, I can say that it is a little more difficult for me to reach state institutions. The relationship of trust (between us) is not very established.”

In support of this view, J7 says that while working at Euronews, she was able to access certain sources much more quickly and easily than other freelance journalists working there, thanks to her past experiences and existing contacts.

“In other words, since my journalistic and reporting stance was known, I did not face any major obstacles, and thanks to my experience, I had the chance to reach a wider circle than Euronews had ever been able to reach.”

To summarize, it is noteworthy that access to news sources has a special place among the problems experienced by journalists working in international media organizations, that this is valid both for the ruling party and state institutions and for the opposition side in different ways, and that journalists try to overcome these problems with their own experience and capabilities.

3.2.3.2 The Effects of Diplomatic Relationships on Foreign Media

Parenthetically, diplomatic relations are also mentioned as a factor in the issue of government repression of foreign media. Former Sputnik employees J8 and J9 mention that government pressure on foreign media is determined by the state of relations between the host and home country. In this context J9 argues that what they are experiencing is more a result of diplomatic tensions rather than government pressure on the media:

“There is no pressure on Sputnik employees, except for issues concerning international bilateral relations. For example, I have made some news that could anger the government in Türkiye, but I was not even sued for it. Therefore, the tensions we experience cannot be called pressure compared to what other press workers experience. We are actually experiencing the outputs of those diplomatic tensions.”

However, J9 adds that he was working at a time when relations between the two countries were getting better, and that these conditions may also be related to the time period in which he worked, because when he started working in 2018, relations between Türkiye and Russia were in a flirtatious period.

At this point, it is worth recalling J10's statement that with the opening of Sputnik Türkiye's Ankara office, they stopped reporting on the AKP government from behind the backstage and using harsh language against the government.

In addition to that, J8 notes again that the relations between Türkiye and Russia in 2015, when he started his job, and 2019 onwards were not the same, and that Sputnik Türkiye changed its editorial policy as relations between the two countries improved.

“As far as I know, things are more diplomatic here. The approach of the organization is important there. Once the institution decides that I will not upset the AK Party, the government, it can completely change the system. It would work with the appropriate people and act accordingly. It would intervene with them, find journalists who will accept the intervention, or find people whose world views are in line with it and continue with them. This is a policy.”

3.2.3.3 Legislative Pressure on Foreign Media

When I asked the interviewees how the government pressure is manifested in foreign media, the journalists working at DW Turkish and VOA Turkish cite the newly enacted internet law. As mentioned in the second chapter, with the new internet law, international news organizations are required to obtain a license from RTÜK and appoint a representative. Obviously, with this law, the AKP government aims to pave the way for direct intervention in the content of the internet media, which it cannot directly suppress as in the mainstream media.

Following the enactment of the law, the news organizations in question were given a certain time, but DW Turkish and VOA Turkish refused to obtain licenses and appoint representatives on the grounds that this would leave the door open to interference in their content. As a result, in June 2022, at the request of RTÜK, the websites of both news organizations were blocked from Türkiye⁸⁹. Currently, it is still not possible to directly access the websites of DW and VOA Turkish services.

It is worth remembering that under this internet law, not only the websites of the DW and VOA Turkish services were blocked, but also their companies were shut down, and as a result, DW and VOA employees are no longer officially insured and

⁸⁹Euronews, “DW ve VOA'nın Türkçe yayınları neden engellendi, Türkiye'den nasıl erişebilirsiniz?” 01.07.2022 <https://tr.euronews.com/2022/07/01/dw-ve-voanin-turkce-yayinlari-neden-engellendi-turkiyeden-nasil-erisebilirsiniz>

cannot work as a tenured employee of these organizations. The employees of both organizations are currently able to work as freelancers on paper and may have to take other jobs in order to meet their needs, such as insurance. In this respect, it is important to emphasize that the law affects not only the website and the reputation of these organizations, but also the working conditions of the journalists.

J3, J4 and J6 state that the revocation of DW Turkish's work permit and the blocking of access to its website are examples of the government's repressive policies. In this respect, J3 emphasizes that the AKP government cannot directly intervene in foreign media and interfere in the functioning of these organizations as it does in the mainstream media, but with this internet regulation, it is trying to consolidate this pressure by closing companies.

Similarly, J11 says that the most visible interpretation of government pressure on VOA is the blocking of access to its website. He adds that this blocking of access sometimes creates a negative perception towards VOA and the journalists who work there during street interviews, which they find difficult to explain.

Although the AKP government tries to restrict the interaction of these international news organizations with readers through practices such as access bans, J12 thinks that this does not affect readers much and that access bans to these websites can be overcome over the internet, but may affect a certain age generation.

“Now there is a phenomenon called social media in Türkiye. So those who took this decision are missing it. People are now very much involved with technology. They know where and how to reach. Those who want to reach the news reach it somehow. You know, they use VPNs, they use social media. It didn't affect us much in terms of news reporting. We are still continuing our work, we are still working.”

3.2.3.4 Targeting as A Policy of Repression

As we noted in the second chapter, as international media gain more attention in Türkiye, journalists working for these organizations are particularly exposed to targeting by the ruling party and its circles. In this context, we can point to the systematic targeting of these organizations and their journalists by the government, ruling party members, pro-government media and organizations as part of the AKP government's efforts to suppress foreign media.

The SETA report, which is the most frequently cited example in this regard, also came up in our interviews. In the second chapter, we mention SETA as a pro-government think tank that published a report titled "International Media Outlets' Extensions in Turkey" where Turkish and foreign journalists working for international news organizations operating in Türkiye were 'profiled' and targeted name by name. Among the journalists I interviewed are those who were targeted and named in the SETA report. At this point, we observe that the issue of being seen as a spy, which was also mentioned by the interviewees in their access to the news, evolved into attacks against journalists. J2 says that the SETA report was "*a message that we see you, we are watching you, we know who you are*" and that this was only the tip of the iceberg.

J8 claims that the AKP government itself created that situation and argues that the main point is overlooked that it is not a choice of these journalists but due to the lack of journalistic autonomy in the mainstream media, many of them have to work in foreign media.

"Unfortunately, it is a shame of this government that journalists in Türkiye are forced to work in the Turkish representative offices of international media. Because there are very high-quality journalists (there). Why are only the ones there read? We follow their news with interest. Because they can report more freely, without restriction. The ones who should be ashamed are the ones who created this system. They have no right to complain about this system."

The experiences shared by journalists in the interviews show that these targeting and discrediting campaigns have an impact and repercussions on public opinion. In this context, journalists working for these organizations face different reactions both on social media and on the streets. For example, J3 says that the most frequent question they are asked when working in the field is "Are you German?". In this respect, J12 thinks that one of the challenges of working for a foreign media organization is that half of society looks at them as spies. The fact that journalists frequently face these questions despite being Turkish citizens and working in Türkiye for many years shows that targeting and discrediting campaigns against foreign media have reached a certain level of success.

For example, J9 says that he is used to being targeted and is not affected by it, but he points out that they are seen as representatives of the host country and that it is

not considered that he could be an ordinary person who has found a job in this organization. He explains this as follows:

“Twitter was labeling accounts for a while, you know, like Affiliated to the Russian State. They make you feel this affiliation thing a lot.”

On the other hand, interviewees J11, J6, and J12 give examples of the problems they experienced in street interviews, explaining that they sometimes seek different solutions to prevent these negative reactions and that this situation demotivates them. For instance, J11 says that the reaction they receive from citizens on the street can vary depending on the state of relations between Türkiye and the US.

“At the end of the day, you carry the Voice of America microphone like a flag. For example, recently there was a rally in Izmir in support of Palestine. We went there with a microphone without a logo, or we told the people there that we were freelance journalists without telling them that we were from the organization.”

Similarly, J6 says that during street interviews the name of the organization on the microphone sometimes leads to reactions. He remembers that once while conducting a street interview, a shopkeeper called them "German officials". Due to these reactions, he thinks that the method, if not the content, of the news may change and street interviews may be used less for news.

“It (street interview) can add color to some news. However, unless there is a very critical situation, I think street interviews can be avoided. At worst it would be safer with a microphone without a logo.”

Similar to J6 and J11, J12 emphasizes the difficulty of street interviews, but says that they take risks and continue to be on the street, albeit reluctantly:

“For example, going out on the streets and doing street interviews is now a very heavy burden for us. This demotivates us because working for a foreign media is perceived differently in the eyes of people, there are different reactions. We work reluctantly, but we still work. I mean, after all, this is our job, we must do it”

When I ask my interviewees whether they feel safe in the face of such targeting, J1 says that journalists in Türkiye cannot feel safe under these circumstances, no matter where they work, -even in the pro-government media. Similarly, J6 emphasizes that even though they do not work under pressure as in mainstream media outlets, even

though they have editorial autonomy within DW, and even though they do not even have a license to avoid government interference, they live in Türkiye and are subject to Turkish laws, and they cannot report whatever they want. In this context, he says, this can be called self-censorship, in a sense it is a mechanism of self-braking.

“After all, we all live in Türkiye. When you do a news report, you see and know more or less what to touch and what not to touch.”

He cites the recent arrest and one-week detention of Tolga Şardan, a journalist working for the independent news website T24, as an example:

“I mean, even if you work for a free and independent channel like T24, like us, you are still subject to the laws of Türkiye. Whether your channel gets a license or not, you live in Türkiye. You may get a knock on your door one morning.”

J4 points out that it is very easy to be labeled as a spy, especially when working in foreign media, and like J6, he says that it is not possible to report on every issue under these conditions in Türkiye.

“Of course, there is a security risk. No matter how much we do our job within the boundaries of journalism, in Türkiye there is always the risk that a news story they don't like might be treated as espionage.”

In this respect, J4 says that he is careful when choosing news topics and avoids reporting on specific security institutions like MİT (National Intelligence Organization) and TSK (Turkish Armed Forces). He argues that this can be considered a form of self-censorship, but that he finds it useful to balance the gains and losses in this regard. According to him, some news may not be reported if it would hinder other journalistic activities.

“It is a matter of keeping a balance between what you will gain and what you will suffer by doing this. Of course, you can report on it, but if it is not something that shakes public opinion if it leads to a result that will hinder your other journalistic activities, I find it better not to go there. Because after all, you are doing work in the public interest. I think it would be beneficial not to engage in behavior that would at least cause other journalistic activities to be hindered because of a simple news story, at least while working at DW Turkish”

J3 also states that when reporting in foreign media, they may receive reactions such as "Why are you interested in this?" but explains that the reason why such news is covered here is because it does not find any space in the national media, including the opposition media.

"For example, there was a fight within the CHP for a while. Many of my journalist friends who covered the CHP did not focus on those issues. But we were able to do it. But there is this perception, why do Germans focus on this issue?"

J9, on the other hand, states that Sputnik's editorial line is not different from his worldview and therefore he does not feel insecure in the face of targeting. However, he expresses that he had experienced tension with Sputnik after some of the news he published on his own social media accounts such as YouTube and Twitter:

"(They said) I, as a Russian media worker, was highlighting developments that could drive a wedge between Russia and Türkiye. Nobody told me I couldn't share anything, but there was a tension between us that by doing so I would make Sputnik a target."

Furthermore, among the methods developed to avoid being targeted, it is also common for journalists working in foreign media to be more meticulous in their news production processes. In this direction, journalists pay particular attention to the language they use and try to enhance the credibility of their reporting to reduce the risk of being targeted. In this regard, J1 says that since working at the BBC she is more rigorous in writing news, avoids using sharp language in her news reports, and chooses her sentences carefully:

"I shouldn't be a target because if I become a target, I won't be able to work. So, I don't practice self-censorship, but I use more careful language, let me put it that way. That's why we have to double-check more than other journalists in the mainstream or national press. Because let's say if you make a mistake in your reporting, every journalist becomes a target in that case, but if you work in the foreign press, you become a target ten times more."

J5 expresses in very similar terms that she feels such pressure, and although she does not call it self-censorship, she takes special care not to make mistakes. At this point, what they all have in common is that they think that this pressure pushes them to do better in terms of journalism.

Expressing similar statements to J1 and J5, J7 says that it is much more important to strike a balance when working for an international organization. While working at Euronews, she says that the news she prepared was subjected to a very serious editorial process and that she became a part of this perspective over time. In parallel, J3 states that being targeted does not directly hinder their reporting, but it does make them more rigorous, and they try to confirm their stories from more sources.

In the first chapter, we read studies on how widespread self-censorship is among journalists, to the extent that Finkel stated that the most effective censor in Türkiye today is the press itself (Finkel, 2015), and Över's study called the current level of self-censorship in the Turkish media as *"Mr. Erdoğan would be angry journalism."* (Över, 2021). In this respect, although some journalists may refer to this as self-censorship, others may call it merely meticulousness in the language of the news and the news production processes in international news organizations seem far from the censorship practices in the mainstream media, the fact that even those who have been working in the media for many years start to act more carefully after they start working in foreign media due to the fear of being targeted might be a sign of self-censorship in a sense.

In addition to paying attention to news language, journalists say they are also limiting their personal use of social media to reduce the risk of being targeted. We learn that the BBC has made a direct request to its staff in this regard, but other organizations have not, but that journalists voluntarily refrain from sharing personal opinions on social media to protect themselves and their colleagues. For example, both J3 and J5 say that they post on social media with a certain sense of responsibility, although DW does not ask them to do so. J5 says that this is a kind of putting the journalist under pressure and even she considers it as psychological pressure. J3 explains that his tweets could be perceived as DW's corporate posts, which is why he has started to pay attention to his use of social media:

"I don't share my opinion on many issues on social media. Germans don't interfere with us in this regard. Share whatever you want on social media, there is no interference, it is your personal space, your opinion. But recently something like this has happened. Even if you write 'Beşiktaş is the biggest', it's as if Galatasaray fans tweet that Germans support Beşiktaş."

Finally, in the context of targeting, J2 and J7 add that the attitude of the organization they work for is decisive and very important. J7 says that she was targeted especially when she was working in the earthquake zone, and that it wore her down, but Euronews stood by her throughout the whole process, and after a while, they offered her to leave the region.

“I was targeted during the earthquake because of the news I was reporting. Here, it is very important whether you have an organization behind you or not. Before I was subjected to various targeting, I was working with great motivation. But after these attacks, I felt very bad. But it is very valuable that the organization stands behind you, and that they think about your safety more than you do.”

J2 also says that the BBC supported her with a large team of lawyers when she was facing lawsuits for some of her stories and that she had no problems:

“We can think of it as a mechanism that makes me feel safe against other risks. In other words, if the BBC had left me alone in the face of all these spy allegations, and security threats, maybe it would have affected my news choices inevitably.”

To summarize, it is possible to say that the AKP government's mechanisms of pressure and control over the mainstream media differ in the foreign media but are similar in its effort to exert a certain authority and control over both. When we examine international news organizations, we see that the AKP government cannot directly influence the internal processes of the Turkish services of the BBC, DW, Euronews and VOA, while in the case of Sputnik Turkish, diplomatic relations can be directly reflected in the editorial policy and news language. In addition, the difficulties journalists face in accessing news sources in these places is one of the main areas where the government exercises its power over foreign media. An important point in this context is that in addition to the problems directly caused by the AKP government, such as accreditation, we learn that the opposition's attitude towards foreign media is also among the reasons for the difficulties faced by journalists.

On the other hand, the most visible form of AKP pressure on foreign media is the new internet law. The implementation of this law has directly affected the working conditions of journalists, since the employees of DW and VOA Turkish services, which refused to obtain a license, are no longer officially insured, and staffed. In addition,

access to these news websites has been blocked under the internet law, which can pose challenges for journalists working in the field.

Moreover, we realize that targeting and discrediting campaigns have become a part of the lives of journalists working in foreign media, affecting their journalistic practices in different ways and at different levels, from the language of their reporting to the topics they choose and the methods they use to produce their stories. In this context, although some journalists call these measures self-censorship and others say that it is not self-censorship but merely editorial diligence, considering the pressure on journalists and the fear of being targeted, it is possible to say that this situation violates journalists' editorial freedom and can be seen as a form of self-censorship.

Until now, we have looked at the professional stories of journalists and how they crossed paths with international news organizations, the news production processes in these organizations, and finally the mechanisms through which the AKP government tries to exert pressure on foreign media. Considering all these data, it is now time to discuss the state of the mainstream media in Türkiye and the place of foreign media in this picture. In this final section, we will discuss the current state of the media in Türkiye and the place of the foreign media in this picture, together with the views of the interviewees.

3.2.4 The Current Picture of Journalism in Türkiye Through the Eyes of Journalists

One question I pose to the journalists during the interviews is how they interpreted the story of the mainstream media in Türkiye and what problems they currently see. When we look at the responses of the interviewees, we see that three main topics stand out. First, the idea that the mainstream media is dead in Türkiye prevails in the interviews. The second, and most frequently mentioned, is the bipolar new order of the Turkish media following the AKP's media transformation. Finally, they think there are problems result from internet journalism, which has developed with digitalization.

3.2.4.1 “Mainstream media is dead.”

In the first section on the AKP-era media, we have looked at journalism debates in Türkiye and found that there is a widespread consensus that the mainstream media is being destroyed. In this regard the sale of Doğan Media to Demirören in 2018 and Olay TV, which was established in 2020 but could only continue broadcasting for 26 days due to political pressure, can be seen as the latest moves in the collapse of the mainstream media. In fact, Yanardağoglu describes the current situation in the Turkish media as "post-mainstream" (Yanardağoglu, 2022).

What journalists say about the mainstream media during the interviews also supports the idea that "there is no mainstream media left". For instance, J5 and J12 say that there is no such thing as mainstream media in Türkiye, while J6 state that the last hit to the mainstream media was in 2018.

J3, on the other hand, states that the destruction of the mainstream media in Türkiye is a story of "divide, fragment, dominate, seize" and traces the story back to the first period of the AKP rule. Similarly, J8 argues that the mainstream media gradually lost power and eventually surrendered, and today it is now run from WhatsApp.

"They turned all the media bosses against each other. Remember their fights in the first period, they were fighting with the government, yes, but they were also fighting with each other. Wars of interest... Of course, those fights wore them out. ... Then it (the AKP) started to seize them through the TMSF. Then it took them over, little by little, step by step, as it strengthened its power. And now it has complete control." (J3)

Both J3 and J12 also mention the impact of a particular historical event on the complete takeover of mainstream media: Both state that it was the July 15, 2016, coup attempt and its aftermath that accelerated this process and brought about the complete end of the mainstream. While J3 says that the AKP government used this process as a tool, J12 also argues that the Resolution Process, which lasted until 2015, opened a space for the media and that the mainstream media completely collapsed after the collapse of this process and the coup attempt:

"After 2015... Why do I say 2015? At that time, there was a solution process for the Kurdish problem and the solution process opened a space for the media. After that

process collapsed, there was a coup attempt and the mainstream media completely died."

When talking about the history of the mainstream media, the interviewees emphasize that there has never been a completely free press in Türkiye, but they describe a media that does not allow any space for journalistic autonomy with the transformation under the AKP.

For example, according to J9, power relations in the media have become more explicit under the AKP rule, and while there used to be a mainstream media, albeit controversial and tokenistic, today there is no trace of it. He states that the AKP has been able to act so boldly in the media because it has transformed the political regime totally.

"So yes, before the AKP, the media was also linked to the government, news was still censored, but during the AKP period, all these steps, from reprimanding news directors, calling them directly and giving them instructions, to forcing big media giants to sell their companies, started to be done openly with Erdoğan."

Similarly, J4 says that in the past, at least critical news could be published in the mainstream media, but this has completely vanished under the AKP rule:

"Think about the Hürriyet of the past, was Aydın Doğan a very innocent media boss? No, he wasn't. We all knew about his relationship with governments, etc. But at least there, we could at least get a critical story published. But now there is no such possibility."

In addition to that, J11 says that there is no media patronage in Türkiye as it used to be, for example, he does not see Demirören as a media boss like Aydın Doğan, and points out that the situation is similar in both the mainstream and opposition media:

"Right now, in Türkiye, in the mainstream, there are actually no different media organizations, there is only one media organization, and it is affiliated to one place. I mean, it is the same on the other side. No matter that there are television channels and newspapers with different names, they also belong to one place. Because it is about source of income. Whether you like Aydın Doğan or not, he was a media boss. But I don't see Demirören as a media boss right now."

Under these conditions, in which the mainstream media has been completely captured and eventually destroyed by the AKP government, according to the interviewees, it is now very difficult to practice journalism according to professional principles in Türkiye.

For instance, J1 emphasizes that unlike today's practice of pre-given questions, journalists were able to ask questions in the past. Today, she explains that they cannot ask questions to Erdoğan, the only place to go beyond this is the parliament, but he reacts when asked there too:

"AKP Headquarters can only be asked the questions they want. Erdoğan can only be asked the questions he wants to be asked. So, a journalist cannot naively ask a question. This only happens in parliament. But he gets angry there too. (For example) Last week Erdoğan got angry because of a question. It had happened before."

It is worth remembering here that Över, based on her fieldwork, described the current situation in the Turkish media as "Mr. Erdoğan will be angry journalism" (Över, 2021). At this point, we are talking about an atmosphere where journalists cannot ask questions, not to mention criticism, for fear that the President and AKP Chairman Erdoğan will get angry. Moreover, as we saw in the section discussing the difficulties in accessing news sources, J1 points out that this is not just about the government, the opposition also behaves in a similar way:

"Parliament is the only place left where journalists can ask questions more or less comfortably. But if you go to the Presidency, the Külliye or the AKP Headquarters, you cannot ask questions directly. Even in the CHP, this had become particularly widespread in the recent period. They (want to) learn journalists' question first. I mean, we have come to such a point. However, journalists ask politicians tough questions, right? They ask so that they can get information."

J1 argues that it is precisely because of these conditions that backstage journalism is over for both the ruling and opposition sides and that at this point we can talk about public relations rather than journalism:

"I mean, what separates journalism and public relations? In journalism you write on behalf of the public what they don't want to be seen, in the other (PR) you do what they want to be done. When we look at journalism, we see that it has now turned

into public relations. This is the bad thing. So critical journalism is no longer possible, unfortunately."

When we look at the current situation in media institutions that used to be able to ask questions and report news that could criticize the government, we see once again why it is said that "the mainstream media has collapsed". In this regard, J8 thinks that the media in Türkiye has been turned into this state is entirely a government choice, because the AKP has no tolerance for informed people:

"We are facing a government that bases its entire existence regarding elections, its political career, its political future on little information."

To sum up, both the developments we have discussed in the first chapter on the AKP-era media and the interviewees tells us that the AKP has completely captured and controlled the mainstream media.

3.2.4.2 Polarization in The Media

As a result of the AKP's takeover of the mainstream media, we see another problem becoming prominent in the Turkish media: polarization. Most of the interviewees say that the media in Türkiye has become bipolar, with the pro-government media on one side and the opposition media on the other. For instance, J12 argues that there are pro-government media and others in the current Turkish media, and among these others there are opposition media and foreign media, and says the following about this polarization:

"There is no example of what we call mainstream media in Türkiye today. Today it draws a line, you are either to the right or to the left of that line. There is nothing else. There is no media that questions. There is no media that expands a news story and looks at it from a different perspective."

J5 similarly notes that there is a direct correlation between the collapse of mainstream media and polarization:

"TV channels and newspapers that started out as mainstream have somehow unfortunately become pro-government. In other words, there are few partisans and many partisans. But there is no mainstream, there is a deep rift between the TV channels and newspapers close to the government on the one hand and those close to

the opposition on the other. I think this is one of the biggest evils that the government has done to Türkiye.”

In this context, two main problems arise when talking about polarization in the media: both the journalists' journalistic practices are restricted and the division of readers into two camps is reinforced in the current social polarization. When we look at the impact of the polarization of the media on journalists, we see once again why interviewees prefer to work for international news organizations. They think that the mainstream media is no longer an option as it is completely under AKP control, but the opposition media is not a good option for them either.

J4, for example, says he rejected offers from opposition media because he doubted how editorially free he would be in opposition media:

"Imagine that there is not even opposition media left and you don't want to go there. Even when I go there, a thousand questions go through my head. If I go there, I can do this kind of news, but on the other hand, I can't do that kind of news. That will limit me. Because even though they are against a certain political power groups in Türkiye, there is also a group of people they are on the side of."

In this respect, J4 underlines that the opposition party cannot be criticized in the opposition media. In support of this, both J1 and J9 says that the opposition media can also openly take sides in the divisions within the opposition. J9 reminds us that during the CHP presidential elections, some opposition channels openly supported then CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu, while others openly supported the new candidate Özgür Özel. In this context, J1 also refers to this attitude of the opposition and adds:

"This is not journalism. It can't be. You're favoring him. No, you have to cover them all. Unfortunately, everyone has their own newspaper, TV and internet media."

In addition to the editorial autonomy of journalists, we learn that there are also problems with working conditions in opposition media. In this context, J3 points to the working conditions of journalists working in opposition media and states that he would not want to work there, adding that this is due to the AKP's pressure on opposition media.

"They also have very serious problems. You know, today, I'm speaking parenthetically, if they asked me if I would like to work at Halk TV, I wouldn't want to. Because when you look at it, it doesn't even provide 212 press insurance, it doesn't

give any of your rights... When you look at it, it's opposition media, but we know from friends who work there, it's a place where there are very serious problems."

On the other hand, some interviewees argue that polarization in the media is a conscious part and a desired outcome of the AKP government's policies to transform the media. For instance, J5 argues that the polarization in the media is a deliberate method of the AKP:

"But that polarization was actually a deliberate method of the government, the media became polarized, so there was no mainstream left."

Likewise, J9 argues that this polarization is a product of the AKP's media policies, and that with the collapse of the mainstream media, the opposition media has also become partisan.

"It is actually the government's media policies that have created this. When the mainstream was completely destroyed, such factions were left. And since everyone knows who these factions are, they are openly spreading such propaganda."

As we have mentioned in the first chapter, people tend to follow the media outlets that reflect their political views (Erdoğan & Uyan-Semerci, 2018). In this regard, J2 thinks that losing the mainstream media has cost Türkiye a lot. She also points out that in this bipolar media, the opposition media cannot reach the audience that follows the pro-government media and creates its own echo chamber:

"Journalism has been divided into two poles, opposition and pro-government, for a very long time in Türkiye. But this is certainly not ideal. What opposition journalists say they do is not enough, nor does it affect the outcome as much as they think it does. Opposition journalists and opposition media outlets have created their own echo chambers, and in those echo chambers we all think that we have an influence that sets the actual agenda. Unfortunately, we don't."

Here, it would be beneficial to recall, journalist Kadri Gürsel argued that the mainstream media was able to break the echo chamber effect thanks to the large masses it could reach, and that it was deliberately eliminated by the government precisely because it wanted to destroy this function. Let us look again at Gürsel's words we quoted in the chapter section:

"Do you realize why the mainstream media was eliminated? To lock the country's readers and audiences in 'echo chambers'. The debaters write and draw in their own little echo chambers. They listen to the echo of their own voices. They have no chance or opportunity to reach the readers and audiences of the government."

Considering the statements of the interviewees, it is possible to say that the story of the collapse of the mainstream media and the emergence of a polarized media in Türkiye actually complement each other. As a matter of fact, this is in line with J6's statements regarding the audience of both media outlets:

"There are two poles, two different realities in society. Neither side listens nor understands each other very much. Both sides think the other is lying. They think the other is looking at things from the wrong side."

J5 draws attention to a similar situation and describes the polarization among the audience in the following words:

"For example, one side does not believe the news on A Haber, the other side does not believe the news on Halk TV. Who will know the truth, which journalist can be trusted? There is such an enigma. I think this is a bad thing for a country."

Here, in fact, we encounter the relationship between polarization and trust in the news that we have mentioned in the first chapter. If we remember, referring to the data in the Reuters Institute Report, Kırdemir (2020, p. 6) argues that although media organizations did not achieve a high trust score among the general audience, they were considered trustworthy by their own audiences.

In the end, if we assume, as J8 claims, that AKP is a government that bases its existence on "little information", we can say that a polarized society of people who are unaware of each other, who do not listen to each other, who do not understand each other even if they do, or who do not want to listen to each other, is the biggest outcome of the story of the media takeover and the collapse of the mainstream media.

3.2.4.3 A New Era for Journalism: Internet Media

As we have mentioned in the first chapter that during the period in which the mainstream media was taken over in Türkiye, digitalization took place rapidly at the same time and the internet environment emerged as a space for journalists purged from the mainstream to continue their journalistic activities (Keten & Ayan, 2023). While

discussing the destruction of mainstream media, the interviewees also touch upon the evolving journalistic practices in digital media.

For example, J4 states that the professional codes of journalism are disappearing in parallel with the proliferation of online journalism, that there is neither original news nor news that complies with professional principles on websites, and that there are only a limited number of journalistic outlets that abide by these rules:

"It's not really about journalism, it is now about content production. Even those who work at newspapers have turned into content producers, not editors. Journalism used to be something that you had to report what, where and how it happened, passing it through 5N1K rules. Now journalism has turned into "Oh, look how interesting it is". A journalism that has become TikTok."

In this regard, J7 draws attention to the rush for fast news production and the widespread use of copy-paste journalism, emphasizing that news content is becoming increasingly unqualified. She adds that this is also due to the desire to do more work with fewer people. In a similar vein, J2 says the following:

"So, is information really just a one-line, two-line or one-hundred-and-forty-character post? Or is what we call news sharing of the most striking part of an indictment file in a hundred and forty characters?"

In the face of both the collapse of the mainstream media and the bipolar media environment that has emerged, and the declining quality of journalism in internet journalism that has become widespread with digitalization, interviewees state that readers looking for qualified news turn to international news organizations. At this point, we can begin to discuss the place of foreign media in the Türkiye's media.

3.2.5 The Place of Foreign Media in Türkiye's Media Through the Eyes of Journalists

When I ask my interviewees about the current place and role of international news organizations in the Turkish media, certain issues become prominent. The first, as almost every one of them mentioned, is to meet the need for news in the wake of the collapse of the mainstream media in Türkiye. There is a consensus that they fulfill not only the need for news, but also the need for in-depth and comprehensive news. It

is also noted that due to the collapse of mainstream media and the polarization in the media, these international news organizations are considered reliable and objective.

In addition, among the interviewees, foreign media is perceived as a medium through which news on certain issues can be reported that cannot be reported in the national media and as the voice of the voiceless. Last but not least, and as it is the starting point of this thesis, the interviewees agree that foreign media outlets open space for journalists in Türkiye by providing them with a humane working environment in which they can carry out their professional activities.

3.2.5.1 Foreign Media as An Alternative, Reliable, Comprehensive News Source

As mentioned earlier, when I ask the interviewees about the role of foreign media in Turkish media today, almost all of them say that it is a good alternative source of information for readers.

If we remember, in the second chapter, we have seen that international media function as alternative news sources in countries where the media is under pressure (Price M. , 2003). Indeed, in Türkiye's recent history, BBC Turkish's activities in the aftermath of the 1960 and 1980 coups were considered as serving this purpose (Nohl, 2010; Yanardağoğlu, 2014). We hear in interviews that today, foreign media again has such a role in the Türkiye's media, especially due to the collapse of the mainstream media.

At this point, it should be noted that the process following the July 15, 2016, coup attempt has a special place in the story of the collapse of the mainstream media. Both J3 and J12 emphasize that the media takeover process was accelerated and completed after the coup attempt. Complementing this story, we hear from J2 that in the aftermath of the coup attempt, in parallel with the total suppression of Turkish media, both readers and journalists are turning to foreign media.

"There was a coup, Doğan media was shut down, people didn't know where to read. The monopolization of the media was very clear. Indeed, the shift of readers to organizations like BBC, DV, Sputnik was very obvious. In those few years, the shift of readers and journalists to these organizations was very clear."

In the first chapter, we have looked at the repercussions of the July 15 coup attempt and the subsequent state of emergency on the media. As we recall, Ayan states

that the pressure on the media manifested itself from the very first days of the coup attempt with the Decree Laws issued one after the other. (Ayan, 2019, p. 234)

In this context, the emphasis of both J3, J12 and J2 is essentially on the repressive environment that accelerated and reached its peak in the media during this period. The result, as we know, is the complete destruction of the mainstream media.

From this point of view, the interviewees argue that foreign media tries to fill the void left by the destruction of the mainstream media. J1, for example, states that foreign media has taken on the task of filling the gap left by the old mainstream:

"I think that in a sense, if not completely, it has taken on the task of filling the void created by the old mainstream. Its impartial and objective reporting that sees both sides fills the lack of news. I hear this from many politicians: "We get our news from you." Because, you know, everyone writes for their own neighborhood and reports from their own neighborhood."

Indeed, J11 says that no matter how bad comments are made on social media, readers still come to get the news from foreign media, and that foreign media fills the news gap:

"If you look at the Voice of America news on Facebook, all you'll see are swear words. But it means that people are coming there to read the news. It's very important. Because the same news doesn't exist anywhere else and people come there to read it. It fills a gap."

Similarly, J8 emphasizes that news is a never-ending need, saying that *"people both get angry and continue to get news from there"*.

Here, we are also talking about the trust in foreign media as opposed to national media. For example, J5 points out that during the years she worked at Reuters, the news they used to circulate with reference to NTV was recirculated with reference to Reuters and adds:

"So, there is such a thing unfortunately. Maybe because there is a lack of trust in the media, maybe international organizations are trying to fill this lack of trust."

In this regard, J2 says that in an information environment where unconfirmed information is shared in 140 characters, international news organizations function as a

reliable source of news. She also talks about readers' trust in the organization using the example of the BBC:

"Sometimes I hear this from readers: 'If the BBC wrote it, it's true, if it got into the BBC, this news is true.' 'There is a debate going on, let me wait and see what the BBC will write.'"

Similarly, J7 states that Turkish services have an important place as a source of accurate and reliable information, although this is not the case for all of them.

"When I read the news, if I can say, 'I learned this, I got this information,' that is important. I think this is still valid for these Turkish services of the international media. We can get information."

J4 emphasizes that qualified readers get news from foreign media because they produce qualified content. J3, on the other hand, draws attention to the news style of international news organizations, saying that they produce multi-dimensional news with backgrounds, and that foreign media fills this kind of news gap in the Turkish media:

"I mean, if you look at foreign media, you know, they don't just report the news. In other words, there is more background, more in-depth reporting. Most of the time, the news here is a reference for many places."

In this context, J5 points out that such comprehensive coverage can be done in foreign media due to the lack of fast news flow and the lack of news rush.

3.2.5.2 Foreign Media as Speaking the Unspeakable

Another role attributed to the foreign media is that it speaks the unspeakable in Türkiye, that it is the voice of the voiceless. Interviewees point out that international news organizations are able to report news that cannot be reported in national media for different reasons. For example, J6 says that news or details that are not prominent in the national press may receive more coverage in the foreign press.

Similarly, J3 says that many news items that are not covered in the mainstream and only partially covered in opposition media can be covered in foreign media without bias.

“For example, you cannot see KaosGL on any TV channel, including the opposition media, they cannot take this risk, they are worried, but there is no such concern in foreign media. Or the HDP, which is marginalized today, is not covered in the central media, it is partially covered in the opposition media. But we don't have such prejudices, we try to talk to everyone.”

In this context, J9 also mentions that foreign media is reporting news that cannot be reported in the national media:

“Today, a journalist in Türkiye can report on corruption in the BBC, Deutsche Welle, Voice of America, etc., whereas a journalist in Anadolu Agency, Hürriyet, Milliyet, Ahaber, etc. cannot. Or the fact that the violations in the earthquake are covered only or mostly by the BBC. Or the fact that the jihadists in Syria are only covered by Sputnik. This is an important data.”

J12 says that foreign media is the voice of the voiceless, and that foreign media provides readers with aspects of events that are not shown elsewhere, and therefore fills a huge gap:

“In the Türkiye's media, foreign media is actually the voice of the voiceless. Without the foreign media, many things and voices that should be heard but are not would not be heard in Türkiye. I think it meets the needs of people who need news, even if not completely, but as much as possible. I mean, it is insufficient, but I think it is better than nothing in today's conditions in Türkiye.”

3.2.5.3 Foreign Media as a Refuge for Journalists

The last point that interviewees mention is that foreign media is opening a working space for journalists in Türkiye, where the mainstream media has collapsed, and journalistic activities are being suppressed. We have already mentioned in the second chapter that both in the international broadcasting literature and in Türkiye's past, foreign media can function as a source of news when the media is under pressure (Price M. , 2003; Nohl, 2010; Yanardağoğlu, 2014; Workneh, 2019; Workneh, 2021; Nye, 2004; Price, Haas, & Margolin, 2008). However, unlike in the past, we see that these organizations have recently opened a space not only for readers but also for journalists and have emerged as an option not only in terms of news but also as a working space. The expansion of Turkish services cadres by international news organizations can also be seen as a part of this. This is, of course, a direct consequence

of the collapse of the mainstream media, which we have been discussing from the very beginning.

In this context, we have already read in the first chapter that there are a limited number of media outlets that journalists can work in Türkiye (Keten & Ayan, 2023). This is also evident in the stories of journalists' paths crossing with foreign media. Indeed, J4 evaluates journalists' turning to foreign media as an indicator of the end of the mainstream media, while J8 says that the opportunities provided by foreign media enable journalists to continue their journalistic activities:

"At least they ensure that journalists who do their job well stay in the system. Without them, many journalists would not be able to stay in this system. I mean, people make a living here somehow. I think this is the most important contribution."

J9 also says that due to the state of the mainstream media in Türkiye, foreign media is on the rise, and that these organizations have become a refuge by opening space for journalists in Türkiye. According to J9, foreign media has taken its place in this story following the transformation of Türkiye's media and even started to act like local media:

"These organizations, with the exception of China and Russia, are opening up a space for journalists, so I think the international media has been involved in the picture that has emerged as a result of the media transformation in Türkiye. Therefore, in a sense, the international media has become a refuge in Türkiye in terms of press freedom and the ability of journalists to do their jobs."

3.2.5.4 Foreign Media That Unable to Fill the Void Left by the Mainstream Media

Until now, we have talked about the current situation in Türkiye after the AKP's takeover of the media and where and what role the foreign media plays in this story. Finally, we see in the findings that among the journalists working in foreign media, both those who have worked in the mainstream and those who have not had mainstream experience say that they would prefer to work in the national media and mainstream media in Türkiye if they could. While the various advantages and good working conditions of working in foreign media are mentioned by the vast majority of interviewees, this commonality in the desire to return to the national media, and especially to the mainstream, is remarkable.

In the interviews, we find the pillars of this desire in the responses to both why mainstream media is necessary as a part of national media and in what ways foreign media cannot replace it. Based on the answers to these two questions, interviewees emphasize the importance of the capacity of the mainstream media in terms of the medium it uses, and they claim that by its very nature, it can reach both audiences and news sources as a part of the national media. Moreover, most of the interviewees say that the main function of foreign media is not, and by its very nature cannot be, to replace mainstream media.

Both in the first chapter and in the findings, we have seen that polarization in the media makes it difficult to reach audiences from different segments, locking them in echo chambers. Emphasizing both this polarization and the fact that the online audience does not include all segments of society, the interviewees underline the need for a media that can reach audiences that foreign media cannot reach.

In this regard, it is pointed out that although foreign media tries to meet the need for news with its impartial and objective reporting, it cannot reach large masses because it only broadcasts on the internet. For instance, J6 says that people who only get their news from television are not aware of a news item that is very topical on social media, and this is realized in street interviews:

"I mean, an issue that is on our agenda right now, on the agenda of social media, is not easily on the agenda of the street."

Pointing out that no matter how popular the agenda is on social media, if it is not covered on television, the audience in question cannot be reached, J6 continues as follows:

"It's like you are talking to yourself there, and other people are talking in a different way. Maybe even when it is not shown on TV, people don't believe it is real, they say it is a lie. Maybe that is why it is not on television."

J2 also notes that television can still reach a large number of people and that the current situation of the old mainstream media outlets should be taken seriously. In this respect, she sees the election results in Türkiye as an indication that the audience is not being reached and according to her, it is not possible to reach certain audiences without the mainstream media:

"We have seen very clearly in the last elections that Türkiye always needs mainstream media. So, this is not something you can do with the BBC, Voice of America, foreign media and a few websites that are supposed to be independent. You cannot determine Turkish public opinion with these. You do not have such a presence, effectiveness or power."

J6 also believes that the biggest problem in Türkiye in this context is the lack of a mainstream media that can reach the masses, which in turn triggers disinformation.

"For example, there are new administrations, new alliances, collaborations, etc. in the parties right now. But how can you do this without a healthy media, without being able to explain the changes you want to make, the policies you want to create?"

In addition to the problem of access to large audiences, another reason why international news organizations have not been able to fully fill the gap left by the mainstream media is the small number of journalists working in foreign media and the fact that they do not have fields of specialization as in the mainstream. Moreover, as we have learned in the news production processes, international organizations generally focus on special news production and conduct a kind of "slow journalism" activity, which is one of the reasons why they are not the equivalent of mainstream media organizations.

For example, J1 mentions both the low number of journalists working and the lack of specialization in these institutions as in the mainstream. She also mentions the foreign media's attitude towards the Türkiye's domestic agenda:

"In other words, the foreign press cannot follow Türkiye's domestic agenda as much as the national press. For example, we cover corruption news from a limited point. I mean, the BBC, for example, does not go into too much detail. But you can do this in the mainstream media. I mean, think about what Hürriyet used to do, Milliyet used to do."

In this respect, the interviewees once again emphasize that foreign media came into the game because the mainstream media could not fulfill its function. J3 states that if the mainstream media were to be re-established, foreign media would lose its function accordingly.

"If they could watch it in the mainstream, they wouldn't watch it anywhere else. But since they can't watch it there, they get it here."

Similarly, J4 believes that the situation would change if mainstream media outlets were able to operate as they used to.

“Even then they (the mainstream media outlets) were criticized, now all journalists are actually looking for that media.”

At this point, based on the interviewees' own stories and opinions, we see that if the mainstream media were to be re-established, not only readers but also journalists who turn to foreign media might prefer the mainstream media again.

However, it should be noted here that the interviewees also criticize the old mainstream media. While the interviewees emphasize the function and necessity of the mainstream media, they do not refrain from mentioning the problems of the mainstream media of the past. In this context, the financing of journalism is held as a particularly important issue. In the first chapter, we have noted that journalism is facing a global revenue crisis (Hunter, 2014; Cage, 2016; Uzunoğlu, 2018; Çevikel, 2020) and is looking for different ways to survive (Almiron-Roig, 2011; Scott, Bunce, & Wright, 2019). Indeed, Enikolopov and Petrova argue that the creation of independent sources of revenue for media outlets is vital to prevent media capture. (Enikolopov & Petrova, 2015) Similarly, in the interviews, we hear that the power and vested interests created by the commercial media has also played a role in the AKP government's ability to capture of the Turkish media. In this regard, J4 and J8 also touch on the debate on how journalism can be financed. Both think that in a future where journalism can be funded by readers, neither political nor corporate pressure will be so effective. J8 says that for independent journalism, readers need to learn to pay for news. J4 adds that:

“I think that if an independent system that can survive and practice journalism with the support of readers is established, I think that impartial and independent journalism can be practiced much more easily in Türkiye.”

As a result, although foreign media tries to fill the news gap and meet the need for quality news, it seems to be far from being able to completely fill the gap left by the mainstream media due to its nature, operational size and the medium in which it broadcasts. Despite good working conditions, we hear that journalists want a ticket back to the mainstream media because they cannot reach large audiences in a polarized media environment, especially on the internet.

CONCLUSION

Journalism around the world is facing difficulties in maintaining an independent, free and authentic journalism approach as a result of the financing crisis it faces on the one hand and the transformation it has undergone with digitalization on the other. Increasing job losses in the media sector due to the financial crisis, shrinking newsrooms and the effort to produce a large number of news quickly with a small number of people are transforming journalism itself, and with internet journalism, this transformation is multiplied and a news media where the content becomes similar to each other and unqualified has arisen (Wunsch-Vincent, 2010; Hunter, 2014; Uzunođlu, 2018; evikel, 2020). Alongside all these global trends, journalism in Turkey is struggling to exist on a different front against the mechanisms of repression and control that the AKP government, which has been in power since 2002, has increased in intensity and diversity with each term in power.

This thesis analyzes the developments in the media over the last twenty-one years, in which the AKP government has tried to create its own media on the one hand and to silence all voices that criticize it on the other, as a story of capture, as interpreted by many who analyze the AKP-era media (Adaklı, 2009; Aydın U. , 2015; Finkel, 2015; Yeşil, 2016; Ayan, 2019; Yanatma, 2021; Coşkun, 2020). As a result of the AKP government's conjuncturally diversified repression policies, today we are not only talking about the creation of the "AKP media" as Adaklı calls it (Adaklı, 2009), but the collapse of the mainstream media as a whole. As stated by Ayan (2019), the AKP government has started to destroy media outlets that it could not directly seize and control, and with the sale of Dođan Medya to the Demirören Group in 2018, the destruction of the mainstream media was completed, as stated by journalist Kadri Gürsel.⁹⁰

At this point, it would not be wrong to say that the AKP government has not only taken over the existing media but has also changed and even corrupted the media sphere. We can cite the polarization trend in the Türkiye's media as both a basis and

⁹⁰ Cumhuriyet, Kadri Gürsel's article, "Dođan Grubu'nun imhası, ana akım medyanın sonu" 23.03.2018 <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/kadri-gursel/dogan-grubunun-imhasi-ana-akim-medyanin-sonu-947137>

an indicator of this claim. The AKP government's destruction of the mainstream media has not only increased the pro-government media, but also created a polarized media environment and brought about an opposition media in response to the pro-government media. In this bipolar media order, although there are media organizations that try to practice independent journalism with the help of the opportunities offered by digitalization, many structural problems, ranging from their financial sustainability to the fact that they can only broadcast online and are numerically small, prevent them from filling the gap in the Turkish media. In this respect, it would not be wrong to say that not only the existing mainstream media organizations, but also the mainstream as a medium has been taken away from journalists in Türkiye. In this context, Olay TV, which was established in 2020 but continued broadcasting for only 26 days, demonstrates the current situation in the so-called mainstream media. In order to understand how all these developments took place and how they led to the polarized and fragmented news media ecosystem that we speak of today we have discussed the developments in the AKP-era media in the first chapter of the thesis.

On the other hand, in its 2022 report on the current state of the media in Türkiye, Reporters Without Borders notes that audiences are turning to alternative media channels for information, including the Turkish services of international news organizations such as BBC, DW and VOA (RSF, 2022). In support of this, when we look at the services of international news organizations in Türkiye, we see that they have increased their activities and expanded their staff in recent years. In this context, it is important to note that although international broadcasters have emerged to be used for propaganda purposes as a foreign policy and have been considered as an element of public diplomacy over time (Browne, 1982; Wood, 1993; Wood, 1993) they also have examples of journalistic activities (Torfeh & Sreberny, 2010; Nohl, 2010; Thiranagama, 2011; Workneh, 2019; Umejei, 2018; Elswah & Howard, 2020; Workneh, 2021). As can be seen in the past practices of the different language services of these organizations, they can also function as an alternative news source in times and places where the media is under pressure (Price M. , 2003; Nohl, 2010; Yanardağoğlu, 2014). From this point of view, today, both the increased interest of these organizations in Türkiye and the demand for these organizations by readers in return make it necessary to study journalistic practices of these organizations.

As a matter of fact, we see that the interest in these organizations mentioned in the RSF report is not only about readers, but journalists are also turning to foreign

media in Turkey. This thesis essentially argues that in contemporary media in Türkiye, the Turkish services of international news organizations have opened a space not only for readers but also for journalists.

Accordingly, in the second part of the thesis, we have looked at the history, development and functions of these international news organizations in different places at different times. Although the activities of these organizations are still considered in the context of public diplomacy and propaganda, it is necessary to go beyond this limited scope in order to determine their current place and functions in Türkiye. When we look at the studies examining the Turkish services of these organizations in Turkey, it is noticeable that there is no comprehensive, systematic, and comparative study that examines the news production processes, newsroom practices and journalists' daily routines in these organizations. However, as the case studies focusing on the newsroom practices of different language services show, it is useful to look at the journalistic practices and news routines to understand the motivation, purpose and structure of these organizations (Browne, 1983; Umejei, 2018; Workneh, 2019; Elswah & Howard, 2020; Workneh, 2021). The growing staff of the Turkish-language services of international news organizations and the tendency of journalists in Turkey to work there also reveal the necessity of the study conducted within the scope of this thesis.

On the other hand, the need to look at the journalistic activities carried out in international news organizations is also evident when looking at the AKP government's policies towards foreign media. Following the collapse of the mainstream media, there is a fragmented media ecosystem in Turkey today (Kirdemir, 2020). The new laws on the internet and disinformation have once again made it clear that no institution and no one in this media system can be exempt from the AKP government's repressive policies (Karan, 2022). Although the AKP government has captured the mainstream media as a medium and turned it into its own mouthpiece, it is not indifferent to the journalistic activities carried out on the internet and is trying to subject this area, which it could not capture, to its control. The internet law has also affected the Turkish services of international news organizations, and today the websites of DW Turkish and VOA Turkish, which refused to obtain licenses and appoint representatives, are blocked.

From this point of view, although we have already know what kind of pressure and control mechanisms the AKP government applied during its takeover of the mainstream media, how this political pressure is manifested and how much it is felt in foreign media organizations remains to be answered. Accordingly, the following questions were asked in the research conducted within the scope of this thesis:

- Why do journalists in Türkiye prefer to work for the Turkish services of international news organizations? What are their stories of working in these organizations?
- How do news production processes take place in the Turkish services of international news organizations? What restrictions do journalists working here face inside and outside the organization and what difficulties do they experience in these processes?
- How do the Turkish services of international news organizations operate as part of the media in Türkiye? What place do they fill and what function do they play in the Türkiye's media after the collapse of the mainstream media?

In order to answer these questions, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with twelve journalists from the most popular international news organizations operating in Turkey: BBC Turkish, DW Turkish, Euronews Turkish, Sputnik Turkish and VOA Turkish. I interviewed with 12 journalists, 5 are women and 7 are men, and 2 journalists from BBC Turkish, 4 journalists from DW Turkish, 1 journalist from Euronews Turkish, 3 journalists from Sputnik Türkiye, and 2 journalists from VOA Turkish. The names of the journalists who participated in the research are withheld in case of possible targeting and to provide a degree of security, and the participants are coded from J1 to J12.

Half of the interviewees had previously worked as full-time and permanent staff in mainstream media outlets including newspapers such as Akşam, Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, Sabah, Vatan, and others like Anadolu Agency, ATV, CNN Türk and NTV. Most journalists in the other group, who are younger, have internship experience at mainstream media organizations, but no full-time work experience at these organizations. In this respect, it is possible to say that the interviewees consist of both those who have experienced the mainstream media and those who have not had this opportunity due to their age.

Throughout the third chapter, the findings obtained from the interviews are mainly discussed under five main headings:

1. The reasons for working in international news organizations
2. The newsroom structures and news-making processes in international news organizations
3. The challenges of working in the foreign media under the AKP rule
4. The current picture of journalism in Türkiye through the eyes of journalists
5. The place of foreign media in Türkiye's media through the eyes of journalists

When I ask the interviewees about their reasons for working in the Turkish services of international news organizations, they say that there are only a limited number of institutions in Türkiye where they can work with editorial autonomy and that this is no longer possible in mainstream media organizations. In addition to this, economic advantages are the other main reason for working in these organizations. Interviewees also mentioned the opportunity to gain an international network while working for foreign media organizations. Many interviewees state that they would like to work in the mainstream media if they could.

Besides, when we look at the newsroom structures and daily routines in these organizations, we see that the Turkish services of BBC, DW, Euronews and VOA have similar newsroom structures. All four do not have a newsroom in Turkey, and journalists in Türkiye have a direct working relationship with central newsrooms abroad. We hear that in these four organizations there are regular editorial meetings in which the agenda is discussed, and news topics are chosen together by editors and journalists. BBC Turkish reporters specifically mention that the BBC editorial guideline is decisive in editorial decisions. According to interviewees working at these four organizations, news topics are determined by mutual exchange of ideas according to the value of the story. We also hear that the BBC, DW, Euronews and VOA Turkish services do not cover every news story like national news agencies but focus on producing special content. In this regard, they claim that they make news by giving background, in-depth and covering different dimensions.

The newsroom structure at Sputnik Türkiye is different from these four organizations. Sputnik's Turkish service has a newsroom in Türkiye and journalists work directly with managers in Türkiye. In fact, interviewees say that they have no contact with managers in the central newsroom in Russia. When we look at the news

production process at Sputnik Türkiye, we learn that agenda meetings are not held as regularly as in other Turkish services. Since one of the interviewees works as a radio programmer, one as an editor and one as an assistant to the editor-in-chief, we see that people with different jobs have different work routines in Sputnik Türkiye.

On the other hand, we hear that Sputnik Türkiye's editorial policy mainly depends on the diplomatic relations between Russia and Türkiye. In this regard, the interviewees explain that Sputnik Türkiye's news production has changed as the relations between Türkiye and Russia has improved. Besides, we learn that Sputnik Türkiye no longer produce news directly on Turkish domestic political crises but takes this news from other media organizations and publishes it on the Sputnik website with quotations. For the editorial policy, although J9 mentions red lines that are expected to be abided by in all of the international news organizations, there is no clarity on the editorial policy of Sputnik Türkiye.

Apart from that when I ask my interviewees whether there is a direct pressure from the government in the international news organizations they work for, and if so, how it manifests itself, the most frequently cited ones are new internet law, accreditation issues and difficulties in accessing news sources. In addition to these, their daily experiences from the news production processes to the reactions they received after the news was published from being considered as spies to being targeted, can also be addressed within the scope of the AKP government's pressure policies.

In this respect, I have addressed the issues that came to the fore in the interviews about the difficulties of working in international news organizations under four sub-headings: difficulties in accessing news sources, the effects of diplomatic relations, legislative pressure on foreign media, targeting as a policy of repression.

When we look closely at the problems in accessing news sources, three dynamics stand out for journalists working in foreign media: the lack of accreditation granted to these organizations and the journalists working there, the anxiety and reluctance to speak to foreign media, and finally the seniority of journalists. We hear that the accreditation issued by the Directorate of Communications is one of the main discipline mechanisms that the AKP government uses over the foreign media. In this respect, accreditation issues vary from organization to organization as DW and VOA Turkish services do not have license, they are particularly disadvantaged in that issue. We learn that the denial of accreditation to these organizations has affected journalists'

fieldwork to varying degrees. The attitude of the Directorate of Communications has repercussions, especially in terms of access to state officials. In addition to accreditation problems, interviewees state that there is a reluctance to speak to foreign media which is not limited to state officials and ruling party representatives but also there is a tendency among the opposition wing to hesitate to speak to foreign media and prefer to speak primarily to media close to them. The last decisive factor in accessing news sources is the journalist's own experience and seniority. We see that the doors that are closed when working in foreign media can be opened thanks to the contacts and networks that journalists have acquired in their past experiences. In this regard, it is possible to say that the disadvantages of working in international media are greater for young journalists than for senior journalists.

Besides, interviewees say that diplomatic relations might be also a factor in the issue of government repression of foreign media. In this regard, interviewees think that the relations between the host and home countries determine the government's attitude towards these organizations.

On the other hand, the mostly cited issue is legislative pressure on foreign media. As mentioned in the second chapter, with the new internet law, international news organizations are required to obtain a license from RTÜK and appoint a representative. However, DW Turkish and VOA Turkish refused to obtain licenses and appoint representatives on the grounds that this would leave the door open to interference in their content. Access to their websites was therefore blocked. In this regard, it is important to note that under this internet law, not only the websites of the DW and VOA Turkish services were blocked, but at the same time their companies were closed down and as a result the employees of DW and VOA are no longer officially insured. In this respect, it is possible to say that the law has direct consequences on the working conditions of the journalists working there.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, we can consider the systematic targeting of these organizations and their journalists by the government, ruling party members, pro-government media and organizations as part of the AKP government's efforts to suppress foreign media. As we noted in the second chapter, as international media gain more attention in Türkiye, journalists working for these organizations are particularly exposed to targeting by the ruling party and its circles. The SETA report is the most well-known example of this. We notice that the experiences shared by journalists in

the interviews show that these targeting and discrediting campaigns have an impact and repercussions on public opinion. In this respect, we hear that they can be seen as ‘agents. The interviewees mention about different reactions they face both on social media and on the streets. For this reason, some interviewees state that they would not prefer to conduct street interviews.

On the other hand, we see the impact of the danger of being targeted reflected in news writing practices. among the methods developed to avoid being targeted, it is common among the interviewees to be more meticulous in their news production processes. In the first chapter, we read studies on how widespread self-censorship is among journalists that even it is called as *"Mr. Erdoğan would be angry journalism."* (Över, 2021). In this respect, although some journalists may refer to this as self-censorship, others may call it merely meticulousness in the language of the news and the news production processes in international news organizations seem far from the censorship practices in the mainstream media, the fact that even those who have been working in the media for many years start to act more carefully after they start working in foreign media due to the fear of being targeted might be a sign of self-censorship in a sense. In addition to paying attention to news language, journalists say they are also limiting their personal use of social media to reduce the risk of being targeted.

One of the questions I asked journalists during the interviews was how they interpreted the story of mainstream media in Turkey and what problems they currently see. When we look at the responses of the interviewees, we see that three main topics become prominent: Interviewees say that 1) the mainstream media is dead, that 2) polarization prevails in the Turkish media, and that 3) online journalism violates and corrupts the ethical codes of journalism.

What journalists say about the mainstream media during the interviews supports the idea that "there is no mainstream media left". As we have discussed in the first chapter, the interviewees also see the AKP period as the destruction of the mainstream media. In this context, the July 15, 2016, coup attempt and its aftermath are said to have accelerated this process and completed the collapse of the mainstream. in this context, the sale of Doğan Media to Demirören is seen as a final move, J11 says that there is no media patronage in Türkiye as it used to be, for example, he does not see Demirören as a media boss like Aydın Doğan. It is important to note that even

tough, the interviewees emphasize that while there has never been a completely independent media in Türkiye, there has been at least some criticism in the past.

Another important finding in the interviews is that there is polarization in the media. In this context, critical journalism has become difficult not only in the mainstream media, which has been captured by the AKP, but also in the opposition media. J5, J8 and J9 argue that polarization in the media is a conscious part and a desired outcome of the AKP government's policies to transform the media.

It seems that there is a direct correlation between the collapse of mainstream media and polarization. For instance, J9 says that with the collapse of the mainstream media, the opposition media has also become partisan. In this context, two main problems arise when talking about polarization in the media: both the journalists' journalistic practices are restricted and the division of readers into two camps is reinforced in the current social polarization. For journalists, the interviewees argue that the mainstream media is no longer an option as it is completely under AKP control, but the opposition media is not a good option for them either.

In this context, interviewees believe that it is also difficult for the opposition media to report news critical of the opposition wing and that the opposition media is even divided within itself. In addition to editorial autonomy concerns we hear that there are also problems with working conditions in opposition media.

On the other hand, the interviewees underline that addition to polarization in the media, there is also polarization among the audience. As we have mentioned in the first chapter, people tend to follow the media outlets that reflect their political views (Erdoğan & Uyan-Semerci, 2018). In this regard, what the interviewees think is similar to what Kadri Gürsel argues about the mainstream media. J2 claims that the lack of mainstream media creates echo chambers in which the opposition media cannot reach the audience that follows the pro-government media. Eventually, if we consider polarization in the media as one of the AKP's media policies we can say that a polarized society of people who are unaware of each other, who do not listen to each other, who do not understand each other even if they do, or who do not want to listen to each other, is the biggest outcome of the story of the media takeover and the collapse of the mainstream media.

Besides, the interviewees also draw attention on the deterioration of journalistic principles with the digitalization. As we have seen in the chapter one, In recent years, we have been witnessing the rise of a news media across the world in which news content has become homogeneous and authentic news production has decreased due to both the income crisis and digitalization (Wunsch-Vincent, 2010, p. 36; Hunter, 2014; Uzunoğlu, 2018). In this regard J4 states that the professional codes of journalism are disappearing in parallel with the proliferation of online journalism and J7 points out the widespread use of copy-paste journalism emphasizing that news content is becoming increasingly unqualified.

The last finding we encountered in the field consists of responses regarding the place and role of foreign media in the contemporary Türkiye's media. At the starting point of this thesis, we have argued that international news organizations, on the one hand, meet the audience's need for news as an alternative news source, and on the other hand, open a space for journalists who are struggling to find a place for themselves in today's Türkiye's news media. We see that the responses of the interviewees confirm this claim.

What the interviewees said about the place and role of foreign media in Turkey can be categorized under four main themes: In this regard foreign media is 1) an alternative, reliable and comprehensive news source, 2) voice of the voiceless, 3) a refuge for journalists 4) not able to fill the void left by the mainstream media.

First, we hear that these international news organizations, similar to past examples, are being recognized as alternative and reliable sources of news in a media under the pressure and control of political power. In this context, journalists say that with the collapse of the mainstream media in Türkiye, there is a need for news and foreign media is trying to fill this gap. Indeed, J11 notes that VOA's Facebook page receives a lot of bad comments, but that even if readers get angry, they do not stop following the content of foreign media.

In this context, there is a common belief that these news organizations meet not only the need for news but also the need for quality news. The interviewees point out that the Turkish-language services provide in-depth and multidimensional news with a background, which is a response to the search for quality news. In this context, J5 points out that such comprehensive coverage can be done in foreign media due to the lack of news rush.

Besides, the interviewees also mention the role of foreign media as being “voice of the voiceless”. They argue that international news organizations are able to report news that cannot be reported in national media and in this regard, they think that they are serving to speak the unspeakable in Türkiye.

In addition to that, the interviewees agree that foreign media is opening a space for journalists in Türkiye. As we have mentioned before, there are a limited number of media outlets that journalists can work in Türkiye (Keten & Ayan, 2023) and while examining the journalistic stories of the interviewees, we have seen that this is confirmed by the reasons why journalists preferred to work in foreign media. In this regard, the international news organizations have recently opened a space not only for readers but also for journalists and have emerged as an option not only in terms of news but also as a working space. For instance, J8 says that the opportunities provided by the foreign media enable journalists to continue their journalistic activities in Türkiye. Even J9 claims that foreign media has started to act like local media.

Finally, although foreign media has an important place and role within the existing media in Türkiye, interviewees believe that it cannot fill the gap left by the mainstream media. Some argue that mainstream media is a necessity for both journalists and people in Türkiye. In this context, the importance of the capacity of mainstream media as a medium that by its very nature can easily reach wider audiences and news sources is underlined.

Both in the first chapter and in the findings, we have seen that polarization in the media makes it difficult to reach audiences from different segments, locking them in echo chambers. For this reason, interviewees believe that the existence of mainstream media is important and necessary. They also emphasize that foreign media cannot reach large audiences as they only broadcast over the internet. Interviewees point out that television is still able to set the political agenda based on street interviews.

On the other hand, we know that the number of journalists working in these organizations is not very high and that they do not have specific areas of expertise as in the mainstream media. Moreover, as we have learned in news production processes, international organizations generally focus on special news production and carry out a kind of "slow journalism" activity. Under these circumstances, they argue, foreign media cannot fully fill the gap left by the mainstream media.

Finally, the interviewees emphasized the need to ensure economic freedom in order to make the news media independent and sustainable. In this respect, the importance of the issue of financing journalism, which we discussed in the first chapter, once again becomes apparent. In the interviews, we hear that the power and vested interests created by the commercial media has also played a role in the AKP government's ability to capture of the Turkish media. In this context, J4 and J8 argue that in a future where journalism can be funded by readers, neither political nor corporate pressure will be so effective.

In light of all these findings, it is worth noting that studies focusing on the practices of journalists and the functioning of newsrooms in order to understand the current state of the Türkiye's media will not only expand the media literature but will also provide data that will increase the struggle for independent journalism.

As we have seen, the Turkish services of international news organizations occupy an important place in today's media in Türkiye, both in terms of the news they produce and the space they open for journalistic practices.

Although we hear that journalists working in these organizations feel editorially and economically independent in principle, we observe that the foreign media is not exempt from the AKP government's repressive policies and that the mechanisms of pressure and control differ from the national media in this respect.

Direct pressure policies of the power include bureaucratic obstacles such as accreditation and work permits. In addition, the problems experienced in the processes of access to news sources are only made visible when looking at news production practices. In this context, it is noticeable that journalists working for international news organizations face different levels of obstacles from both the ruling and opposition sides.

On the other hand, it would not be wrong to say that targeting and discrediting campaigns by pro-government media and civil society organizations against foreign media outlets and journalists working there are also one of the government's pressure policies. As a matter of fact, the risk of being targeted is also reflected in the news production processes and can affect many different factors, from the topics journalists choose to the news language they use. In this respect, although some journalists may refer to this as self-censorship and others may call it merely meticulousness in the

language of the news, the fact that even those who have been working in the media for many years start to act more carefully after they start working in foreign media due to the fear of being targeted might be a sign of self-censorship in a sense.

This thesis starts with the claim that the services of international news organizations in Turkey have opened a space for journalists in the Turkish media today. the increasing popularity of these organizations and the fact that both readers and journalists are turning to them makes it relevant to look at the journalistic practices and news production processes carried out in these organizations. furthermore, the fact that foreign media are not exempt from the government's policies of pressure on the media makes it necessary to investigate the opportunities and constraints faced by journalists working in these organizations.

In the interviews conducted within the scope of the thesis, the activities of international news organizations and the problems faced by journalists were discussed and, although limited, an attempt was made to present a current picture of the Türkiye's media. Although discussions about mainstream media in Türkiye have been around for a long time, the idea that there is a need for mainstream media, as stated by most of the interviewees, shows that there is a need to think more about what mainstream means as a medium in Türkiye today.

In order to understand both the place and function of the Turkish services of international news organizations in the contemporary Turkish media and the news production processes within the organization, this thesis draws only on the experiences of journalists who have worked or are currently working in the Turkish services of BBC, DW, Euronews, Sputnik and VOA.

Considering both the number of journalists and the number of organizations covered, it would be fair to say that this is an introductory study in terms of a comprehensive and detailed examination of these organizations. Due to the design of the study, the thesis examines the current state of the media in Türkiye, the place of foreign media in this current picture, the news production processes operated by these organizations and the difficulties faced by journalists in these processes only through the eyes of journalists who work or used to work there. Since only semi-structured in-depth interviews were used in the research design, the information and opinions obtained from the interviews could not be tested within the scope of this study. In this respect, it would be possible and useful to test and critique the findings of the research

with different methodological approaches in future studies. For instance, it would be relevant to test these findings in content-oriented studies in order to see how the functions attributed to foreign media by interviewees are reflected in practice. In this regard, I hope that the findings of this research will be helpful for future studies.

With the belief that the debates on what kind of media is needed in Türkiye today will provide a ticket to out of this difficult period for journalism, this thesis hopes to contribute to making visible the struggle of journalists who resist to remain journalists in Türkiye.



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TEZ ONAY SAYFASI

Üniversite : T.C. GALATASARAY ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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Unvan, Ad-Soyadı

İmza

Doç. Dr. Tolga Çevikel
Doç. Dr. Ayşe Nevin Yıldız
Doç. Dr. Ceren Sözeri Özdal

Prof. Dr. Ulun AKTURAN
Enstitü Müdürü