

Analysis of the Obstacles to the Freedom and Independence of the Media in the World and Turkey

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Abstract

Media freedom and independence are the pillars of a given democratic society. Since the media makes up the bridge between the political authority and the public opinion, its independence is crucial for the survival of democracy. However, the history of the media has always been paved with obstacles of different kinds. This paper examines the obstacles to the freedom and independence of the media in the world in general and Turkey in particular. The critical political economy of the media was used as the theoretical framework for the study and, as for the method, a qualitative analysis of secondary data was performed. The existing literature showed that media concentration ownership, commercial stakes, and political interference make up the main obstacles to media freedom and independence in the world. Also, the literature revealed that political interference, economic stakes, and the legal framework in which the media operate consist of the main obstacle to media freedom and independence in Turkey. It was revealed that even in countries where freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Constitution, the media still struggle to maintain a completely independent editorial policy. The negative world trends in media freedom and independence consequently imply a negative trend in democracy in the world. The rise of electronic journalism contributed significantly to the freedom and independence of the media. However, political power and digital capital control the media content, which often leads to censorship.

Keywords: Media freedom, media independence, political interference, economic stake, legal framework

Introduction

The media makes up one of the most important mediation institutions in a State of law. To maintain harmonious relationships between the citizens and the leaders of a given society, the media must be free from economic and political interference. However, the relationships between the media and politics often denote either contradictions between the two or submission of the media to politics. In a state of law, contradictory ideas are key to collective deliberation. In contrast, an autocratic regime does not allow debates and public discussion when making decisions that concern its citizens. Despite the efforts made by human rights organizations and media associations, the challenge of media independence and freedom remains a long journey. In societies shaped by class struggles, the mainstream media make up the voice of the ruling class. Thus, the link between media groups and capital endangers the media's editorial freedom. Also, alternative media which often lack financial resources, fail to survive. In a country where the State is more powerful than the political ruler, freedom and independence of the mediation institutions are not endangered. In contrast, in a country where the ruler is more powerful than the State, the media falls under the control of political power. Whether regarded as a democratic mediation agency (Lievrouw, 2009) or as an ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1971), the media has always played an important role in shaping the worldview of a given society. Therefore, the desire for a political ruler to control the media lies in the importance of the media. This control is often translated into restrictions and censorship.

Since the invention of the book, the media has been at the center of the struggle for democratic societies. The media make up the necessary condition of democracy, allowing ideas to confront freely. The claim for press freedom started in the seventeenth century. However, it took more than a century for this claim to appear in law books. Sweden was the first country in the world to establish press laws in 1766; Prohibition of restricting the right to broadcast is part of the country's Constitution. In 1776, the State of Virginia followed Sweden's path: Virginia's Law Act, the Basic Law of the State, states that no government can block the expression of press freedom. Later, the US Constitution adopted this principle. The first amendment to the American Constitution voted in 1791, stipulates that Congress will not make any laws restricting the press or freedom of expression.

Media freedom has deteriorated worldwide over the past decade. In some of the most influential democracies in the world, populist leaders have made joint efforts to reduce the independence of the media sector. While the threats to global media freedom are obvious, their impact on the state of democracy is what makes them dangerous. In general, the freedom and independence of the media are hampered by pressure from politics and capital. However, rivalry and rigorous autoregulation among media groups make it difficult for journalists to do their jobs in complete freedom and independence. Media freedom is not a universal phenomenon. Even in countries where it is protected by the law, the right to express and publish free opinions often contradicts the economic interests of the ruling class. Besides, this freedom cannot be fully experienced without corresponding responsibilities. According to the UNESCO (2018) report on global trends in freedom of expression and media independence, there are two main and different indicators in the analysis of media independence. The first indicator is editorial independence from the regulatory authorities, and the second is resistance to political and commercial pressures. In the same vein, Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2019) stresses that freedom of the press is used only in a limited number of countries. The countries are mostly Western European countries, Eastern European countries, and North American countries. Nonetheless, Oceania, Israel, some African and Asian countries are exceptionally part of the list. According to the 2019 world media freedom index (RSF, 2019), Norway, Finland, Sweden, Netherlands, and Denmark are ranked as the 5 countries with the most media freedom out of 180 countries.

Turkey, which ranks 154th in the RSF index, is part of the countries where media freedom and independence remains very challenging. According to RSF (2019), politico-economic ties of media owners, intransparent distribution of public funds, and audience and market power geared towards media empires make up the factors that hamper media freedom in Turkey. The Press Freedom Index is the ranking of countries compiled and published by Journalists Without Borders, based on the organization's assessment of the press freedom records of the previous year. To compile the index, Journalists Without Borders developed an online survey of 87 questions that focus on several criteria. The degree of freedom of journalists in 180 countries is determined by combining the experts' responses into a survey prepared by the RSF. This qualitative analysis was combined with quantitative data on violence and abuse against journalists in the period under consideration. The categories of criteria and indicators determined by journalists without borders include pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legal framework, transparency, infrastructure, and fraud. The report showed that the freedom and independence of the media remain an angry question even in the most developed countries. Thus, the relationships between media and politics, media and capital, and between media groups create an endless struggle for power. However, in these power relations, it can be noticed that the media is the power that is subject to politics and capital.

This article is a theoretical study of media freedom and independence in the World and Turkey. Based on different reports and studies, this paper identified three main barriers to the independence and freedom of the media which are global media concentration, political interference, and economic pressure. Furthermore, based on Kurban and Sözeri (2013)'s research, the present study identified three main obstacles to the freedom and independence of the media in Turkey. These obstacles are legal issues, political pressure, and economic influence. Since the article focuses on media freedom and independence, understanding the political, economic, and legal framework in which the media operates requires a look at the theory of the political economy of the media.

The critical political economy of media

Power relations between antagonistic forces make up an obstacle to press freedom worldwide. Social research based on the political economy of the media views the political and economic structure of the media system as the source of the problem of freedom of press and independence. According to Hardy (2014), the first scientific study on critical political economy dates back to the late 1960s and early 1970s. The political economy of communication is related to the relationship between politics and the economy with communication. While the neoclassical approach to the political economy regards communication as a technical tool that serves the political and economic power, the critical political economy sees it as a complex process (Başaran & Geray, 2005). This complex process requires a comprehensive analysis that involves history, social integrity, moral philosophy, and praxis. Thus, more than a means to an end, the concept of communication makes up a crucial determinant of social interactions. Mosco (2009) provides a conception of communication that highlights social relationships. In the same vein, Hardy (2014) stresses that the critical political economy of communication addresses power relations that make up social hierarchies.

For this reason, the critical political economy analyzes how capital and politics affect communication practices by shaping people's perception and social representations of reality. Political power and capital make up structural forces that manifest themselves in trade and the international division of labor. Herman and Chomsky

(1988) emphasize the weight of the owners' group in the production of media content. As a result, the editorial line of the media is determined by these structural forces. Thus, the media's editorial line is viewed as a propaganda model closely intertwined with the geopolitics of information.

McQuail (2005) identifies seven basic assumptions related to the political economy of the media. The first assumption emphasizes the importance of logic and economic control. Economic control of the media hampers the possibility of citizen participation in the production of media content. The second assumption stresses that the media structure tends to intensify. In the third assumption, McQuail states that the global integration of the media tends to develop ceaselessly. The fourth assumption highlights the commodification of media content and audiences. The fifth assumption emphasizes the decrease in media diversity. The lack of diversity in the media landscape maintains the logic of single thought imposed by the ruling class. In the sixth assumption, McQuail claims that the dissenting and alternative voices have been neglected. Finally, he stresses that private interests override public opinion.

This study aimed to examine the obstacles to the freedom and independence of the media in the world and Turkey. The methodology of this study includes a secondary analysis of research and reports related to the topic under study. Thus, a qualitative analysis of the existing literature was conducted. According to Creswell (2012), the qualitative research method explores a problem and develops a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon.

The obstacles to freedom and independence of the media in the world

According to the 2019 House of Freedom report, in some of the most influential democracies in the world, large segments of the population no longer receive unbiased news and information. This is due to the interference of politics and capital in the production of media content. Common methods include state-sponsored property changes, regulatory and financial pressure, and reporting honest journalists. Governments have also provided proactive support to friendly media outlets through measures such as profitable government contracts, appropriate regulatory decisions, and preferential access to government information. The aim is to make the press serve those in power instead of the citizens. In Europe, the problem arose with right-wing populism that undermined fundamental freedoms. The government of Viktor Orbán in Hungary and that of Aleksandar Vučić in Serbia has had great success in eliminating critical journalism. Both leaders concentrate media ownership in the hands of peer groups, enabling organizations with the widest reach to support the government. In Hungary, where the process of media freedom and independence seems to improve, about 80 percent of the media belongs to government allies.

In Eurasia and MENA, the media faced the intensification of traditional challenges last year. Examples include new legislative restrictions in Belarus, a rise in arrest and conviction in Lebanon, and insecurity and death in a war-torn Yemen. As a result, the concentration of the media, political interference, and economic interests are the main obstacles to the freedom and independence of the media in the world. The following section highlights the problem of media concentration in the world.

Media ownership concentration as an obstacle to media freedom and independence

Media ownership concentration makes up an increasing trend in developed countries. Large media groups strengthen by controlling more and more newspapers, radios, and television. In such a context, information is an economic data whose value is measured by its mass audience. Global media groups include Bertelsmann, National Amusements (ViacomCBS), Sony Corporation, News Corp, Comcast, Walt Disney Company, AT&T Inc., Fox Corporation, Hearst Communications, MGM Holdings Inc., Grupo Globo (South America) and the Lagardère Group (France). According to Noam (2016), major media groups and companies have attracted attention, fear, and anger. Also, the media is increasingly controlled by a growing number of firms, which can influence public opinion, national agenda, democracy, and global culture. Therefore, media concentration is defined either according to the concepts of ideological pluralism and ownership diversity.

Cappello (2016) distinguishes between two indicators of media ownership concentration: horizontal media concentration and cross concentration of media ownership. The horizontal concentration reflects the level of control that one or more media owners can apply in a particular industry. The cross-media concentration denotes the degree of control applied by one or more media owners in several other economic sectors. Cappello (2016) states that horizontal concentration indicators can be identified in four media sectors: the television, the radio, daily newspapers, and Internet-based services. The cross-media concentration indicator follows the same logic as in horizontal media concentration. Thus, once legal provisions to prevent cross-media concentration has been determined, the indicator makes it possible to effectively enforce these provisions. In both horizontal and cross

concentration of media ownership, the relevant framework is determined by the supervisory authorities whose role is to ensure effective compliance with the legal provisions.

Cappello (2016) stresses that media pluralism is one of the foundations of freedom of expression. The concept of media pluralism encompasses a set of media actors and a large number of operators to prevent excessive market concentration. Therefore, media pluralism makes up the solution to the problem of media concentration. Given the situation in Europe, Cappello (2016) emphasizes that convergence may be an important regulatory institution. Besides, the opportunities offered by the internet do not imply that the diversity of the media can only be protected by new technological developments. Traditional broadcasting continues to be an important source of information for many European citizens, meaning that legal provisions to impede media ownership concentration should also be enforced.

İCRI (2009) sets the metrics and indicators to measure the concentration of media ownership. The study indicates that the risk of high ownership concentration is considered high if the four main media owners have a market share of more than 50% in the same country. If the market share of the four main media owners is 25 to 49% in the same country, the risk of high ownership concentration is considered moderate. Finally, if the market share of the four main media owners in the same country is below 25%, the risk of ownership concentration is therefore low.

Brogi et al. (2017) revealed that the concentration of media ownership and the commercial impact on editorial content are the indicators that hamper the independence of media the most. In Europe and with a score of 71%, Bulgaria is among the countries with the highest media concentration risk. This score is largely explained by the fact that rules restricting the concentration of property in Bulgaria are not implemented. The Media Reform Coalition (MRC, 2019) 2019 report shows that only three companies (News UK, Daily Mail Group and Reach) control 83% of the UK's national newspaper market. In France and Spain, according to Sciences Po LIEPP (2016), the media tends to belong mostly to private companies (almost 80% in France and 46% in Spain). In France, 51% of printed and online media are controlled by companies in the financial and insurance services industry. These companies created complex and opaque partnership structures that make it difficult to recognize the ultimate owner. In Germany, media pluralism is weakening slowly but steadily due to the closure of more newspapers and publishers for economic reasons. However, even countries that show a 5% media ownership concentration level show a high level of audience concentration. According to Brogi et al (2017), it seems that revenues and audiences continue to concentrate around a small number of providers, especially around established traditional companies and those that are successfully expanding to online markets.

Political interference as an obstacle to media freedom and independence

The interference of political power negatively affects the freedom and editorial independence of the media. If the control of the ownership of media outlets remains a strategic political weapon, the control of the content of media discourse is even more important to the manipulative politician. This control is even more intense in countries where the political regime has more power than the state itself. In a study on media pluralism among European countries, Brogi et al. (2017) identified five indicators of the media's political independence: political control over media outlets, editorial autonomy, the process of democratic elections and the media, the regulation of resources of the states and support for the media sector, and independence of funds. Similarly, Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2019) revealed that countries such as Sweden, France, Germany, Portugal, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the UK show a low risk for political independence. In contrast, the study showed that the four countries experienced the highest risk of political influence on their media. These countries are European Union member states Hungary and Slovenia and candidate countries Montenegro and Turkey.

According to Hallin and Mancini's Media and Policy Tree Models (2004), Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden belong to the democratic corporatist model, which is characterized by the professionalism and self-regulation of journalism. Evidence from the monitor confirms the effectiveness of self-regulation in these countries, which acts as a shield to protect the media and journalism from political influence. European Union candidate countries, Montenegro and Turkey, show a considerable level of political influence on the media. Consequently, these countries need to ensure complete media freedom, which is a prerequisite for democracy (Brigo et al, 2017).

The United States is ranked 48th in media freedom ranking. According to RSF (2019), media freedom continued to decline in the second year of President Donald Trump. Rhetoric attacks from the government and private individuals have become increasingly hostile. These attacks became physical when an armed person entered the Capital Gazette newsroom in Maryland in June 2019, killing four journalists and one employee in a targeted attack on the local newspaper. Since then, President Trump has continued to regard the press as an enemy of the

American people. He also uses the expression "fake news" in an attempt to discredit critical reporting. In France, attacks and harassment targeting media and journalists increased tremendously in 2018. Journalists are insulted, threatened, and attacked by politicians and protesters who claimed that the media do not give enough space to dissenting voices. The Yellow vest protest that started in November 2018 makes up an example as to how complicated are the relationships between the media and social protesters. Furthermore, although the German constitutional favors and environment for independent journalism in Germany, far-right groups and protestors continue to threaten, harass, and even physically attack journalists. This alarming trend that emerged in 2015 intensified in 2018.

According to RSF (2019), Turkmenistan is the country with the least media freedom and media independence in the world. The Turkmen government controls all the media and few internet users can only access a censored version of the internet. The harassment of a small number of journalists working secretly for media outlets residing abroad continues to grow. In recent years, many of these journalists have been arrested, tortured, physically assaulted, or forced to abandon their job. A new law provides favors the implementation of private television channels, provided that they convey a positive image of Turkmenistan. In Russia, which is 140th in the world press freedom index, the pressure on independent media has increased steadily since the great anti-government protests in 2011 and 2012. According to RSF (2019) and House of Freedom (2019), leading independent news organizations have either fallen under the control of political power or slowly disappeared. As TV channels continue to expose viewers to propaganda, the political environment has become very oppressive to those who question new patriotic and neo-conservative discourse. Never have more journalists and bloggers been imprisoned since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

As for the American continent, Cuba, ranked 169 out of 180 countries, is the country with the least freedom of press and media independence. Cuba, which is a distinctive socialist republic and a one-party state, continued to be the worst media freedom violator in Latin America. In place since 1959, the regime maintains a total media monopoly and the constitution prohibits private media. Several Cuban bloggers and independent journalists are threatened by the government and are often monitored by security agents who take them to query and delete information on their devices.

Eritrea, which ranked 178th out of 180 countries, is the African country with the least freedom and independence of the media. The peace agreement signed with Ethiopia in 2018 did not lead to any relaxation in the dictatorship, which left no room for freely reported news and information. According to a UN report (2016), the media in Eritrea is subject to the whim of President Issayas Afewerki, a press freedom hunter accused of crimes against humanity. Radio Erena is the only independent and politically non-partisan radio station that broadcasts news and information to Eritreans for free, but its coverage signal is often blocked in Eritrea.

As for the Middle East, the 2019 RSF report revealed that Syria is the Middle East country with the lowest media freedom and independence (RSF, 2019). The war, which somewhat favors the survival of citizen journalism in Syria, is among the reasons that explain the political control over the media. The risk of arrest, abduction, and death in Syria makes journalism an extremely fragile and dangerous activity. At least 10 journalists were killed in 2018. Three of these journalists were killed in conditions that remain unclear. Although the 2011 uprising led to the creation of new Syrian media, few of them survived the political pressure.

According to Dankov et al. (2003), control is understood more broadly than ownership as it includes both direct ownership and indirect control. Indirect control implies that parties, partisan groups, and politicians are not directly involved in the ownership structure but use their power through intermediaries. They also noticed that conflict of interest was often the cause of tension between the media and political power. Conflict of interest is defined as the incompatibility of the government agency with media ownership (Djankov et al., 2003). Therefore, transparency in media ownership is an important prerequisite for assessing the independence of the media. Regardless of the media's ideological stance and editorial line, the concentration of media ownership and political interference are the main obstacles to the independence and freedom of the media in the world.

Commercial stakes as an obstacle to media freedom and independence

In the postmodern era, the role of the media is becoming more and more important in the field of marketing and advertising. If the freedom of the media goes hand in hand with its financial independence, it follows that capital has a powerful influence on the editorial line of the media. According to Gwartney and Lawson (2003), economic freedom of the media implies that the media are free to choose between goods and services while volunteering with others in a competitive market. Governments promote economic freedom when they establish a legal framework that ensures respect for property rights and enforcement of contracts. This legal framework is

breached when governments change the coordination of economic activities by imposing trade and entrepreneurship regulations and restrictions.

The link between economic freedom and press freedom was formally established by Nobel Prize Winners, Friedman (2010) and Hayek (2013). The authors emphasize that the curtailment of economic freedom leads to a reduction in civil and political rights, including the right of citizens to express their opinions. According to Brooke and Déry (2018), the degree of control of political power over the economy has an impact on information providers. The study showed that places with a high degree of economic freedom are places where fewer journalists are attacked. Those are places with the least laws and regulations applied to the media and with the least political pressure to control media content.

Brogi et al. (2017) emphasize the commercial impact on the editorial line of the media. The financial independence of the media stems from the relationship between commercial impact and ownership concentration. In such a context, producing free content is a risky challenge for the media. In the UN report on global trends in press freedom (2017), the impact of trade on media independence is viewed as a form of capture. In this perspective, the capture of the media is the loss of the media's ability to make up the bridge between political leaders and citizens. Instead, the media serves the purposes and needs of capital. The capital affects the editorial content of the media and prevents their independence through advertising and other financial support. The ethical problem is that, despite the cooperation between media and capital, some media outlets pretend to be free and independent.

The obstacles to the freedom and independence of the media in Turkey

In "The Media in the wheel of Politics: the political, legal, and economic obstacles to freedom and independence of the media in Turkey", Kurban and Sözeri (2013) highlights the historical power imbalance between media and its political, legal and economic counterparts. Historically, the influence of political power on and the media content has always been significant. Also, the Turkish media have never been exempted from the ideological polarization and excessive politicization of society. The media's decision as regards the actors allowed to participate in political and social debates makes up a reflection of the social, economic, and political transformation of Turkey that started in the 1980s. The economic liberalization and the process of democratization of the country caused a structural, technological, and ideological transformation of the media sphere. According to Kurban and Sözeri (2013), the obstacles to the freedom and independence of the media in Turkey can be classified into three categories: political, economic, and legal.

The political obstacles to the freedom and independence of the media in Turkey

According to Elmas and Kurban (2011), since the emergence of the press in Turkey, journalists have played a major role in the modernization of republican institutions. However, the press has always been the target of pressures from political power. In the 2019 RSF report, Turkey ranks 157th out of 180 countries as regards media freedom and independence. According to the report, the dismantling of dozens of media and the affinities between the largest Turkish media group and political power have completely undermined media pluralism in Turkey. Political pressure thus hampers editorial pluralism and the free expression of journalists.

The existing literature on the relationship between political power and media in Turkey falls uses a critical approach. The literature regards journalists as victims without emphasizing their responsibility to produce and share impartial and accurate information. Pierini and Mayr (2013) state that the government interferes directly with media affairs in response to personal and policy criticism. As regards the tense relationship between the Turkish and the media, Erdem (2018) stresses that Turkey has moved away from the Western understanding of democracy since the 2016 failed coup attempt. Erdem identifies two basic forms of political interference in the media policy in Turkey. The first form of political interference is to encourage flexible businessmen to buy the mainstream media by obtaining preferential loans from public banks. The second form of political interference stems from direct political pressure on media owners. In short, the literature related to the political obstacles related to media freedom in Turkey showed a shared media stance towards political power over several decades. The media expresses and promotes the interests of the political establishment. Also, not only did the weakened media affect the ownership structure but it also indirectly affected editorial policies and caused an increase in self-censorship.

The economic obstacles to media freedom and independence in Turkey

According to Kurban and Sözeri (2013), the economic barriers to the independence and freedom of the media lie in the relationship between the media and the market structure. Liberalization policies in the 1980s facilitated the transition from other sectors to the media and changed the media ownership profile. However, Karlıdag and Bulut (2016) emphasize that the free market is not a necessary condition of free media. Instead, the strategic

relations between the government and the media led to the media's rapid commercialization. Although the media outlets were concentrated into small publishing companies at the early stage of advertising, the concentration of ownership of major media conglomerates started from the late 1990s to the early 2000s. Besides, a few of the major media groups that dominate the media market also operate in various industrial sectors (Kaya & Çakmur, 2011).

This situation changed drastically with the 2001 economic crisis and the regulations introduced to the banking sector. While media groups that invested in the banking and finance sector were more affected by the crisis, some of them completely disappeared from the market. It should be noted that some companies, including those operating in the media, were taken over by the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (SDIF). The financial investment of the media sector in other business sectors makes up one of the most important reasons for the media ownership concentration in Turkey. Thus, the media makes up an element in larger business groups ruled by a closed circle of owners. Almost all media groups invest in sectors such as energy, telecommunications, finance, and construction (Sönmez, 2003; Bek, 2004; Adaklı, 2006).

According to Karlıdağ ve Bulut (2016), the current media ownership profile is a result of the neoliberal policies applied in the 1980s. Thus, favoritism results in the hyper-commercialization of the media, which constitutes a barrier to media freedom. It can be understood that favoritism between capital and the media is a condition for the media to survive. The problem is that this survival strategy does not meet the criteria for media freedom and independence, as outlined by Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House. Karlıdağ and Bulut (2016) note that the relationship between the state, capital, and the media creates an environment in which capital shapes the media's treatment and dissemination of information. This dependence of the media on politics and capital, as Touraine (1992) stresses, is an indication of the modern mode of production in which information and truth are supplanted by capital and power.

The legal obstacles to media freedom and independence in Turkey

Legal restrictions related to national security issues are the main legal obstacles to the freedom and independence of the media in Turkey. Article 28 of the Constitution provides constitutional guarantees of press freedom in Turkey, it is incumbent upon the State to take the necessary measures to guarantee this freedom. Article 26 of the Constitution protects individuals' freedom to express and disseminate their opinions and thoughts. Citizens are also entitled to receive and share ideas without the interference of public authorities. Due to the European Union membership process, Turkey has made significant progress to increase the freedom and independence of the media. However, the process began to deteriorate in 2008 as journalists were accused of terrorist propaganda during major political investigations.

The Anti-Terrorism Law (TMK) and the Turkish Penal Code (TCK) are the primary sources of accusations against media professionals. The most common accusations and political cases against journalists are the following: leading a terrorist organization, becoming a member of a terrorist organization, providing support to a terrorist organization, propagandizing for a terrorist organization, and reporting a terrorist organization's statements as news. Akdeniz and Altıparmak (2018) emphasize that the state of emergency declared after the 2016 coup attempt contributed to the strengthening of legal measures against media freedom. Although the media, state, and capital seem to coexist, the media is not completely independent of the power of politics and capital.

Therefore, the legal framework which shapes the media's activities does not always meet the free-range expectations of the media. The road to media freedom and independence is paved with significant legal obstacles. Admittedly, excess in the media's freedom may create more room for rumors and propaganda. Since social media favors post-factual journalism, there is a need for a certain control of the media's freedom. According to Kurban and Sözeri (2013), despite the significant political reforms over the last 10 years, Turkey is still required to make substantial progress as regards the media's independence and freedom. The authors stress that real change is only possible with the overhaul of institutions and a radical change of mindset.

Conclusion

The road to media freedom and independence worldwide is paved with many obstacles. World trends in freedom of expression and media independence revealed that journalists are not completely free to do their jobs even in most democratic countries. The existing literature review shows that media ownership concentration, political interference, and economic favoritism are the main obstacles to media freedom and independence in the world. In the case of Turkey, the literature revealed that political interference, commercial stakes, and legal constraints make up the main obstacles to the freedom and independence of the media. Although the media is often regarded as the fourth democratic power, it remains subject to its political and economic counterparts.

Media ownership concentration goes against the principle of media pluralism. The concentration of capital leads to the concentration of small and closed media groups. Capital favors small media groups, which help influence the media's editorial policies. Unexpectedly, the development of community and alternative media did not affect the steady media ownership concentration. Media companies are controlled by several companies in the USA, France, the UK, Turkey, and many other countries. Capital influences the concentration of media ownership, thereby shaping the media's discourse. Freedom of speech, although enhanced by social media, remains restricted for two reasons. First, ownership concentration continues to prevail in the era of social media. Social media platforms are controlled by capital, not by the users. Second, content delivered via social media platforms is monitored and frequently censored.

Political power plays an important role in influencing the media's discourse. The media's discourse contributes to shaping the public. The rise of nationalist right-wingers in some parts of Europe and America has worsened the relationship between media and politics. The concept of fake news in America has been the slogan of the government when facing media criticism. Media organizations in France are often accused of collaborating with financial institutions by groups of protesters. World trends in media freedom and independence show that journalists are accused by politicians of sharing fake news. Also, press workers worldwide are frequently the object of psychological and physical attacks.

The literature regarding media freedom and independence in Turkey shows several similarities with world trends. While media ownership concentration and political interference make up two significant obstacles to media freedom and independence in Turkey, the 2016 coup attempt caused the hardening of the legal framework in which the media operate. National security concerns and the tendency to tackle fake news have forced independent journalists to review their publication policies. In such a context, the media fail to meet the criteria for media freedom and independence. Among these criteria, pluralism and transparency are two indicators of media freedom that are yet to be fully achieved in many countries. Despite the obstacles mentioned above, media freedom and independence remains an internal process of democratic governance. Media freedom and independence are vital conditions for democracy to survive as the media makes up the bridge between governments and citizens.

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