THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF PARIS
MASTER OF ARTS IN GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS

Error 404 - Democracy Not Found: Interactions between political communications and digital media in Turkey

Emine Gülfem Demiray
Contact e-mail: gulfemdemiray@gmail.com

-Paris, June 9, 2014-

ProQuest Number: 10305757

ProQuest 10305757

www.manaraa.com

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF PARIS
MASTER OF ARTS IN GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS

Error 404 - Democracy Not Found: Interactions between political communications and
digital media in Turkey

EMINE GÜLFEM DEMIRAY

THIS THESIS WAS APPROVED BY:

Thesis Director: Professor Matthew Fraser

Committee member: Professor Waddick Doyle

Program Director: Professor Waddick Doyle

Date: 19 June 2014

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

I have read the American University of Paris's policies on plagiarism and I certify
that the content of this thesis entitled

**Error 404 - Democracy Not Found: Interactions between political communications
and digital media in Turkey**

is all my own work and does not contain any
unacknowledged content from other sources.

Number of words: 16007

Signed: Emine Gülfem Demiray

Date: June 9, 2014

Intellectual property and copyright statement:

The present Master's thesis -- in its printed and electronic version -- has been submitted to The American University of Paris Library in order to enrich its thesis collection and to grant scholarly access. As of today, I authorize the AUP Library to archive, catalog, classify, index, keep records of my thesis, to quote it, to produce abstracts and summaries and disseminate them in France or abroad.

In addition, I authorize AUP to provide free access to the entire work for on-site consultation, to lend it, and to perform inter-library loan transactions -- via Internet/Intranet - for as long as this work exists. AUP must acquire my explicit approval to make any additional copies of my thesis.

Je dépose l'intégralité de ce mémoire universitaire - sous format papier et sous version électronique - à la bibliothèque de The American University of Paris – AUP afin d'enrichir sa collection de mémoires universitaires. A partir d'aujourd'hui j'autorise la bibliothèque d'AUP à le cataloguer et l'indexer, à produire et disséminer ses notices, à l'archiver, à le citer, à en faire des résumés et à les diffuser en France ou à l'étranger.

Ainsi, j'autorise AUP à donner un accès gratuit à la totalité de l'oeuvre pour sa consultation sur place, son prêt et sa diffusion pour le prêt entre bibliothèques -- par internet/intranet- en France ou à l'étranger. AUP doit obtenir mon accord explicite pour toute reproduction ultérieure.

Emine Gülfem Demiray

Signature

June 9, 2014

Date

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wonderful mother, Nilay Demiray, for convincing me to pursue a master's degree in communications, as well as for her unconditional love and constant support. I owe all my academic and professional achievements to her words of encouragement and push for determination.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Abstract

Today's society is characterized by a digital convergence culture emanating from the predominating presence of the Internet and social media. Political leaders and organizations take great advantage of the advancement in digital media technologies, utilizing new media to manage public relations, to improve their brand image, and to connect to voters. At the same time, in the absence of valid public spheres in the real world, citizens turn to the digital world to reach out to political leaders, to share their opinions with the rest of the world, and to participate in political debates. This thesis project aims to investigate the influence of web and digital media on political communications, scrutinizing the political communications scene in Turkey as a case study. Ultimately, it seeks to find an answer as to why social media networks such as YouTube can be banned in a country, such as Turkey, that has a large and vibrant community of Internet users.

The project first presents an overview of the interaction between digital media technologies and political communications in the world. Then, it introduces the theory of the public sphere and explains why media is no longer able to provide public spheres for debate, in addition to exploring the rise of the virtual public spheres. The third and biggest part of the study comprises the case study on Turkey, which portrays an overview encompassing the political communications scene and the media ownership structure in Turkey. It also addresses the decline of the public sphere and journalism in Turkey, as well as the birth of online public spheres. While digital media can solve the crisis of journalism under freedom of speech, it can create socio-political tension under authoritarian or highly strictly regulated regimes.

Keywords: digital media, Internet, political communications, public sphere, Turkey

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Turkey has a very large population of digital natives, with a total population of 76.7 million, a median age of 30, and a 25 percent of the population under the age of 14. Compared with the age demographics of many OECD countries, this generation of digital natives represents a very large percentage of the entire Turkish population (Turkish Statistical Institute). As a consequence, Internet usage throughout the country is increasing at exponential rates. In fact, with more than 40 million active Internet users, Turkey is one of the top 10 most active countries on the web and has the fifth biggest Internet population in Europe after Germany, Russia, The United Kingdom, and France (Europe Digital Future in Focus Report, 2013; Kurban and Sözeri 2012).

According to the most recent market data report published by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (2014), the number of the broadband internet subscribers in Turkey has climbed to 32.6 million by the end of 2013, from six million in 2008, representing a nearly five hundred percent increase. 49.1% of Turkish households have Internet access home (ICTA, 2013). The number of 3G subscribers has exceeded 49 million by the end of 2013, from 7.1 million in 2009 (ICTA 2014). As for social media platforms, Turkey ranks among the top 15 countries for Facebook use, with 34 million active users in a population of 77 million. (Butler and Pamuk, 2014). Similarly, Turkey ranks 11th for Twitter use with nearly 10 million users (Semiocast, 2012). In addition to using the social media platforms, users in Turkey connect to the Internet in order to send e-mails, log in to chat rooms and forums, read newspapers and magazines, acquire information about goods and services, and download media (Kurban and Sözeri, 2012).

1

The increase in Internet penetration of ordinary citizens' daily lives has also surely changed the political communications landscape in Turkey. Mirroring the citizens, Turkish government is also utilizing social media tools efficiently. For example, the assembly uses E-petition in order to consider the views of individual citizens on issues related to the constitution. Updates and announcements by public institutions and ministries are constantly sent through Twitter, Facebook, and RSS feeds. There are local municipalities that run blogs and broadcast their council meeting over social media platforms. The advancement of new media technologies also plays a great role in the branding of political figures and campaigning. Political leaders, deputies, interest groups, and other political bodies increasingly utilize the Internet as a communications tool to connect to citizens and win votes. Today, during election campaigns, agencies, politicians, parties, and government officials spend tremendous amounts of investments in new media, as opposed to television, radio, or print media.

Despite the widespread popularity of web and digital media platforms both among the citizens and the political figures, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan describes social media as a "menace to society" (Letsch, 2013). "There is now a menace which is called Twitter," the prime minister said in a public statement. "The best examples of lies can be found there. To me, social media is the worst menace to society." It is highly contradictory that a politician condemns social media platforms, while at the same time he continues using them. This contradiction in the Turkish political communications scene has its roots in the general demise of the public sphere and journalism, in addition to the media-ownership structure in Turkey and the lack of freedom of speech.

Political communications, press, digital media and virtual public spheres

The influence of digital and mobile media technologies is a hot topic of research in academia, as it has changed individual lifestyles, modern societies, and global communities. There is now an established body of empirical and theoretical studies that highlight the Internet and its role within political communication and election campaigning. The bulk of research has focused on the United States.

An exemplary case study cited in almost every single research in the literature is the election campaigns conducted for the American President Barrack Obama, which were successfully based upon the use of new media platforms, such as Reddit, Twitter, and Pinterest. There is also a vast amount of literature elaborating on the election campaigns within the European Parliament and European states, such as Germany and the UK. Scholars in the field are in consensus that the strategic key to successful campaigning is to implement interactive models of political communication in order to communicate and form relationships with an online audience, using the interactive tools provided by social media environments, especially during election campaigns.

At the same time, in the absence of valid public spheres in the real world, citizens turn to the digital world to reach out to political leaders, to simply share their opinions with the rest of the world, and to participate in political debates and discussions. This thesis project aims to investigate the influence of web and digital media on political communications, scrutinizing the political communications scene in Turkey as a case study. Ultimately, it seeks to find an answer as to why social media networks such as YouTube and Twitter can be banned in a country, such as Turkey, that has a large and vibrant community of Internet users.

Chapter 1 opens with a theoretical introduction into the academic field of political communications and presents a brief literature review. It also elaborates on the interaction between digital media technologies and political communications, discussing current uses of new media in political branding and election campaigning. Chapter 2 introduces the theory of the public sphere and sheds light on the relationship between the media and the public sphere. Examining the erosion of the public sphere, the chapter explains why traditional media is no longer able to provide public spheres for debate. In addition, it also explores the rise of the virtual public spheres and discusses whether or not the web can successfully sustain virtual public spheres and counterpublics. Chapter 3 presents a case study on Turkey, based on the concepts and theories discussed in the previous chapters. The chapter surveys the study of political communications in Turkey and discusses the current research in the field, giving a detailed report of how Turkish political leaders and institutions utilize social media tools in order to connect with citizens. After an examination of the media ownership structure in Turkey, the chapter analyzes the status quo of the public sphere and journalism in Turkey. The chapter also addresses culture-specific challenges related to the decline of the public sphere and the crisis in journalism in Turkey, such as the issue of freedom of speech.

Chapter 1 – Political Communications

The history of political communications can be traced back to the ancient Egyptian civilization, as far back in history as 2675 BC, in view of *the Precepts*, which was a text composed by Ptahhotep for the eldest son of the Pharaoh Huni. The text aimed to advise the Paharaoh's son on the art of persuasion and effective communication. Discourse on political communications was also predominant in the Classical Greco-Roman antiquity, as evidenced by works of classical rhetors, such as Plato and Cicero, who frequently discussed contemporary political institutions and how they communicated influence (Stacks, 1995). According to Stacks (1995), the origins of political communications "probably go back to the first time humans attempted to rule through logic instead of physical violence. As long as there have been factions seeking power over others, political communication has been theorized and tested."

1.1 What is political communication?

Political communications is defined as "an interactive process concerning the transmission of information among politicians, the news media and the public" (Norris, 2001). This interactive process incorporates the transmission of information from political authorities to citizens, among political authorities themselves, and from the public back to the authorities in form of feedback. However, Denton and Woodward (1998) define political communications as a method of influencing the political scene because "the crucial factor that makes communication 'political' is not the source of a message, but its content and purpose." McNair (2003) holds a similar view and argues that political communication is "purposeful communication about politics."

Communications within a political context relies heavily on composing messages addressed by political entities to their voters; therefore, strategy is at the core of political communication (Stacks, 1995). However, political communications does not embody only verbal and written statements. It also includes visual means of communications, such as banners, dress, hairstyle, and logos, that help construct a political image Photographic images of political leaders have been very significant in the public sphere ever since James Knox Polk, the 11th President of the United States, had his formal portrait taken in 1845 and became the first United States president to have his photo taken while still in office (Culbert, 1983).[1] As highlighted by Culbert (1983), such images have even influenced the public's perception of a political figure's leadership skills and ability to govern. The heavy influence of photography was sustained by the radio and film media as technology progressed throughout the Twentieth Century (Stroud, 2007). Political communication today integrates a wide variety of different media tools and platforms in order to craft messages directed towards citizens and devise strategies in order to maintain the base and attract more voters (Sweetser and Lariscy, 2008).

With respect to certain elements of political campaigns, such as promotions, electoral speeches, advertisements, brochures, and political broadcasts, political communications is also described as a form of marketing. In addition to such elements, the ideological positioning of political parties in the electoral market is another factor that juxtaposes political communications with marketing (Harrop, 1990). In contrast, Scammell (1996) argues that political communications is not meant to be used "simply to explain the promotional features of modern politics but as tools of analysis of party and voter behaviour." Similarly, Kavanagh (1995, 1996) denominates political communications as

---

[1] For his formal portrait, James K. Polk commissioned the nationally renowned daguerreotypist John Plumbe Jr. President Polk had another formal sitting with Plumbe in the company of his cabinet in 1846. The photograph, which was taken in the State Dining Room is known to be the first photograph of a United States president along with his advisers, as well as the first photograph known to have been taken inside the White House. See Krainik (2005).

6

"electioneering", which comprises of the development of campaign communications and the assessment of their impact. In this context, political communications is the creation of strategies and tools that are used to trace and examine public opinion before and during an election campaign.

1.2 Literature review

As a consequence of the interdisciplinary nature of political communications, research in this field is constructed by collaboration among different disciplines in social sciences, such as sociology, history, political science, and media studies. Despite the broad spectrum of research topics, the literature in political communications consists of three major categories: 1) Studies on the production process, which examine the creation of political messages and their transmission via both direct channels, such as advertisements, and indirect channels, such as mass media channels (radio, television, newspaper, and web); 2) Studies on content, which shed the light on and analyze the contents of the messages produced by the aforementioned production processes; and 3) Studies on the effects and influence of political communication messages (Norris, 2001).

The study of political communications began to gain momentum during World War I, although the field was labeled as "public opinion and propaganda," as opposed to "political communications." Journalist and political commentator Walter Lippmann was among the first who theorized the notion of propaganda and 'the manufacture of consent' with his *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925) (Rogers, 2004). Lippmann (1922) argued that the masses should be guided by a "specialized class of enlightened elites," because the majority of the population acted chaotically and were unable to independently make rational choices. Therefore Lippmann believed that mass consent had to be engineered and manufactured by advertising, journalism and public relations (1922).

Edward L. Bernays, who based his methodology partially on works by Lippmann, similarly believed that the average individual in the society was incapable of making rational decisions. In his influential book *Propaganda* (1928), Bernays asserted that masses could be consciously and intelligently controlled without their knowledge and that propaganda could be used as an agent to generate consent and popular approval. He asserted that the large majority of members in a democratic society are governed by a small number of people "who understand the mental processes and social patterns," so that the society keeps functioning smoothly. Because, according to Bernays, "the manipulation of news, the inflation of personality, and the genera ballyhoo by which politicians and commercial products, and social ideas are brought into the consciousness of the masses" as instruments that are heavily criticized but nevertheless help organize public opinion (Ewen, 1998).

The traditional literature in the political science field hold the same view that media is an accommodating channel through which messages of the "elite" are transmitted to the masses. The media is considered solely as a cooperative and obliging mechanism in the policy-making process, as opposed to an impartial informative agent (Bloch and Lehman-Wilzig 2002). Based on his theory of cultural consumption, Bourdieu similarly argues that fields of cultural production, including news media, are determined by the dominant class (Bourdieu & Nice, 1980).

Another theoretical framework that features the "ruling elite" is the propaganda model developed by Herman and Chomsky (2011), which places propaganda as a cornerstone of mass media. According to the propaganda model theory, the public is manipulated by propaganda, and consent for economic, political and social policies is "manufactured" in the public mind. Chomsky elaborates further on the use of propaganda in the mass

media in his *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda* (2002), where he focuses on the mass media in the United States. Chomsky asserts that American mass media is essentially controlled by the "elite", which he identifies as corporations and politicians, citing examples primarily from how mass media was used in order to gain support for involvement in wars (2002).

However, some research in political communications and media studies propose that media is a much more independent actor within the political context. The "gatekeeper" literature declares that the news agenda is not solely shaped by political figures and is indeed configured by journalists and other media agents who have the final say in dictating the news-worthiness of stories (White 1950, Galtung and Ruge 1965, Patterson 1993).

The focus of research in political communication has recently shifted to the Internet and, especially over the past decade, to social media (Hanson, Haridakis, Cunningham, Sharma, and Ponder, 2010). The technoromantic school in the literature maintains an optimistic view that the Internet offers endless opportunities for ordinary citizens regarding their involvement in direct democracy (Coyne, 1999).[2] According to this view, digital technologies help facilitate civic engagement by providing ordinary citizens with alternative channels, such as virtual communities and chat rooms, which stimulate participation in public affairs (Barber 1998).

While many scholars emphasize the increase in political participation owing to social media, a great number of studies argue that social media does not generate an increase in

---

[2] Before the Internet, the technoromantic view in literature was addressed to such technological advancements as the electric telegraph, telephone, and the wireless radio. For detailed discussion, see Lubar (1993), Pursell (1995), and Rhodes (1999).

political participation but merely serves as a tool for citizens who were already willing to voice their opinions (Druckman, 2004; Hanson et al., 2010; Metzgar and Maruggi, 2009).

1.3 Political communications in the digital age

According to Norris (2001), "in the last decade the most important change to the political communication process has occurred through the rise of the Internet, particularly in postindustrial societies that are at the forefront of the information society such as the United States, Australia and Sweden." The rise of the Internet from the 1990s onwards has introduced opportunities for global access to information and data exchange. While linear, one-way communication prevailed in the early days of the Internet age, the focus has been shifting more and more towards interactive and dynamic communication models with the emergence and increasing popularity of social media platforms which have enabled users to connect and network with each other.

As a consequence of their ubiquitous prominence, online networks and social media platforms have also been utilized as communication and public relations tools for political figures, organizations, candidates, and interest groups. Similarly, the level of interest in political matters has also flourished. The number of political information seekers who choose to go online in order to acquire political information is increasing continuously. Therefore, the interactive communication model offered by these new media technologies has also been used in order to cultivate political discussion. Prominent political bodies and figures all maintain a strong online presence through websites and social media platforms (Johnson and Perlmutter, 2010).

10

Twitter, which has been immensely growing in importance over the past few years, is one of the most popular social media platforms that help political leaders connect with their citizens and voters, in addition to with each other. Founded by web developer and Internet entrepreneurs Evan Williams, Jack Dorsey and biz stone in July 2006, Twitter is a microblog that allows users to share messages up to 140 characters long (Comm, 2010). Twitter also provides a new key platform for political bodies to disseminate their news, events, and other related information. However, Twitter also gives citizens direct access for communication with their political leaders, since any Twitter used with an account can mention, retweet, or favourite a political leader's tweet, although only a few political personas interact back with the citizens via Twitter. It is important to note that this social media platform allows for analysis of feedback and public opinions, as a political figure or entity can follow what the public is saying about them via hashtag and keyword search (Burston-Marseller, 2013).

According to the Twiplomacy study conducted by Burson-Marsteller (2013), three quarters of all the world's governments and 77.7% of world leaders have an active Twitter account. All states in Europe and South America (except for Suriname) have an official Twitter presence. In North America, 79% of all governments are actively using Twitter, followed by Asia with 76%, Africa with 71%, and Oceania with only 38.4%. The most followed political leader on Twitter is the U.S. President Barack Obama, with the Twitter handle @BarackObama, with 41,5 million followers as of January 2014. The President of the United States is also the fourth most popular account in the Twitterverse, ranking behind pop star Lady Gaga. The second most influential world leader is Pope Francis, with over seven million followers combined on the nine different accounts run by his social media team. The White House of the United States ranks the

11

third with 4.58 million followers. Two Turkish leaders are among the top five most followed world leaders: President Abdullah Gül (with the Twitter handle @cbabdullahgul) with 4.38 million followers and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (with the Twitter handle @RT_Erdoğan) with 4.06 million followers (as of January 2014). Other eminent political leaders who are among the top 10 list of most followed leaders include Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev (@MedvedevRussia and @MedvedevRussie), the UK government (@Number10gov), Queen Rania of Jordan (@QueenRania), Indonesia's president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (@SBYudhoyono), and Cristina Kirchner of Argentina (@CFKArgentina).

Despite the fact that digital media platforms established their dominance in the political sphere, it is important to note these platforms do not guarantee political success on their own and they should be accompanied by the key fundamentals of communication strategy. Metzgar and Maruggi (2009) point out that no matter how effectively and efficiently used, social media platforms cannot replace "message, motivation, or strategy," which are key elements that construct the brand and identity of a political entity, in addition to communicating its mission and vision to the public.

1.4 Online campaigning

Political figures and organizations have been using social media platforms in order to fabricate firmer connections with voters and constituents. The Internet and new media technologies have changed many aspects of the execution and organization of political campaigns, including but not limited to fundraising, press coverage, and opinion polling (Barrett, 2011).

The literature on online political communications cites Barrack Obama's election to the U.S. presidency in 2008 as a pioneering example, as well as a turning point in political and media history, with regards to his election campaign and the methods employed in order to generate votes. The statistics presented in Graber's *Mass Media and American Politics* (2010) point out the striking contrast between Obama's online presence on social media platforms and that of his opponent, John McCain. For example, Obama had over two million followers on Facebook, while McCain had 600,000. Unlike his opponents, Obama addressed his supporters on how he felt about important issues via Facebook, YouTube, and especially Twitter. These social media platforms played a crucially important role especially in voter registration and grassroots organization during Barack Obama's presidential election in 2008 (Metzgar and Maruggi, 2009).

Turning the spotlight on digital media technologies, the success of Barack Obama's campaign established the use of social media platforms as an integral strategy of any election campaign plan (Tumasjan, Sprenger, Sander and Welpe, 2012). In fact, the favourable outcome of Obama's digital media strategy created a stir in Europe as well. According to some, social media networks heralded "a new architecture of political communication" (Elter, 2012). Following the United States presidential election held in 2008, all German parties developed a social media strategy for the federal election of 2009 in order to mirror Obama's success. However, their efforts failed, since fewer citizens voted in the 2009 federal election than in the 2005 election. According to Elter (2012), this is because "most German parties had taken the American campaign as their model and tried to adapt it to the German context… the candidates were too different, the party systems were too different, and the potential target groups were too different." However, some researchers found that the number of tweets corresponded to the results

of the German federal elections Tumasjan et al. (2011) asserted that the volume of tweets reflected voter presence because Twitter was used as an arena for political discussion, similar to a live political debate among citizens.

Social media platforms have the potential to generate great success in election campaigns because the image of a political leader is significantly enhanced by interpersonal discussion and a candidate can generate closer connections with the voters by joining online discussions (Druckman, 2004). Strategic use of social media networks can enhance voter participation in political campaigns, as these online platforms are more accessible and personal (Baym, Zhang, and Lin, 2004). Hanson et al. (2010) describe this phenomenon as "the pattern of activation, reinforcement and conversion."

Another reason that encourages politicians to be active on social media platforms is that most of these social media platforms are very popular and widely used especially by the younger generations, which are more inclined to access the Internet on a regular basis than their older counterparts. While the older citizens remain loyal to television broadcasts, the youth follows news online. Young adults find that social media platforms have a greater impact than other types of advocacy (Harvard Institute of Politics, 2011). In fact, younger generations learn political information through social media platforms more than any other age group (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010). Besides, the younger generations are also accustomed to express their personal opinions and share their views online (Patterson, 2007). As a result, the principal channel of communication between political figures and young citizens remain the social media platforms and other related digital technologies.

14

Chapter 2 – Media and the Public Sphere

In "Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article" (1964), Jürgen Habermas briefly introduces the concept of the public sphere, which has its origins in the bourgeois society of the 18th century, the time period where the distinction between "opinion" and "public opinion" came about. He defines a public sphere as a communicative space formed by private people who band together in order to form a "public", debate public affairs, and construct "something approaching public opinion". According to Habermas, "the expression 'public opinion' refers to the tasks of criticism and control, which a public body of citizens informally – and, in periodic elections, formally as well – practices *vis-à-vis* the ruling structure organized in the form of a state." The public sphere where public opinions are formed is not so much a physical place, but is rather a social realm that exists through conversation and discourse. It is also conceptually separate from the state and can even lead to discourse that is critical of the state. For democratic relevance, the public sphere is contingent on the quantity of participation and the quality of discourse. It also requires outlets like the media or the Internet in order to keep individuals informed (Habermas, 1964).

2.1 The bourgeois public sphere

In order to derive the origins of the bourgeois public sphere, Habermas first traces the historical division between "public" and "private," explaining that the public and private realms were not separated in the Middle Ages, but got separated as the feudal authorities, such as the church, princes, and nobility, disintegrated in the eighteenth century. The ambivalent nature of "public" and "private" within the pre-bourgeois social structure had given rise to a representative public sphere, which involved a feudal

authority figure representing himself as the powerful ruler before an audience (Habermas, 1964).

After the demise of the feudal authorities, the bourgeois public sphere emerged, taking a variety of forms and undergoing a "structural transformation," corresponding to the historical and socio-economical context of British, French, and German developments in the 18th and early 19th centuries (Habermas, 1964, 1992). The bourgeois public sphere was distinguished from the feudal public sphere by the clear separation of the "public" and "private," as well as the separation of the civil society from the state and its belonging to the public sphere. The structure of the bourgeois public sphere was established by state power, market economies, and public discourse. Characterized by particular institutions such as periodicals, the press, and coffee houses, the public sphere "revolved around literature and art criticism." It was politicized and transformed into a political sphere within the public realm as a result of the French revolution (Habermas, 1992). Economic developments, such as capitalist modes of production and the long-distance trade in news and commodities, were also essential agents contributing to the evolution of the public sphere.

Habermas' concept of the public sphere is revisited in "Rethinking the Public Sphere" (1992) where revisionist historian Nancy Fraser criticizes the bourgeois conception of public sphere developed by Habermas and discusses some assumptions within his model, despite the fact that she describes it as "indispensable to critical social theory and democratic political practice." She proposes that Habermas' theory of the public sphere has to "undergo some critical interrogation and reconstruction" in order to be applicable to contemporary democracy. One of Fraser's main arguments is that the bourgeois public sphere was not accessible to everyone "despite the rhetoric of publicity

16

and accessibility" and it excluded certain groups, such as women, people of color, and homosexuals. (1992). Referring to recent revisionist historiography, and scholars such as Joan Landes, Mary Ryan, and Geoff Eley, Fraser points out that women and lower social strata of society were discriminated against by the hegemonic tendency of the male bourgeois public sphere. She further argues that promoting a single public sphere, as opposed to multiple public spheres, does not allow dissenting opinions to be heard since there were groups of individuals that were excluded from the male bourgeois sphere. Fraser suggests that members of excluded groups should form their own alternative public spheres, "subaltern counterpublics," where members of subordinated social groups can engage in counter discourses and create "oppositional interpretation of their identities, interests, and needs."

2.2 Decline of the public sphere and the crisis in journalism

In "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere" (1992), Habermas replies to Fraser and a number of other critics by re-examining his position and pointing out some problems with the historical basis of his conception, as well as reflecting on the structural transformation of the society that led to the disintegration of the public sphere. Habermas notes that the bourgeois public sphere eventually eroded due to socio-economic changes and society has been refeudalized by the interweaving of the public and private realm, because "political authorities assume certain functions in the sphere of commodity exchange and social labor" and "social powers now assume political functions." In other words, while the state power begins to dominate the private life once again, at the same time, private businesses begin to assume public power. Once separated, the civil society and state were merged again, rational-critical debate ceased to exit and civil society began to "demand" basic social rights. Therefore, the

17

political public sphere of the social welfare state is marked by "a peculiar weakening of its critical functions" (Habermas, 1964).

Habermas also reflects on the changing dynamics of the relationship between media and the public sphere, pointing out that "the infrastructure of the public sphere has changed along with the forms of organization, marketing, and consumption of a professionalized book production that operates on a larger scale and is oriented to new strata of readers." Habermas also highlights the change in the contents and roles of newspapers and periodical press. He states that the new forms of content delivered to the "culture-consuming public" lacked "literary and political debate." Media started fabricating the debates and turned the public sphere into an advertising arena, as opposed to covering the rational-critical debate of the public sphere (1992).

Indeed, newspapers and periodical press in the nineteenth century "served as an extension of the town meeting," creating a public forum where the public could debate various common issues (Lasch, 1990). According to Lasch, newspapers and periodicals "not only reported political controversies but participated in them, drawing in their readers as well" (1990). Nonetheless, journalism has been systematically deteriorating for many years and right now it is on the verge of a crisis, as newspapers are collapsing into bankruptcy and the news-media system is falling apart (McChesney and Nichols, 2010). Traditional journalism is facing this crisis because of a variety of reasons. McChesney and Nichols (2010) underline that while the Internet, which revolutionized communications, is a huge factor in the decline of the industry, it is definitely not the only reason why traditional journalism is "dying." Another factor is the economic recession/depression, which has led to a dramatic decrease in advertising revenues for

18

newspapers. However, traditional journalism had already begun to move into a crisis state during the past two decades and been systematically deteriorating long before the Internet revolution and the economic downturn, because of the "corporate subordination of journalistic values to economic ones" and "development of a form of market-driven journalism" (McChesney and Nichols, 2010; Davies, 2009).

Based on their propaganda model, which is introduced in Chapter 1, Herman and Chomsky (2011) associate this crisis to the free-market economics model of media, arguing that mainstream media works ideologically in favor of the "government and dominant private interests. " In other words, the propaganda model underlines that the corporate media system creates media content that shapes political discourse supporting the political and economic elite. Herman and Chomsky (2011) further characterize today's news media in the United States with the following key 'filters,' which can also be applied to other countries that have a similar basic economic structure:

> "(1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and
> profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms;
> (2)advertising as the primary income source of the mass
> media; (3) the reliance of the media on information
> provided by the government, business, and 'experts'
> funded and approved by these primary sources and agents
> of power; (4) 'flak' as a means of disciplining the media;
> and (5) 'anticommunism' as a national religion and
> control mechanism. "

Similarly, Bourdieu (1999) asserts that the political and journalistic fields collaborate and cooperate in order to "impose a way of seeing the world." According to Bourdieu, fields of cultural productions provide media consumers only with a narrow political view of the world (Bourdieu, 1999). He also criticizes the privatization and commercialization of news media, addressing the crisis in journalism and cultural production in general:

> "Even in the most independent sectors of journalism, ratings have become the journalist's Last Judgement… In editorial rooms, publishing houses, and similar venues, a 'rating mindset' reigns. Wherever you look, people are thinking in terms of market success. Only thirty years ago, and since the middle of the nineteenth century – since Baudelaire and Flaubert and others in avant-garde milieux of writers… immediate market success was suspect. It was taken as a sign of compromise with the times, with money… Today, on the contrary, the market is accepted more and more as a legitimate means of legitimation… Audience ratings impose the sales model on cultural products. But it is important to know that, historically, all of the cultural productions that I consider (and I'm not alone here, at least I hope not) the highest human products – math, poetry, literature, philosophy – were all produced against market imperatives" (Bourdieu, 1999).

The decline of traditional journalism and its domination by business values are "obstacles to the journalists' contribution to democracy" and therefore they pose very big problems for social welfare and the greater good (Guns, 2003). According to McChesney and Nichols (2010), investigative journalism was "first on the endangered species list" because it required relatively much higher financial costs. Besides, investigative reporting also "means incurring legal risks and the wrath of powerful interests." However, no matter how much time and patience it requires, investigative journalism is a crucially important mechanism that somehow controls "unaccountable leadership, secrecy, corruption, and hollowed-out democracy" (McChesney and Nichols, 2010). In other words, traditional journalism acts like a watchdog over the state and the criminal justice system (McChesney and Nichols, 2010).

Another big problem is that "major news stories are going untold" and "vast stretches of a metropolis are being neglected" (McChesney and Nichols, 2010). In other words, while traditional journalism used to produce content for every member of public sphere and "everyone had a stake in understanding the affairs of the day, right now, the lives of the jet-set or the middle class people seem to be more valuable and important than the lives of the working-class people." Unlike traditional journalism, which according to Habermas gave rise to the birth of the public sphere in the 18th century, today's deteriorated journalism cannot generate or promote public debate, let alone give a voice to concerns of every member of the public sphere. This is a very big problem for the viability of democracy (Herman and Chomsky, 2011) unless the underrepresented groups find a way to assemble in "subaltern counterpublics," as suggested by Fraser (1992).

21

Tabloidization of the news media

Instead of covering news stories that relate to the entire public, journalists are "forced to rely uncritically on copy produced by the news agencies and by the PR industry" (Petley, 2008). Davies (2008) dubs this phenomenon "churnalism" and says,

> "where once journalists were active gatherers of news, now they have generally become mere passive processors of unchecked, second-hand material, much of it contrived by PR to serve some political or commercial interest… An industry whose primary task is to filter out falsehood has become so vulnerable to manipulation that it is now involved in the mass production of falsehood, distortion, and propaganda."

Chomsky, who similarly argues that today's news media serves as propaganda for undemocratic forces (2011), describes the content produced by mainstream media as the "necessary illusions" (2011). The "necessary illusions" divert the public's attention from political awareness and the political process so that the political elite maintains the status quo. Infotainment content presented by traditional news media channels via tabloidization of news is a perfect example of the necessary illusions. There are two distinct fundamental types of infotainment, as (1) politicians may communicate with the public using formats that mirror existing popular culture (or alternatively through appearances within popular culture), while (2) similarly, the news media may present news in a more entertaining manner that is reflective of pop culture. Infotainment is one of the two main features of tabloidization, which is characterized by more visuals, more entertainment stories, less text, and fewer political and/or international news stories (Sparks, 2000; McLachlan and Golding, 2000).

22

The idea of infotainment was discussed by Walter Lippman who formulated the use of sensationalism in news coverage and political discourse all the way back in the 1920s (Ewen, 1998). Building on Lipmann's theories, Bernays argued that an essential part of the job of the PR professional is the creation of news. This brings back the problems pointed out by Chomsky, Davies, McChesney and Nichols, and the notion of "necessary illusions," although Bernays is on the opposite side of the pole, designating PR professionals as the "intelligent few" and "invisible wire pullers" who can and must control the public mind. According to Bernays, "the manipulation of news, the inflation of personality, and the genera ballyhoo by which politicians and commercial products, and social ideas are brought into the consciousness of the masses" as instruments that help organize public opinion (Ewen, 1998).

Some researchers harshly criticize the notion of infotainment as tabloidization results in the "dumbing down of political communication and media news values" (Lilleker, 2006). On the other hand, some critics assert that news increase the relevance and authenticity of politics when tabloidized or presented as infotainment. For example, Bennett (2005) argues that infotainment is not necessarily a bad thing, as "there is no reason why news cannot be both entertaining and usefully informative." Nevertheless, he asserts that the problem arises if "deceptive, distorted, or inconsistent factual claims may become folded into factually compromised but highly dramatic news reality frames" and when "pop culture begins to define politics and vice versa, the result may be a shrinking scope of sharable human emotion and comprehension." According to Bennett, it is also not clear whether "infotainment or the emerging reality genre can support the monumental issues of politics".

2.3 The virtual public spheres

While politicians and political figures utilize the Internet and digital media technologies in order to connect to citizens and to persuade voters, there are also many citizens who seek to engage in meaningful political discussions and interactions with fellow citizens in online discussion forums and blogs. In literature, web forums and the blogosphere are viewed as virtual agoras where democratic meetings take place. The online extension of the political arena has been described as "electronic Athens" (Mulgan and Adonis, 1994), "electronic commons" (Abramson et al., 1988; Blumler and Coleman, 2001), and "the virtual public sphere" (Sassi, 2001, Keane, 2001).

Despite the demise of the public sphere and its repercussions on democracy in the hands of mainstream media, Dahlgren (2005) hopes that "the Internet will somehow have a positive impact on democracy and help to alleviate its ills." The Internet has the potential to lead to the creation of modern public spheres. Because, web platforms, especially social media, allow members of the public sphere to communicate with the media and among themselves, interpret the news, and participate in meaningful discourse. Many people in today's society actually participate in such a virtual form of public sphere or counterpublics, by commenting on an article published on *the New York Times*, engaging in a political discussion on Reddit, or reading an alternative opinion blog.

Social media, in fact, provides "an expansion in terms of available communicative spaces for politics, as well as ideological breadth, compared to mass media", which allows "engaged citizens to play a role in the development of new democratic politics" (Dahlgren, 2005). Described by Coleman (2005) as "a form of networked expression" which is "fast becoming listening posts of modern democracy," blogs do not necessarily

24

talk about the same topics and issues covered by mass media channels but instead create new topics of discussion for citizens (Meraz, 2011). For example, Jost and Hiplot (2010) have shown that political news blogs do not only cover news, but also cover the methods the news are presented in mainstream media.

So, allowing ordinary citizens to create their own content and share it with a virtual community, social media allows individuals control over the news agenda. Media agenda has crucial importance because it is the "main form of communication with a mass audience, and so a key mode of influencing the public" (Lilleker, 2006). Competing voices in a pluralist democracy also compete for the domination of the media agenda, which can be set by editors, media moguls, politicians, lobbyists, or corporate powers who attempt to control the dominant ideas in the public sphere. Controlling the media agenda gives such competing institutions or individuals the power to shape the public opinion in their favor. Therefore, social media diminishes the established agenda-setting power of mainstream mass media while increasing the "power of partisan social influence within networked political environments" (Meraz, 2011).

However, literature still cites barriers that put constraint on the ability of social media channels to create virtual public spheres and counterpublics. The Internet and related web technologies are still not universally accessible to all social groups in a society and they have still not infiltrated many societies from all around the world, especially in developing countries (Lunat, 2008). Another barrier that may block social media is the patterns of global capitalism, which may force digital technologies to conform to the current political culture, as opposed to constructing a new one (Papacharissi, 2002).

25

2.4 Twitter revolutions

The virtual public spheres created by digital media technologies may or may not substitute for civil society and other 'real' public spheres. However, Social media is also described as a "liberation technology", which "enables citizens to report news, expose wrongdoing, express opinions, mobilize protest, monitor elections, scrutinize government, deepen participation, and expand the horizons of freedom" (Diamond, 2010). Social media has already played a seminal role in the organization and reporting of a wide variety of protest events all around the world, such as the political "spring" in the Middle East, the ad hoc electoral success of the small German Pirate Party in the 2011 Berlin state elections, and the global "Occupy Wall Street" protests against the global power of the financial markets. (Shirky, 2008; Li and Bernoff, 2008).

Social media platforms can give rise to uprisings and protest movements by changing the public's perception of the political mood and therefore eliminating the barrier of individual isolation that inhibits mass protests. Individual isolation is a key agent of propaganda as it allows mass manipulation. In isolation, individuals who do not agree with their government and its actions may think that there are no other like-minded people around and thus may feel that they are alone in their thinking. As a result, they may be unwilling and/or scared to share their political opinions openly, even if they are dissatisfied with a political regime. As like-minded individuals are unable to congregate and build strength in shared data and knowledge, societies are unable to resist a propagandized agenda set forth by governing bodies (Chomsky, 2002). However, social media platforms can encourage citizens to express their political opinions online. Consequently, this may bring together groups of people who feel equally dissatisfied with a political regime and "create an ever- increasing willingness to participate in

public protests" (Hanrath and Leggewie, 2012). Therefore, the "networked nature of social media" offsets the social fragmentation and isolation typically reinforced by authoritarian regimes as a mechanism that ensures political conformity by muffling political critiques. At the same time, it supports protest movements also by facilitating networking across physical and social distances and thus significantly decreasing the transaction costs related to the organization of a collective mass protest (Hanrath and Leggewie, 2012).

Social media bolsters political protests also by disseminating information about such events at the local, regional, and global levels. With the ubiquity of smartphones and web connections, political uprisings can be followed live via photos posted on Twitter or video clips shared on YouTube. Not only does this generate publicity for the demonstrations, but it also provides evidence in case of brutality and torture at the hands of security forces (Hanrath and Leggewie, 2012).

However, there are some who disagree. For example, Sreberny and Khiabany (2011) argue "technologies in themselves are insufficient substitutes for political strategy, goals and discourse," claiming that social media networks, such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, did not play a major role in the organization of the 2009–10 Iranian election protests. They assert that the social networks merely acted as "channels through which messages could be sent to international media organizations that had little access and firsthand information about what was happening in Iran" and thus "attracted messages and actions of international solidarity as well as mobilizing the Iranian diaspora" (Sreberny and Khiabany, 2011). Hanrath and Leggewie (2012) share the same view with regards to the Arab Spring movements in 2011. While acknowledging that social

27

media incited the initial protests by mobilizing crowds in Tahrir Square in central Cairo, they argue that the mass gathering of millions of citizens from all across Egypt was facilitated by structures such as trade union movements, the Muslim Brotherhood, and local groups of football hooligans.

Barriers against virtual spheres

It might be tempting to optimistically think that web and social media platforms will allow citizens to bypass strict government control and create counterpublics where they can thrive. However, it should be noted that authoritarian regimes are also using digital media technologies for their own mission and purposes. For example, there are some governments that subsidize entertainment sites and even facilitate the online dissemination of pirated entertainment material in order to keep the citizens compliant. However, governments can establish draconian regulation over all forms of communication technologies, or choose to directly target online activists, because providers of online services in many countries have to abide by strict control on technical systems, as well as web content (Lunat, 2008).

Some regimes to control access to information by requiring servers to install filtering software that enables content filtering. For example, China blocked words such as *Egypt*, *Tunisia*, and *Jasmine* after the events in the Middle East in 2011. Some other regimes block access to entire web sites or disable proxy servers to control web access. For example, Internet access was blocked in the entire privince of Xinjiang in China for 10 months, following an unrest that broke out there in 2009 (Lunat, 2008). There are many other ways technology can be used by authoritarian regimes that want to strictly control what the citizens can access on the web. For example, Iran restricts data

transmission speeds in order to prevent people from accessing video clips (Sreberny and Khiabany, 2011).

On the other hand, many states collect online data about their citizens in order to target dissident groups or specific individuals. Data collection by major web companies is a growing concern even in Western democracies. Citizens living under democratic regimes are concerned about the economic exploitation of their personal and private data. However, in extreme cases authoritarian regimes can use such information to target individuals and threaten their families/friends (Lunat, 2008).

Chapter 3 – Case Study: Turkey

The relationship between the press and the state in Turkey has been shaped by media policies since the launch of the first Turkish language newspaper, *Takvim-i Vekayi* [Calendar of Facts], which was launched as the Official Gazette of the Ottoman Empire in 1831. While their Western counterparts created public forums for debate and "served as an extension of the town meeting," Turkish newspapers and periodical press served as a "tool of political power" that circulated the ideology of the state and the ruling leaders. The transition from the monarchy regime to a multiparty democracy did not change the status quo either. After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, media channels kept being utilized as propaganda tools by elected governments or military coup regimes that wanted to secure their positions and strengthen their authority. Occasionally there are some attempts at establishing independent media outlets with independent agendas. However, since the late 19th century, dissident media channels and independent journalists who hold opposing beliefs have been hushed, suppressed, punished, and, in the worst case, assassinated in the name of state interests (Kurban and Sözeri, 2012).

3.1 Political communications

In Turkey, political communications is seen as an art of persuasion utilized by political parties, whose main fundamental goal is to possess political power. The concept of political communications began to be theorized and developed in Turkey in the 1950s, which was a pivotal decade in Turkish political history (Özkan, 2004). The period was marked by the inception of the multi-party period following the election of the Democratic Party government in 1950, as well as by the consequent emergence of political rivalry for the first time in the history of the Republic of Turkey.

30

While radio was the most effective and efficient communication channel for the political parties during the elections in 1950, newspapers were more influential during the elections that were held in the 1960s and the 1970s. The mission and vision adopted by the Turkish newspapers during those election periods aimed to 1) present information on the political parties and their candidates, 2) to communicate the opinions and views of the editorial board, and 3) to provide news coverage of mass meetings, rallies, and protests. Another factor that helped facilitate the development of political communications in Turkey during those years was the establishment of the Turkish Radio Television Corporation (Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu – TRT), which started nation-wide test emissions in television broadcasting in 1968 (Özkan, 2004).

At the same time, political communications established itself as an academic and theoretical field in the 1970s. This coincided with the increase in the number of communications faculties and programs, nationwide and the consequent increase in research conducted by students pursuing masters, doctorate, and post-doc degrees. In these early years of the discipline, academic research focused on the use of mass media channels and their influence on public opinion and voting behavior during national and local elections, the third category of political communication research defined by Norris (2004). On the other hand, academic research conducted over the last two decades has focused much more on the second category, which includes studies and analyses on contents of messages produced within a political communication context. Following the Amendment of the Turkish constitution in 1993 that enabled private broadcasting and the concomitant increase in the number of commercial television and radio channels, research was heavily centered on television broadcasting (Aziz, 2007).

31

The majority of the current academic research in political communications in Turkey concentrates on election campaigns, similar to the research conducted by Western academia, which was discussed in Chapter 1 (Özkan, 2004). In recent research on digital political communication in Turkey, there are a great number of studies that dissect and examine the websites of political parties. An extensive study conducted by Yalin and Arpaci (2007) presents a comparative content analysis of the websites of eight political parties all of which ran for the general elections in Turkey in July 2007. The study demonstrates that websites of political parties in Turkey are composed of four main content categories: 1) content that serves as a general presentation of the party, introducing its mission, vision, leader, body and structures, history, and logo; 2) content that elaborates on current party activities, such as speeches, reports, press releases, publications, documents, and news briefs; 3) content that sheds the light on elections, such as election statements, videos and photos from rallies, results/predicted results of the election, and promotional material; and 4) content that serves as a media review, demonstrating press clippings and coverage related to the party's activities.

Yalin and Arpaci (2007) also concludes that the websites place the biggest emphasis on the first category, in order to reach out to their voter base, persuade voters, and lure potential visitors to the site. The unbalanced and heavy emphasis on the presentation of the party indicates that the political parties view and utilize their website as a publicity tool. Another interesting point to highlight is the domination of the website by content on the party leader, which suggests that the party leaders in Turkey act as the embodiment of their party's mission, vision, and ideology. An alternative study on political party websites presents a comprehensive analysis in terms of design and functionality, as opposed to content. Ozüpek, Altunbas and Aktas (2007), who presents a comprehensive analysis of the websites of all parties who ran for the 2007 elections,

concluded that the Justice and Development Party's website had the most user-friendly interface and the easiest-to-navigate design. Akinci Vural and Bat (2007) have a similar study, examining party websites in terms of design, functionality, and content. Their comparative analysis elaborated on how much and how well these websites improved in the period between the 2002 elections and the 2007 elections.

Bakan (2007) puts forward a unique study that focused on the use of surveys on the websites of political parties and found that only 12 out of 41 parties used web surveys during the election campaign period in 2007. Surveys by all 12 parties featured questions about the website content and interface, in addition to questions about the upcoming elections. Bakan (2007) asserts that, unlike their Western counterparts, Turkish parties are not making sufficient use of surveys on their websites. In addition, he also points out that most of the websites had too many technical programming errors which must be fixed by qualified web developers in order to give the websites a more professional look and also to make sure the surveys present the correct results.

In the literature, there are also studies that focus on other aspects of digital political communications, such as Internet forums and blogs, which are today an integral part of the political communication strategies. Uluç, Yilmaz and Isikdag (2010) investigate the role of political blogs and forums in the 2007 presidential election in Turkey. Their work scrutinized content of 270 top-rated blogs and 15 discussion forums posted between April and September 2007, paying special attention to the interaction between political figures and citizens. The study concludes that blogs and Internet forums "have emerged as innovative modes of political communication in Turkey resulting in a broad interchange of diverse political opinions in the political arena," as they facilitate and foster political dialogue, political participation, and civic interaction.

Social media report card of Turkish politics

Literature on the use of social media platforms by political entities and figures in Turkey still remains weak. An interesting study conducted by Sancar (2013) analyzes the Twitter accounts of Abdullah Gül, the President of the Republic of Turkey, and political party leaders who have been MPs at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM): Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of the Justice an Development Party (AKP), Kemal Kilicdaroglu of the People's Republican Party (CHP), Devlet Bahçeli of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and Selehattin Demirtas of the Peace and Democracy Party. The study concluded that Twitter is effectively used only by two party leaders, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and Selahattin Demirtaş, who are both very interactive social media users. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received a low score despite his effective tweets, because he does not interact with other Twitter users and does not follow other accounts. The study highlighted that Abdullah Gül has the greatest number of followers despite the fact that he is not an effective user on Twitter. Devlet Bahçeli received the lowest score with respect to his presence on Twitter.

A study by Okmeydan (2013) adds to the findings of Sancar (2013), providing an extensive numerical analysis on how political parties and key political figures in Turkey use social media. According to his findings, 55% of Turkish MP's have personal accounts on Twitter listing their official names and titles. While only 5% of the Turkish MP's had personal Twitter accounts before they took up position as MP's, this number was increased to 23% in 2010 and to 48.5% by Spring 2011, with a rapid rate of growth especially during the four months leading to the elections in April.

34

Representation on social media:

In terms of comparison among different parties represented in the parliement, AK Party has the greatest number of MP's on Twitter with %56. CHP, MHP, and BDP follow AK Party with 30%, 8%, and 5% respectively. As for ratios within the parties themselves, 67% of the CHP MP's have personal Twitter accounts, followed by BDP with 55%, AK Party with 51%, and MHP with 47%. Lütfü Türkkan of MHP is the most active Turkish MP on Twitter, with 19,500 tweets, followed by Veysel Eroglu of AK Party with 15,900 tweets (Okmeydan, 2013). As for the number of followers, AK Party is the leader with a total of 6,878,849 followers. CHP has 2, 377,693 followers, MHP 773, 753, and BDP 741, 945 (Okmeydan, 2013).

Gender dynamics:

While male PM's have 39,043 followers on average, the female PM's in the Turkish Parliament have only 18,447 followers on average. The most popular female PM's are Emine Ulker Tarhan of CHP with 622,000 followers, Fatma Sahin of AK Parti with 618,000 followers, Safak Pavey of CHP with 550,000 followers, Nimet Bas of AK Parti with 131,000 followers, and Sebahat Tuncel of BDP with 124,000 followers (Okmeydan, 2013).

Re-tweet scores:

The most re-tweeted Turkish MP is Hakan Sükür of AK Parti, who used to be one of the most prominent and famous football players in Turkey, with 5790 re-tweets. In the number of re-tweets, Sükür is followed by Prime Minister Erdoğan with 2872 re-tweets, opposing political party leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu with 2285 re-tweets, Egemen Bagis with 1538 re-tweets, Samil Tayyar with 1446 re-tweets, Devlet Bahçeli with 1441 re-tweets, and Muharrem Ince with 1360 re-tweets (Okmeydan, 2013).

Abdullah Gül, 11<u>th</u> and current President of Turkey:

The President of Turkey, who uses social media actively, has 4.57 million followers on Twitter (as of May 2014). In contrast, he follows only two accounts: @trpresidency and @tccankaya, both of which are official accounts of the Turkish presidency. The president's Facebook page has 2.3 million followers. His posts on both platforms are mainly in Turkish and are about daily presidential activities and official visits. The President generally shares details about his own daily agenda, as opposed to talking about the current media agenda. In addition, he never replies or mentions other users on these platforms. Although the President does not interact with other accounts on social media, he has in the past tweeted a few important foreign policy statements in English, such as his tweet "Turkey's Membership Will Enrich the EU," dated 14 July 2010. Following the popular trends in digital media, he frequently shares multimedia posts, such as videos and photos. His Instagram page has 107,254 followers, while his YouTube page, which is frequently updated, only has 2,675 followers. President Gül also has a Flickr page which has not been updated since February 2012.

It is important to note that the President also has mobile phone applications developed for both the iPhone and Android markets. This indicates that his communications team is dedicated to keeping up with trends in digital technology. The applications are updated like a newspaper/magazine application with news briefs, photos, and other multimedia. In addition, the applications also allow users to have a virtual 360-degree tour of the Çankaya Köşkü (Çankaya Villa), the official residence of the President of the Republic of Turkey.

Turkish Presidency:

As mentioned above, the Turkish Presidency has two official Twitter accounts: @tccankaya, which is in Turkish, and @trpresidency, which tweets in English. The Turkish account of the Presidency has 1.49 million followers (as of May 2014), while the English counterpart only has 292,000 followers. However, it is important to highlight that the English account is followed unilaterally by 13 international political leaders. Both Presidency accounts post tweets and Internet links relating to the agenda of the President, official Presidency visits and meetings, as well as speeches and policy statements. Similar to the President's personal Twitter account, the official Presidency accounts do not re-tweet, mention, or reply back to Twitter users other than the President.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of Turkey:

Erdoğan, who set up a Twitter account on 23 August 2009, was the first Turkish political leader to join Twitter. He has over five million followers on Facebook and 4.2 million followers on Twitter. Similar to the President's Twitter feed, most of Erdoğan's tweets are in Turkish, except for a few English tweets regarding foreign policy, and his tweets mainly highlight his agenda, activities, visits, and meetings. However, unlike President Abdullah Gül, Erdoğan posts tweets regarding hot topics on the current media agenda, as well as personal tweets regarding his health. The Prime Minister also has a second account where he shares tweets in Arabic, underlining Turkey's special interest in the Middle East. Unlike the President, who follows two other accounts, the Prime Minister does not follow any accounts and thus is among the least connected political leaders in the world (Burston-Marseller, 2013).

<u>Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs:</u>

Minister Davutoğlu has three personal Twitter accounts: @Ahmet_Davutoglu in Turkish, A_Davutoglu_eng in English, and @A_Davutoglu_ar in Arabic. His accounts are very interactive at all, since 22 world foreign affairs ministers follow him unilaterally, while he only follows back the Swedish Foreign Minister @CarlBildt. Among his three accounts, his English account has the greatest number of followers. While his tweets are centered around foreign affairs and policies, Minister Davutoglu does not have a public presence in other social media platforms.

<u>Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, Leader of the Main Opposition:</u>

Kılıçdaroğlu who uses the handle @kilicdarogluk has two million followers on Twitter. Unlike the other political figures mentioned above, MP Kilicdaroglu also follows back 8,998 accounts. His Facebook page, which is frequently updated, also has two million followers. In addition to sharing his views about the media agenda, his posts mainly consist of messages that criticize the government. In fact, he creates his own agenda centered around his criticism of the current government, highlighting issues such as high unemployment rates and the high number of journalists in jail. He also posts content related to the mission and vision of the political party he is representing, frequently sharing content on topics such as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, values of the Turkish Republic, secularity, and the Turkish War of Independence. Like the Prime Minister Erdoğan, he also sends personal posts as well, such as sending "get-well soon" messages to friends and colleagues. Like President Gül, Kilicdaroglu also has a public Instagram account with 6,148 followers. On Instagram he posts very dynamic and moving images, taking full advantage of the medium.

Dr. Bahçeli, who is the leader of the second opposition party in the parliament, has a Twitter account with the handle @dbdevletbahceli and no other official social media accounts. He has nearly 1 million followers on Twitter, but does not follow anyone back. He tweets frequently on a daily basis, using a very poetical and figurative language. His tweets include critiques of the government, in addition to posts about current events and hot topics in the media agenda.

3.2 Press and media

From the inception of the Republic of Turkey until the 1980s, newspapers were owned primarily by journalist families. However, the media ownership structure completely changed during the economic liberalization of the 1980s as flocks of investors entered the media industry. The corporations who invested in the media sector also had substantial investments in other sectors, such as banks and financial markets, energy, telecommunications, construction sectors, and transportation. While the media holdings had lower turnover and profitability rates, these corporations were still interested in them because they aimed at using the media channels as advertising, marketing and public relations instruments (Çaglar and Çakar-Mengü, 2009). Thus, while family-owned newspapers were bought by rapidly expanding capital and replaced by companies prevalent in the Turkish economy, the periodicals were turned into businesses that operated with the principal purpose of profit-maximization, as opposed to conducting journalism and giving news (Oktay, 1987). For example, the first non-journalist media-owner was Aydın Doğan who bought *Milliyet* newspaper in 1979

and cancelled the syndicate membership of all newspaper employees shortly after (Çaglar and Çakar-Mengü, 2009).

When the state monopoly over broadcasting ended in the early 1990s, the media sector faced further changes with the exponential increase of private broadcasters (Kurban and Sözeri, 2012). The first private television channel of Turkey, Star TV, was set up in 1990 by the banker Uzan family, who owned İmarbank and Adabank, and Ahmet Özal, son of the then prime minister Turgut Özal.[3] The launch of private broadcasting also changed the economic structure of the media industry and generated an advantageous position for big corporations by making it more difficult for small and medium-sized businesses to penetrate the media market. As a result, by the end of the 1990s the media industry was dominated by only a few big corporations who kept increasing their financial power continuously through cross, horizontal, and vertical mergers. For example, the aforementioned media-owner Aydın Doğan bought the *Hürriyet* newspaper in 1994 and subsequently became the owner of *Milliyet*, *Hürriyet* and *Posta* newspapers, as well as a large number of magazines, Hürriyet News Agency, and national TV channel Kanal D. Similarly, the Uzan family entered the print-media market in 1999 with *Star Newspaper* (Çaglar and Çakar-Mengü, 2009).

There was a lack of legal barriers to prevent media-owner corporations from bidding for procurement project contracts for other sectors that they had investments in. So the corporations that owned businesses in multiple sectors including media started to bargain with the government and leveraged their media companies in order to win tenders and generate large amounts of profits in construction, transportation, and heavy industry sectors (Sönmez, 2003; Adaklı, 2006; Baydar, 2013). In other words,

---

[3] Star TV was first founded as Magic Box TV and then had its name changed throughout the 1990s.

40

media-owners were trading their agenda-setting power with the government and/or the military in exchange for tenders in other sectors that would bring huge sums of profits. In addition, while media corporations competed financially amongst each other, they "shared a common mindset which rested on protecting the 'state interest'" (Kurban and Sözeri, 2012).

There were further changes in the media industry following the economic crisis of 2000-2001, which was caused by the collapse of private banks. Some corporations that owned major broadcasting and press companies left the media industry when the banking branch of the corporation went bankrupt. As a result, these major media businesses were transferred to the state. In the end, a great portion of the newspapers, magazines, radios, and television stations in the market were bought by corporations that had no prior experience in the media industry but had close ties to the AK Party government (Kurban and Sözeri, 2012; Baydar, 2013). While the military hitherto maintained ideological control of the media agenda, the reconfiguration of the media ownership structure resulted in a shift in balance of power in favor of the AK Party government. The media became sharply polarized between pro-government and pro-military views and remained divided until after the presidential and general elections in 2007. Following the re-election of AK Party and the imprisonment of senior military leaders who were accused of plotting a coup against the government, the pro-military media channels changed their positions and began supporting AK Party (Kurban and Sözeri, 2012). At the same time, media-owners who did not want to abide by the agenda imposed by the government were threatened with tax-related procedures (Adakli, 2006; Sönmez, 2003). Therefore the government gained control over the media

41

agenda and there was an evident slide in publication and broadcasting policies (Kurban and Sözeri, 2012; Çaglar and Çakar-Mengü, 2009).

Moreover, the current Turkish prime minister, who is "known for his intolerance towards criticism and oppositional views," shows an overbearing attitude in his relationship with the media (Tunç, 2013). Tunç (2013) describes the prime minister's unconventional correspondence with the media below:

> "Erdoğan, for example, occasionally calls on media owners to watch out for their negative coverage of the government on the grounds that it distorts the AKP's image and that it serves to destabilize the economy. It is not unusual for the prime minister to publicly condemn prominent columnists or call on the people to boycott opponent newspapers. In some cases, the government demands from chief editors to remove information or investigative pieces from websites. In others, it calls on the owners to fire or put pressure on critical columnists or commentators."

3.3 Public sphere

As discussed in Chapter 2, the decline of the public sphere and the changes in the media in the West are attributed to a "broader shift in the political economy of the communications and information industries than to a transient loss of professional direction in one of its occupational spheres" (McLachlan and Golding, 2000). This is the case for Turkey as well, since "the current media industry in Turkey is so focused on

42

maximizing its profit that it does not even allow journalists to be members of a trade union" (Bek, 2004). According to Tekinalp (2008), the decline of the public sphere in Turkey originates from the following reasons: 1) Turkish media-owners use their media businesses as a means of advertisement for the other businesses they own; 2) they leverage media agenda and content to assert pressure on the political powers in making decisions that benefit their businesses; 3) they use their media channels in order to win competition against rival companies and corporations; and 4) they conceal mistakes and frauds committed by the state by distracting the masses with tabloidized programming.

News media in Turkey was depoliticized after the third military coup on 12 September 1980, which ended all political activities and organizations. As a result of the politically authoritarian post-coup d'état climate, the public sphere became very fragile, as the public was discouraged from having political discourse in private or public. The focus instead shifted from politics towards religion, popular culture, sports (especially football), and the sensationalist press. During this period, the number of lifestyle, food, entertainment, fashion, and home styling magazines increased, as well as the number of pornographic magazines. Since the 1990s, this apolitical trend has also been seen in the newspapers and on television as well, with an ever-increasing number of lifestyle and gossip reporters (Bek, 2004). In Bourdieu's terms, the fields of cultural production in Turkey provided the Turkish public with a very limited view on the local political scene since the beginning of the 1980s.

In his book on the tabloidization of the news on Turkish television channels, Ergül (2000) outlined the characteristics of tabloidization as seen on Turkish televisions as the following: 1) there is an increase in the number of less newsworthy "news;" 2) popular and/or tabloid elements in the news are placed at the forefront; and 3) the news content digresses from the real source to an increasing extent. In a similar study on tabloidization

of news media, Bek (2004) dissects the issue of tabloidization of news in the Turkish context by analyzing the news texts presented by four commercial televisions channels and one public service channel. According to her findings, content presented as news on Turkish television "has a tendency towards personalization and tabloidization of politics." The news presented on commercial television channels feature fewer stories on international news, pay little attention to politics and economy, and more attention to entertainment news stories. The most striking result of her study is that the news reporting adopted by the Turkish media channels is no the investigative type, as "it does not attempt to investigate why and how an event happened or what the social context or solutions are." On the other hand, celebrities are more newsworthy than political news, which underlines that the private sphere precedes over the public sphere.

Unlike Ergül who believes that the tabloidization of news media on television is primarily due to the nature of broadcast media, Bek argues that "tabloidization is not something that derives from the nature of the medium and things can be done differently even on television. Instead, tabloidization is the outcome of the characteristics of the current media industry." Indeed, tabloidization in Turkey originated following the structural changes in media-ownership that took place in the 1980s and early 1990s, which suggests that tabloid content was favored by media-owners because it generated larger profits and at the same time fostered a cordial relationship between media corporations and the military, which aimed at diverting public attention away from local politics. As Herman and Chomsky suggested with their propaganda model, the corporate media system in Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s favored the "government and dominant private interests" (2011). Juxtaposed with AK Parti's hegemony over mainstream media in the 2000s, the public sphere in Turkey gradually vanished.

44

The issues of freedom of speech and freedom of press

However, there are also other country-specific reasons that contribute to the demise of the mainstream media and the public sphere in Turkey, such as freedom of speech. One of the main principles of the public sphere is based on the critical, open, and rational debate of all public issues and interests. Therefore, the public sphere presupposed freedom of speech (Habermas, 1964). The constitution of the Republic of Turkey guarantees freedom of expression, as well as the right to express and/or disseminate personal opinions, and gives individuals protection from state intervention upon expression of their personal opinions with the following article:

> "VII. Freedom of thought and opinion
>
> ARTICLE 25- Everyone has the freedom of thought and opinion.
>
> No one shall be compelled to reveal his/her thoughts and opinions for any reason or purpose; nor shall anyone be blamed or accused because of his/her thoughts and opinions."

However, on the other side of the medal, there is a "framework where nationalism, statism and cultural conservatism emerge as the supreme values looming over individual rights" (Kurban and Sözeri, 2012). Because, as evidenced by the second paragraph of Article 26, the exercise of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed in Article 25 is subject to compliance with "national security," "public order," and "state secrets":

ARTICLE 26- Everyone has the right to express and disseminate his/her thoughts and opinions by speech, in writing or in pictures or through other media, individually or collectively. This freedom includes the liberty of receiving or imparting information or ideas without interference by official authorities. This provision shall not preclude subjecting transmission by radio, television, cinema, or similar means to a system of licensing.

(As amended on October 3, 2001; Act No. 4709) The exercise of these freedoms may be restricted for the purposes of national security, public order, public safety, safeguarding the basic characteristics of the Republic and the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation, preventing crime, punishing offenders, withholding information duly classified as a state secret, protecting the reputation or rights and private and family life of others, or protecting professional secrets as prescribed by law, or ensuring the proper functioning of the judiciary…"

Besides Article 26, which limits freedom of speech, there are a number of different articles in the constitution that impede freedom of speech and press freedom. For example, an individual who criticizes public institutions or the police can be prosecuted based on Article 125, which prohibits insulting the state and a representative of the state, Article 299, which prohibits defaming the president, and Article 300, which prohibits insulting symbols of the state. Similarly, an individual who criticizes the

armed forces can be imprisoned under Article 305, which prohibits undermining basic national interests and Article 318, which prohibits inciting abstention from compulsory military service (Tunç, 2013).

According to Commissioner of Human Rights of the Council of Europe Thomas Hammerberg, the constitution "enshrines state-centrist approach" (2011). Hammarberg also points out that "the letter and spirit of the present Turkish Constitution represent a major obstacle to the effective protection of pluralism and freedom of expression (2011). The lack of freedom of speech has been indicated as a major problem also by the EU Commission Turkey 2010 Progress Report, as well as by a variety of international human rights and freedom of expression organizations, such as Reporters Without Borders, International Press Institute (IPI), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and Amnesty International. There are 450 pending cases against Turkey in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in the field of freedom of expression. Ranking in 154th among 170 countries, Turkey is listed as one of the worst offenders in the World Press Freedom Index 2013, which is released by Reporters Without Borders (RSF). According to the report, Turkey is "currently the world's biggest prison for journalists, especially those who express views critical of the authorities on the Kurdish issue" (RSF, 2013).

3.4 Emerging online public spheres

As mainstream media in Turkey is unable to foster public spaces while dealing with restrictions on freedom of speech and pressure from the state, in the absence of a public sphere the young population in Turkey turn their attention to social media platforms in order to receive news and discuss public issues with peers. In December 2012, Turkish

47

war planes accidentally bombed Kurdish smugglers entering Turkey from Iraq, mistaking them for members of the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The mainstream media, including television and channels, press agencies, and newspaper websites, did not report the tragic event and remained silent for twelve hours. Social media platforms, mainly Twitter, were the only outlets disseminating news and information from the region. Mainstream media remained silent the same way in October 2011, following a devastating earthquake that struck Van, a city in eastern Turkey, with a magnitude of 7.2. However, hashtags about the disaster, such as #van and #deprem (the Turkish word for *earthquake*) were instantly trending topics on Twitter (Christie-Miller, 2012). In addition, many Turkish citizens are aware that the mainstream media in Turkey is not fulfilling its role. So there have been some people who posted tweets from inside courthouses during controversial political trials, while no journalist dared to report about what went on in the courtrooms (Tunç, 2013).

Social media platforms also played a very important role in the organization and the communication of the Turkish protests in May 2013, which started over controversies over the Gezi Park in Istanbul, which is located near the city center. Originally organized as a reaction to the government plans to demolish the green space and commercialize it by building a shopping mall, the protests were eventually transformed into a series of broad-based demonstrations that expressed the collective discontent with the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP). According to Social Media and Political Participation at New York University (2013), "the social media response to and the role of social media in the protests has been phenomenal". During the demonstrations, social media platforms were used to organize for the protests, spread information to the public, and

48

attract international attention (SMaPP, 2013) On the other hand, the content shared on the social media platforms, such as footage of the events and humorous graffitis, inspired many citizens to go out on the street and join the protesters.

About 90% of all tweets about the protests came from within Turkey, while in contrast only about 30% of the tweets during the Egyptian revolution came from within Egypt and the rest came from all around the world as a reaction to the events. This suggests that social media platforms were mainly utilized to disseminate information and news from the ground about the demonstrations. SMaPP (2013) points out that this ratio would have been even higher, had the 3G network in the area not been shut down during the protests and the protesters not have to rely on WiFi access provided by local shops. The high number of tweets partly resulted from a reaction against the silence of the press and lack of media coverage about the events despite the death toll and hundreds of wounded citizens (SMaPP, 2013; Tunç, 2013).

Law No. 5651 of 2007, a.k.a. the Internet Law

Despite having such a vibrant community of Internet users, both among the ordinary citizens and senior politicians, Turkey places many restrictions on the Internet and social media. The Internet content providers, domain providers, access providers, and collective usage providers are regulated by the Turkish Law No. 5651 of 2007, which is commonly known as the Internet Law. It is described by the authorities as a law that is "fighting against and auditing Internet crimes committed through online publications" (Official Gazette, 2007).

The law was initially established due to concerns for some YouTube videos that feature insulting and disrespectful content regarding the Turkish state and the founder of the

49

Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as well as due to concerns for the availability of child porn on the Internet and web pages that share information about suicide and illegal substances. Article 8 of this law authorizes blocking access to certain websites when there is 'adequate suspicion' that any of the following eight offences enumerated in Article 8 are committed: encouraging suicide, sexual exploitation or abuse of children, facilitating the use of narcotics, supply of unhealthy substances, prostitution, facilitating gambling activities, online betting, and crimes against defined in the Law on Crimes Committed against Atatürk (no. 5816). According to the Internet Law, access can be blocked by a judge, a court, or by the Telecommunications Communication Presidency (TIB), which is responsible for executing the orders issued by the courts.

The initial YouTube ban, that initiated the Internet Law, lasted more than two years and it concerned an offensive video posted by Greek users in 2007, which dubbed Atatürk and all Turks as homosexuals. Due to a barrage of complaints to YouTube, the video was removed from YouTube in Turkey. However, Internet users outside Turkey could still watch the video as YouTube did not want to apply the Turkish law outside the country. As a result, all access to the site was banned in May 2008. In June 2010, Internet service providers were asked to block new YouTube-linked IP addresses. But the updated ban became tremendously problematic because it also blocked access to certain Google services that shared the YouTube-linked IP addresses, such as Google Analytics, Google AdWords, and Google Docs. The ban on YouTube was eventually lifted in October 2010. About a month later, a new ban on YouTube was placed on 2 November 2010. The court order was the result of a complaint filed by Deniz Baykal, former head of Republican People's Party (CHP), who had been forced to resign after a video scandal allegedly

showing in an adulterous relationship. YouTube agreed to remove the video when contacted by the Telecommunications Communication Presidency.

In addition to YouTube, there are many other websites that are blocked by the TIB. The official statistics on Internet blockings are not disclosed to the public (Akdeniz, 2011). According to Engelliweb.com, a web source that displays track of blocked websites, there were over 40,000 websites that are blocked in Turkey as of May 2014. In addition, as of May 2014, 89.4% of the ban orders have been issued by TIB, 5% by a court, 3.3% by a prosecutor (Erişime Engellenen Websiteleri [Access Blocked Websites], 2011). Among the blocked sites are news websites reporting on sensitive political issues such as the Kurdish question, LGBT websites and websites on sexuality (Akdeniz, 2011). However, International experts point out that "even if it is legitimate to *remove* some content, such as child pornography and hate speech inciting to violence from the internet, the *blocking* of internet sites often results in the blocking of content which has nothing to do with child pornography or hate speech inciting to violence" (Hammarberg, 2011a).

The TIB also announced a plan to prohibit the search for and the use in domain names of a total number of 138 English and Turkish words, including *beat*, *çıplak* (naked), *escort*, *free*, *gay* and its Turkish pronunciation *gey*, *home-made*, *hot*, *itiraf* (confession), *liseli* (high school student), *nefes* (breath), *nubile*, *teen*, and *yasak* (forbidden). The list also included some English words due to their meanings in Turkish, such as *pic* (bastard in Turkish), which is short for picture, and the past tense of the verb *get* (*got* means butt in Turkish). According to the TIB, the ban was planned for protection of children from harmful content on the Internet. However, thousands of innocent websites came to face the risk of closure. This announcement lead to a wild uproar and country-wide protests,

as well as and anti-censorship campaigns. The Information Technologies and communication Authority eventually withdrew the suggestion (Akdeniz, 2010).

In addition to blocking websites and filtering certain content on the Internet, government institutions in Turkey also put restriction on personal statements made via social media platforms, applying the strict constitution rules discussed in Chapter 3 on social media posts. In April 2013, internationally renowned Turkish pianist, and outspoken opponent of the ruling party AKP, Fazil Say was convicted of blasphemy with a ten-month prison sentence for "insulting religious beliefs held by a section of the society" under Articles 216 and 218. Say had allegedly offended some Muslim believers with some tweets he shared on Twitter. One of the tweets was in fact a quote by the 11th century Persian poet Omar Khayyám, "You say rivers of wine flow in heaven, is heaven a tavern to you? You say two *huris* [companions] await each believer there, is heaven a brothel to you?" Another one of his tweets had read, "I am not sure if you have noticed, but where there's a louse, a non-entity, a lowlife, a thief or a fool, they are all Islamists. Is this a paradox?"

In order to press charges, the government even coerces website, forum, and network owners to provide the IP addresses of anonymous users. For example, the Ekşi Sözlük owner was coerced to give the police the IP addresses of the social network users to after charges were pressed against some anonymous users in 2011 by a member of the same group that made the complaint about pianist Fazil Say (Egrikavruk, 2011).

Ekşi Sözlük is a social media network in the form of a satirical, web-based dictionary, where anonymous users submit unconventional dictionary entries on current and

52

historical events, notable quotations, works of high art and popular art, philosophical topics, and political issues. As users can up-vote and down-vote other entries and share their personal opinions and views with each other, the web site is a perfect example of a virtual counterpublic. However, the owner of the website and 40 users were charged with religious defamation under Article 216 and Article 218, due to the entries they shared on the network. Moreover, Ekşi Sözlük was actually charged with 200 civil suits and 150 criminal complaints in the past few years as a result of the user entries on the network. Following the charges, Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ posted the following statement regarding the Ekşi Sözlük case on Twitter (English Pen, 2013):

> "Those who insult our Prophet are Satan's 21st Century followers, the new Abu Jahls [Abu Jahl was a bitter enemy of Muhammad and early Islam]. Even if all the devils and their followers unite, they will be unable to extinguish the divine light of Allah. Allah will perfect his light; he will protect the Quran and his Prophet… insulting our Prophet is an offence under the scope of 216/3 of the Turkish Penal Code. It is the legal duty of public prosecutors to start an investigation into this matter."

53

Conclusion

As Twitter was banned in Turkey in March 2014, the government faced a widespread outrage from the Turkish public and harsh criticism from the international community. In fact, President Abdullah Gül defied the ban of Twitter on Twitter, tweeting "One cannot approve the complete closure of social media platforms." And he continued, "It is not possible technically to completely block access to platforms like Twitter… I hope this implementation does not last long" (Jones, 2014).

Turkey clearly seems to be torn, facing a dilemma. There is a large and vigorous community of Internet and digital/mobile technology users that keeps growing in number every year. But at the same time, the state and the judiciary are "far from understanding the political and social implications of social media" (Tunç, 2013).

Social media can be used as a powerful political tool, because it helps politicians manage public relations, improve their brand image, and connect to voters. Therefore, many politicians from all around the world, including those in Turkey like President Abdullah Gül, are active users on social media networks. On the other hand, citizens can utilize social media tools in order to express and share their opinions, and to comment on other fellow citizens' opinions, as well as on statements made by political figures. Thus the developments in information and communication technologies gives us hope in terms of the public sphere, as web and social media networks can take the role of traditional media in the 19th century and early 20th century, hosting virtual public spheres where civic society can come together to converse about public issues.

54

Based on the historical context of British, French, and German developments in the 18th and early 19th centuries, Habermas' bourgeois public sphere and the eventually vanished due to socio-economic changes in the society and the blurring distinction between the public and private realm. The transformation is seen most significantly within the press and traditional news media, which once used to be at the core of the public sphere as the backbone of democracy. While in the past the political public sphere embodied an analytical voice that criticized government action and inhibited domination by the powerful state, today's public sphere is like a publicity tool easily manipulated by politicians, PR practitioners, and corporate forces. As traditional news media has been replaced by infotainment and tabloids, mass media fails to point problems in the society, survey socio-political and socio-economic issues, and provide a valid platform for political debate. Most importantly, mass media fails to fulfil its role as the watchdog that uncovers errors and misdeeds done by the political powers. In other words, there is now a lack of a control mechanism regarding the power and justice of the state.

While democracy has started facing obstacles and limitations due to the erosion of the public sphere in the West, the notion of the public sphere in Turkey was never as solid to begin with as its Western counterparts, because the Turkish society had been under the rule of an absolute monarchy for hundreds of years until the 1920s. And the public sphere continued to fade further in the 20th century because media-owners in Turkey aimed profit-maximization as opposed to real journalism just as media-owners in the West did. Erosion of the public sphere in Turkey gained momentum initially in the 1980s, following the military coup in September 1980 and the liberal economy policy that was established during this decade. Throughout the 1980s, media-ownership was

transferred from small family businesses to the hands of key players in the Turkish economy. These big companies were interested in the media businesses despite the low profit margins in the industry, because they viewed media as a tool that could be used to expand in other business branches and industries. Consequently, media channels began to serve as public relations and advertising agencies of the concerned companies. These companies evolved into massive industrial complexes in the 1990s, comprising different enterprises in a variety of industries and sectors. However, the media enterprises owned by these corporations were still primarily used in order to generate profits in the other industries in which the media-owner corporations invested. Media channels were leveraged by media-owners who traded news content and agenda with the political powers in order to generate profits. The media sector was thus driven by corporate interests and clientelist relations as opposed to journalistic principles of true and critical news coverage. Yet, Turkey experienced the total collapse of the public sphere following the latest wave of structural changes in the media industry, which took place after the economic crisis in early 2000s and resulted in bankruptcy of major media-owner corporations. While the government seized complete control over media agenda following the crisis, corporations in the industry continued to prioritize profit-maximization and therefore avoided adversarial relationships with the political powers. Strict legal constraints, repressive laws on freedom of speech, and tight control of the media agenda by the government, only exacerbated the situation. Under the existence of an authoritarian legal framework which punishes critical opinions and press coverage of political issues, the public sphere in Turkey disappeared.

However, in the past few years, web and social media platforms have allowed Turkish citizens to bypass the constraints discussed above by giving them a voice, as well as the

ability to share information and congregate quickly. In the absence of coverage by traditional news media, individual citizens have started communicating and exchanging news and information with each other about political issues and their discontent with the state. In the Gezi Park protests we saw that web and social media were used by ordinary citizens in order to disseminate information, coordinate and mobilize protesters, organize the movement, and attract support of the international community. As in the Western world, the Internet and social media in Turkey are fulfilling the role traditional media used to play in a democratic society, providing citizens with platforms where they can discuss and rationally debate public matters.

Turkey has undergone an electrifying transformation due to social media. Yet, it is still not possible to say that Turkey is on a path towards sustainable public spheres and true democracy, which is delineated by Chomsky as a democracy where the state is not run by a select few. In democratic states where citizens have complete and legitimate freedom of speech, the Internet and digital media technologies can and do prevent the demise of the public sphere. Because, in such environments the virtual public spheres have enough strength to serve as a check on the power and actions of the state, just as traditional media and investigative journalism used to do in the past. But when there is no freedom of speech, such as in the case of Turkey, virtual public spheres can provide a solution to the issue of the public sphere only in the short-term. Because constitutional ordeals that construct the framework around the suppression of free speech will act in favor of the political powers and set out to exterminate the virtual public spheres in order to stop political discourse. In fact, in most cases developments in web technologies are utilized in order to suppress the virtual public spheres, either by cutting web connection, filtering web content, or shutting down entire social media platforms

like YouTube and Twitter. Without freedom of speech and thought, the virtual public spheres are not strong enough supervise the and/or the political powers, let alone withstand against them, not matter how dynamic, productive, and rich the virtual spheres become. So, social media in Turkey is not powerful enough to facilitate and also sustain alternative public spheres for citizens. This is demonstrated by the fact that the political rulers can even shut down entire social media networks like YouTube and Twitter in order to control the agenda of the public sphere.

A long-term solution to the problem of the public sphere in Turkey demands a change in mindsets and additional institutional reforms. For example, traditional news media can regenerate public spheres if media-owners aim at achieving high-standards of journalism and stop prioritizing profits over everything else. The political elites also need to stop viewing themselves as omnipotent monarchs who can and should control the public opinion. Political leaders should not view mass media as their personal tools which they can freely play with in order to maintain their political power. On the other hand, social media in Turkey can also fulfill the role of the traditional news media, if citizens are allowed to express their individual views on the Internet without the risk of being penalized for sharing content that does not appease the political powers and the state. This would require changes in the constitution, particularly in amendments that restrict the freedom of press, speech, and thought. However, the constitutional changes would also need to be accompanied by increased tolerance towards criticism and openness to a multitude of opinions at every level of the society; as utopic as it sounds, only then web and digital media technologies can be used in a meaningful way that promotes political participation and fosters democracy.

Bibliography:

Arsenault, A. (2009). Public Diplomacy 2.0. *Toward a New Public Diplomacy.* Seib. (Ed.), New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Arsan, E. (2011). Gazeteci Gözüyle Sansür ve Otosansür [Censorship Self-censorship from the Journalist's Perspective], *Cogito*, *67*(3), 56-73.

Bennett, W. L. (1990). *Toward a Theory of Press – State Relations in the United States.* *Journal of Communication*, *40*(2), 103-127.

Borovali, A. F. (2011). Deciphering the Code of (Recent) Turkish Foreign Policy: The 2011 Libyan Episode as Case Study. *Leaders and New Trends in Political Communication*. International Conference in Rome, Italy, May 20-21, 2011.

Bucy, E. P. and Holbert, R. L. (Eds.). (2011). *Sourcebook for Political Communication Research: Methods, Measures, and Analytical Techniques*. New York: Routledge.

Chadwick, A. and Howard, P. N. (Eds.). (2010). *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*. Taylor and Francis.

Coleman, S., Morrison, D. E., and Yates, S. (2011). The Mediation of Political Disconnection. In K. Brants and K. Voltmer (Eds.), *Political Communication in Postmodern Democracy: Challenging the Primacy of Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Comm, J. (2010). *Twitter Power 2.0*. New Jersey: Wiley.

Corcoran, E. P. (1990). Language and Politics. In L. D. Swanson and D. Nimmo (Eds.), *New Directions in Political Communication*. California: Sage Publications.

Cull, N. J. (2008). Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *616*(1), 31-54.

Değirmenci, N. (2011). Berlusconization Process of Politics in Turkey: Political Parties, Individual Politicians and Media. *Leaders and New Trends in Political Communication*. International Conference in Rome, Italy, May 20-21, 2011.

Eickelman D. F. and Anderson, J. W. (2003). *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*. Indiana University Press.

Elmas, E. and Kurban, D. (2011). *Communicating Democracy-Democratizing Communication: Media in Turkey: Legislation, Policies, Actors*. Istanbul: TESEV Publications.

Emmons, A. J. (2004). Technology, Development, and Democracy: International Conflict and Cooperation in the Information Age (SUNY Series in Global Politics). In F. Esser and B. Pfetsch (Eds.), *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges*. Cambridge University Press.

Garnham, N. (2000). The Role of the Public Sphere in the Information Society. In C. T. Marsden (Ed.), *Regulating the Global Information Society*, London: Routledge.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2006). Bourdieu, the media and cultural production. *Media Culture Society*, *29*(2), 105-134.

Howard, P. N. (2010). *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam*. Oxford University Press.

Iyengar, S. and Reeves, R. (1997). *Do the Media Govern: Politicians, Voters, and Reporters in America*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kanra, B. (2009). *Islam, Democracy and Dialogue in Turkey: Deliberating in Divided Societies*. Ashgate.

Koopmans, R. and Statham, P. (Eds.) (2010). *The Making Of A European Public Sphere: Media Discourse and Political Contention.* Cambridge University Press.

Krämer, H. (2000). *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States*. Brookings Institution Press.

Lee Kaid, L. and Holtz-Bacha, C. (Eds.) (2008). *Encyclopedia of Political Communication*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Lilleker, D. G. (2006). *Key Concepts in Political Communication*. London: Sage.

Lim, M. (2002). Cyber-civic Space in Indonesia, International Development Planning Review, *24*(4), 383-400.

McGuigan, J. (2012). *Culture and the Public Sphere*. Routledge.

Negrine, R. and Lilleker, D. G. (2002). The Professionalisation of Political Communication: Continuities and Change in Media Practices. *European Journal of Communication*, *17*(3), 305-323.

Nimmo, D. and Swanson, L. D. (1990). The Field of Political Communication: Beyond the Voter Persuasion Paradigm. In D. Nimmo and L. D. Swanson (Eds.) *New Directions in Political Communication.* California: Sage Publications.

Norris, P. (1997). *Politics and the Press: The News Media and Their Influences*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Norris, P. (2001). Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty and the Internet Worldwide. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Norton, W.W. and Iyengar, S. (2011). *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide (Second Edition).* W. W. Norton and Company.

Oktay, M. (2002). *Politikada Halkla İlişkiler* [Public Relations in Politics]. Istanbul: Derin Yayınları.

Patterson, T. E. (2007). *Young People and News*. Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy.

Rhodes, R. (Ed). (1999). *Visions of technology: A century of vital debate about machines, systems and the human world.* New York: Touchstone.

Salter, L. (2004). Structure and Forms of Use: A Contribution to Understanding the 'Effects' of the Internet on Deliberative Democracy, *Information, Communication and Society*, *7*(2), 185-206.

Scammell, M. (1996). *Designer Politics*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan.

Semetko, H. A. and Scammell, M. (Eds.) (2012). *The SAGE Handbook of Political Communication*. SAGE.

Pursell, C. W. (1995). *The Machine in America: a Social History of Technology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lubar, S. (1993). *Infoculture: The Smithsonian Book of Information Age Inventions*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Sözeri, C. and Güney, Z. (2011). *The Political Economy of the Media in Turkey: A Sectoral Analysis*. Istanbul: TESEV Publications.

Tan, W. and Iyengar, S. (Eds.) (2012). *Political Communication in China: Convergence or Divergence Between the Media and Political System?* Routledge.

Whitman, L., Froncek, T., and Helsinki Watch (Organization: U.S.) (1989). *Paying the Price: Freedom of Expression in Turkey*. Human Rights Watch.

Wright, S. and Street, J. (2007). Democracy, Deliberation and Design: The Case of Online Discussion forums. *New Media Society*, *9*(5), 849-869.

References:

Abramson, J., Arterton, F. C. and Orren, G. R. (1988). *The Electronic Commonwealth: the Impact of New Media Technologies on Democratic Politics*. New York: Basic Books.

Adakli, G. (2006), *Türkiye'de Medya Endüstrisi / Neoliberalizm Çağında Mülkiyet ve Kontrol İlişkileri* [The Media Industry in Turkey / Ownership and Control Relationship in the Age of Neo-liberalism]. Ankara: Utopya Publishing House.

Adonis, A. and Mulgan, G. (1994). Back to Greece: The Scope for Direct Democracy. *Demos Quarterly*, 3, 2-9.

Akdeniz, Y. (2011). *OSCE Report on Freedom of Expression on the Internet: Study of legal provisions and practices related to freedom of expression, the free flow of information and media pluralism on the Internet in OSCE participating states*. Retrieved from http://www.osce.org/fom/80723.

(2010). *Report of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on Turkey and Internet Censorship*. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/speak_up/osce_freedom_of_the_media_on_turkey_and_internet_censorship.pdf.

Akinci V., Beril, Z. and Bat, M. (2007). Siyasal İletişim Sürecinde Yeni Teknolojiler: Siyasi Partilerin Web Sitelerine Yönelik Bir Analiz [New Technologies in the Political Communications Process: An Analysis of Web Sites of Political Parties]. *Media and Politics*. International Symposium, organized by Ege University, Izmir, Turkey, November 15, 2007.

Aziz, A. (2007). *Siyasal İletişim* [Political Communications]. Istanbul: Nobel Yayıncılık.

Bakan, Ö. (2007). Siyasi Partilerin Web Sitelerinde Anket Kullanimi [Use of Surveys in Political Party Web Sites]. *Media and Politics*. International Symposium, organized by Ege University, Izmir, Türkiye, November 15, 2007.

Banko, M. and Babaoğlan, A. R. (2013). *Gezi Parkı Sürecine Dijital Vatandaş'ın Etkisi* [Influence of the Digital Citizen during the Gezi Park Process]. Retrieved from http://www.geziparkikitabi.com/.

Barber, B. R. (1998). Three scenarios for the Future of Technology and Strong Democracy. *Political Science Quarterly*, *113*(4), 573-589.

Baydar, Y. (2013, July 19). In Turkey, media bosses are undermining democracy. *New York Times Sunday Review*, Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/21/opinion/sunday/in-turkey-media-bosses-are-undermining-democracy.html?_r=1&.

Bek, M. G. (2004). Research Note: Tabloidization of news media: An analysis of television news in Turkey. *European Journal of Communication*, *19*(3), 371-86.

Bennett, W. L. (2005). News as Reality TV: Election coverage and the democratization of truth. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *22*(2), 171-177.

Bernays, E. (1928). *Propaganda*. Routledge.

Bloch, Y. and Lehman-Wilzig, S. (2002). An Exploratory Model of Media–Government Relations. In E. Gilboa *Media and Conflict*. New York: Transnational.

Blumler, J.G. and Coleman, S. (2001). *Realising Democracy Online: A civic commons in cyberspace*. London: Institute of Public Policy Research.

Bourdieu, P. (1999). *On television*. The New Press.

Bourdieu, P. and Nice, R. (1980). The production of belief: contribution to an economy of symbolic goods. *Media Culture and Society*, 2, 225-254.

Burston-Marseller. (2013). *Twiplomacy: Heads of state and government on Twitter*. Retrieved from http://twiplomacy.com/twiplomacy-study-2013/.

Çaglar, S. and Çakar-Mengü, S. (2009) Media Groups and Their Market Shares in Turkey during Globalization. *Revista de Economía Política de las Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación*, *11*(2), 111-134.

Christie-Miller, A. (2012, 23 July). Turks turn to Twitter as Erdoğan Muzzles Traditional Media. *The Christian Science Monitor*.

Coleman, S. (2005). Blogs and the New Politics of Listening. *The Political Quarterly*, *76*(2), 272-280.

Coyne, R. (1999). *Technoromanticism: Digital Narrative, Holism, and the Romance of the Real*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Culbert, D. (1976). Presidential Images. *The Wilson Quarterly*, *7*(1), 158-167.

Dahlgren, P. (2005). The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation. *Political Communication*, *22*(2), 147-162.

Davies, N. (2009). *Flat Earth News: Falsehood, distortion, and propaganda in the global media*. London: Vintage.

(2008). Our media have become mass producers of distortion. *The Guardian*, Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/feb/04/comment. pressandpublishing.

Denton, R.E. and Woodward, G.C. (1998). *Political Communication in America*. New York: Praeger.

Diamond, Larry. (2010). Liberation Technology. *Journal of Democracy*, *21*(3), 69-83.

Druckman J. N. (2004) Political Preference Formation: competition, deliberation, and the (ir)relevance of framing effects. *American Political Science Revolution*, *98*(4), 671-86.

Egrikavruk, I. (2011, June 26). 'Ekşi-users' raid sour web freedom. *Hürriyet Daily News*. Retrieved from http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid= 438&n=8216eksi-users8217-raids-sour-web-freedom-2011-06-26.

Elter, A. (2012). German Parties and Web 2.0 – A Way to Deliberative Politics. *International Conference on Communication, Media, Technology and Design*, Istanbul, Turkey, May 9-11, 2012.

English Pen Staff. (2013, August 23). Turkey: Ekşi Sözlük owner and contributors charged with religious defamation. *English Pen*. Retrieved from http://www.englishpen.org/turkey-eksi-sozluk-owner-and-contributors-charged-with-religious-defamation/.

65

Ergül, H. (2000). *Televizyonda Haberin Magazinlesmesi* [Tabloidization of News on Television]. Istanbul: Iletisim Publishing.

Erişime Engellenen Websiteleri [Blocked Websites]. (2014). Retrieved from http://engelliweb.com.

Ewen, S. (1998). *PR! - A Social History of Spin*. Basic Books.

Fraser, N. (1992). Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. In C. Calhoun (Ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Galtung, J., and Ruge, M. H.. (1965). The Structure of Foreign News. *Journal of Peace Research*, *2*(1), 64-91.

Gans, H. J. (2003). *Democracy and the News*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Graber, D. A. (2010). *Mass Media and American Politics*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Habermas, J. (1974). The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964) transl. by Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox. *New German Critique*, 3, 49-50.

(1993). Further Reflections on the Public Sphere. In C. Calhoun (Ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Hammarberg, T. (2011). *Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom in Turkey*, report by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe following his visit to Turkey from 27 to 29 April 2011. Retrieved from https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1814085&Site=COE&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864.

Hanrath, J. and Leggewie, C. (2012). Revolution 2.0? The Role of Digital Media in Political Mobilisation and Protest. *Global Trends 2013: Peace – Development – Environment*. Bonn: Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden/Development and Peace Foundation.

Hanson, G., Haridakis, P. M., Cunningham, A. W., Sharma, R. and Ponder, J. D. (2010). The 2008 Presidential Campaign: Political cynicism in the age of Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube. *Mass Communication and Society*, *13*(5), 584-607.

Harrop, M. (1990). Political Marketing. *Parliamentary Affairs*, *43*(3), 277-291.

Herman, E. S. and Chomsky, N. (2011). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Random House.

Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA). (2014). *Electronic Communications Market in Turkey: Market Data (2013 Q4)*. Ankara, Turkey.

Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA). (2013). *Information And Communication Technology (ICT) Usage Survey on Households and Individuals, 2013*. Ankara, Turkey.

Institute of Politics, Harvard University. (2011). *Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes Toward Politics and Public Service: 19th Edition*. Cambridge.

Jones, B. (2014, March 24). Turkey's Twitter Ban Condemned – even by nation's own president. *CNN*. Retrieved from http://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/21/world/europe/turkey-twitter-ban-condemned/.

Johnson, T. J. and Perlmutter, D. D. (2010) Introduction: The Facebook Election. *Mass Communication and Society*, 13, 5.

Kavanagh, D. (1995). *Election Campaigning: the New Marketing of Politics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

(1996). New Campaign Communications: Consequences for Political Parties. *Harvard International Journal of Press and Politics*, *1*(3), 60-76.

Keane, M. A. (2001). Broadcasting Policy, Creative Compliance and the Myth of Civil Society in China. *Media, Culture and Society*, *23*(6), 783-798.

Kurban, D. and Sözeri, C. (2012). *Caught in the Wheels of Power: The Political, Legal and Economic Constraints on Independent Media and Freedom of the Press in Turkey*. Istanbul: TESEV Publications.

Kushin, M. J. and Yamamoto, M. (2010). Did Social Media Really Matter? College Students' Use of Online Media and Political Decision Making in the 2008 Election. *Mass Communication and Society*, *13*(5), 608-630.

67

Lasch, C. (1990, September). The lost art of political argument. *Harper's Magazine*, 1-5.

Letsch, C. (2013, April 16). Turkish composer and pianist convicted of blasphemy on Twitter. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/15/turkish-composer-fazil-say-convicted-blasphemhy.

Li, C. and Bernoff, J. (2008). *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*. Harvard Business Press.

Lilleker, D. G. (2006). *Key Concepts in Political Communication*. London: Sage.

Lippmann, W. (1932). *Public Opinion*. Transaction Publishers.

Lunat, Z. (2008). The Internet and The Public Sphere: Evidence from Civil Society in Developing Countries. *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries*, *35*(3), 1-12.

McChesney, R. W., and Nichols, J. (2010). *The death and life of American journalism: The media revolution that will begin the world again*. Philadelphia, PA: Nation Books.

McLachlan, S. and Golding, P. (2000). Tabloidization in the British Press: A Quantitative Investigation into Changes in British Newspapers 1952–1997. In C. Sparks and J. Tulloch (Eds.) *Tabloid Tales: Global Debates over Media Standards.* Lanham, MD, Boulder, CO, New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.

McNair, B. (2003). *An Introduction to Political Communication*. London: Routledge.

Meraz, S. (2011). The fight for 'how to think': Traditional media, social networks, and issue interpretation. *Journalism*, *12*(1), 107-127.

Metzgar, E. and Maruggi, A. (2009). Social media and the 2008 U.S. presidential election. *Journal of New Communications Research*, *4*(1), 141-161.

Norris, P. (2001). Political Communication: Technological Diffusion and Democracy. *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Oxford: Pergamon/Elsevier Science.

Okmeydan, C. K. (2013). *Social Media Usage of Turkish Political Parties in Public Relations Activities (Masters Thesis).*

Oktay, A. (1987). *Social Change and Press*, Istanbul: Bilim/Felsefe/Sanat Publications.

Özkan, A. (2004). *Siyasal İletişim* [Political Communications]. Istanbul: Nesil Yayıncılık.

Özüpek, N., Altunbaş, H. and Aktaş, H. Seçim Kampanyalari ve İnternet: 2007 Seçim Kampanyalarinda Partilerin İnternet Siteleri [Election Campaigns and the Internet: Web Sites of Parties during the 2007 Election Campaigns]. (2007). *Media and Politics*. International Symposium, organized by Ege University, Izmir, Turkey, November 15, 2007.

Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The Virtual Sphere. *New Media and Society*, *4*(1), 9-27.

Patterson, T. E. (2007). *Young People and News*. Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy.

(1993). *Out of Order*. New York: Knopf.

Petley, J. (2008). Flat earth reviews: When the dogs bite. *Journalism Practice*, *2*(3), 501-5.

Reporters without Borders. *World Press Freedom Index 2013*. (2013). Retrieved from http://fr.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/classement_2013_gb-bd.pdf.

Rogers, E. M. (2004). Theoretical Diversity in Political Communication. In L. Kaid (Ed.), *Handbook of Political Communication Research*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Sancar, G. A. (2013). Political Public Relations 2.0 and the Use of Twitter of Political Leaders in Turkey. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 3(1), 181-194.

Sassi, S. (2001). The controversies of the Internet and the Revitalization of Local Political Life. In K. L. Hacker and J. van Dijk (Eds.), *Digital Democracy: Issues of Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.

Scammell, M. (1999). Political Marketing: lessons from political science. *Political Studies*, *47*(4), 718-739.

Shirky, C. (2008). *Here Comes Everybody*. London: Penguin Press.

Sönmez, M. (2003). *Filler ve Çimenler* [Elephants and Grasses]. Istanbul: Iletisim Publishing.

Sparks, C. (2000). Introduction: The Panic over Tabloid News. In C. Sparks and J. Tulloch (Eds.) *Tabloid Tales: Global Debates over Media Standards*. Lanham, MD, Boulder, CO, New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.

Stacks, D. W. (1995). Political Communication: Contributions to the Study of Public Relations. *Annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association*, San Antonio, TX, November 1995.

Stroud, N. J. (2007). Media Use and Political Predispositions: Revisiting the Concept of Selective Exposure. *Springer Science and Business Media.*

Sweetser, K. D. and Lariscy, R. W. (2008). Candidates Make Good Friends: An Analysis of Candidates' Uses of Facebook. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, *2*(3), 175-198.

Tekinalp, S. (2008). Postmodernist Fourth Power: Commentaries. *Istanbul University Communication Faculty Magazine*.

Tumasjan, A., Sprenger, T. O., Sandner, P. G. and Welpe, I. M. (2011) Election Forecasts with Twitter: How 140 Characters Reflect the Political Landscape. *Social Science Computer Review*, *29*(4), 402-418.

Tunç, A. (2013) Freedom of Expression Debates in Turkey: Acute problems and new hopes. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, *9*(2), 153-163.

Uluç, G., Yılmaz, M. and Işıkdağ, Ü. (2009). Blogs and Forums in a Presidential Election Process in Turkey. In T. Dumova and R. Fiordo (Eds.) *Handbook of Research on Social Interaction Technologies and Collaboration Software: Concepts and Trends*. Information Science Reference, Hershey, New York.

White, D. M. (1950). The Gatekeeper. A Case Study in the Selection of News. *Journalism Quarterly*, *27*(3), 383-90.