

Determinants of Media Criticism in a Democracy in Transition: Applying Field Theory to Turkey

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Following recent studies using Bourdieusian field theory to examine journalistic freedom and media criticism, we investigated the Turkish press using a comparative perspective focusing on the media's interaction with the nexus of power/government and market mechanisms. Using a snapshot of four Turkish newspapers in 2013, we analyzed their critical content vis-à-vis reporting about the government. To explain differences of criticism across these media outlets, we extended our qualitative and quantitative analyses to three sociopolitically key years with regard to the consolidation of governmental power. Our results indicate that what explains media criticism goes beyond structural factors and should also involve both between- and within-field variations, emphasizing media as a semiautonomous field.

Keywords: media studies, bias, criticism, Bourdieusian field theory, Turkey, content analysis

Despite its regional aspirations, Turkey—ranked 154 of 180 countries worldwide for press freedom—registered no improvement and continues to be one of the world's biggest prisons for journalists. The Gezi Park protests highlighted the repressive methods used by security forces, the increase in self-censorship, and the dangers of populist discourse, declared Reporters Without Borders (2014) recently, yet there has been no a systematic analysis of how much worse Turkey's press record has become since the 1990s.²

In this article, we show the extent to which Turkey's media has become reluctant to criticize the government since the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) consolidated its power, and we attempt

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² For some (Kaya & Çakmur, 2010; Yeşil, 2014), even then, certain topics (e.g., minority issues) were off limits for the Turkish press, whereas for others (Cizre & Yeldan, 2000), neoliberalization of the Turkish market in the 1990s went hand-in-hand with a more free and daring media vis-à-vis state practices.

to explain the possible mechanisms that caused the increasing reluctance. We also investigate the varying levels of criticism among different media outlets to understand the additional factors that may influence journalism as a field. In doing this, we turn to the field theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu and applied to journalism studies by Rodney Benson (1998). Introducing the Bourdieusian field theory framework to this new case allows for both theoretical and methodological contributions. Theoretically, treating the media as a semi-independent field, we explain media criticism by going beyond structural factors and take both between- and within-fields variations into consideration by focusing on the media's interaction with other fields. Methodologically, adopting a measurement of criticism, as suggested by Benson, opens itself to a quantitative analysis of media criticism. As a result, we also are able to locate Turkey in other cross-national studies of news media that have focused mostly on more developed democracies (Benson & Hallin, 2007; Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, & Rucht, 2002; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011).

Upon examining the extant literature on the issue in Turkey and the contribution of our findings, we suggest that a better understanding of media censorship in Turkey requires wider lenses that should go beyond the analysis of the relationship between journalism and the state. How do the interactions of the media, political power, and market mechanisms explain the variation in critical reporting in Turkey? How do different media outlets define their own norms of criticism, free speech, and censorship? And how could we measure Turkey's declining press freedom record by taking into account both dynamics within the field of journalism as well as between the related fields?

To answer these questions, we conducted an extensive content analysis of government criticism of four main newspapers (*Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, and *Zaman*) over four selected years in a 20-year span. We then compare these findings with discussions of power consolidation in Turkey as well as market pressures, journalistic norms, and public demands. To conclude, we discuss the theoretical and policy implications of our findings and address ways to expand this research agenda.

Turkish Press and Media Criticism

At a time when daily newspapers have been purchased and read in declining numbers across the world, it is necessary to establish the importance of newspapers in Turkey and lay out the positioning of Turkish newspapers comparatively vis-à-vis their reader base and market structures. First, as illustrated by the World Press Trends 2014 report published by World Association of Newspapers (Chisholm, Kilman, Milosevic, & Henriksson, 2014), the demand side of journalism is relatively weak in Turkey. There are about 5 million total readers for an adult population of 55 million people (for 37 national newspapers), which is about the same as Italy, and newspaper reach is 25%, which is comparable to Brazil and South Africa. Considering the relationship of market mechanisms to the media, total newspaper advertising expenditure is US\$556 million, which is about the same size as in Denmark, Finland, or Colombia, and gross media advertising expenditure including all media outlets is US\$3 billion dollars per year, which is comparable to Norway and Sweden (Chisholm et al., 2014).

The aforementioned statistics should be approached with some caution with regard to certain characteristics of Turkish media. For instance, supporting Lisa George's (2010) claim that greater Internet

penetration might be associated with higher newspaper circulation, in Turkey, newspaper reporting is the main source of other forms of reporting in that the headlines and main stories are covered as part of the morning news on most TV channels. This pattern compares well with cases such as Argentina, where news broadcasting mostly rests on newspaper journalism (Waisbord, 1994). The findings from a private study that only 17% of the population read at least one newspaper on a daily basis, whereas 47% do not read any newspapers at all, are further supported in an analysis of two statistical data sets from 2012 ("Türkiye halkının yüzde 53'ü gazete okuyor," 2012). A second set of data published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (2012) shows further that 38% of the population, mostly the youth, use the Internet regularly, and among them, 73% use it for accessing daily news. Combining this information should suggest that no matter how they reach out, whether it is in print or online, the Turkish people still value newspapers as primary sources of sociopolitical information, along with the television news.

Looking at history, ownership of Turkish media outlets illustrates varying patterns. Newspaper journalism in Turkey was established by foreigners in the early 19th century, and it took several decades until the first Turkish-language newspapers were published (Alemdar, 1988; Koloğlu, 2006). Although the written press played an important role in the spread of the ideas of the Ottoman constitutionalism and independence in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, neither in the late-Ottoman era nor in the first decades of the Republican period did a true "freedom regime" for the media exist (Kaya, 2009; Topuz, 2014). It was not until the neoliberalization of Turkey's political economy during the 1980s that direct or indirect forms of government subsidies became the primary means for newspapers' survival; consequently, press coverage was manipulated and freedom of expression was severely restricted by the state itself (Yumul & Özkırmı, 2000).

Although print media had always been private and commercial in Turkey, the 1990s witnessed a dual movement of neoliberalization of the Turkish market and the rigorous number of private entries into the field of media (especially the radio and TV channels). With the transfer of press technology from Western counterparts, newspaper and magazine ownership in Turkey became highly attractive; yet, the influx of big capital allowed only a small number of holding companies to continue to operate each with business interests in non-media-related sectors such as mining, energy, tourism, transportation, insurance, banking, and construction (C. Christensen, 2007; Yeşil, 2014). Doğan Medya Grubu, Ciner Yayın Holding, Samanyolu/Feza Gazetecilik, Çalık Medya Grubu, and Albayrak Medya Grubu, to name a few, are currently at the top of the business, helping to create this oligopolistic environment featuring an example of cross-media concentration.

Despite this trend of increasing privatization, however, the current literature is heavily inclined to conclude that post-1990s Turkish media did not break their strong ties with the state, and there is a rising "political parallelism" in Turkish media with the state.³ Raşit Kaya and Barış Çakmur (2010), for instance, argue that "increased commercialization of the media did not help to alleviate government's control; instead, it fortified the media industry and thus paved the way to the instrumentalization of the media outlets by the corporate interests" (p. 523). They further propose that the combined impact of commercialization of the media on the one hand and the political parallelism on the other has resulted in

³ For a counterargument, see Hanitzsch et al. (2011).

three major consequences. First, newspaper coverage has aligned itself toward what sells instead of what needs to be published (see also Bek, 2004). Second, journalistic autonomy has declined compared with earlier periods because the means of suppression has doubled because of business interests as well as favoring the political. Finally, although post-1990s neoliberalization led to a proliferation of media outlets with a variety of political orientations (including leftist, extreme-rightist, Kurdist, feminist, etc.), particularly after the AKP's success in consecutive elections from 2002, Turkish newspapers have become much more concentrated on the two pillars between the mainstream and the pro-Islamist/conservative tendencies.

Çarkoğlu, Baruh, and Yıldırım's (2014) study on press-party parallelism during the 2011 election campaigns also provides strong evidence for this. Based on four major factors that they found to be effective for newspaper journalism in Turkey today, namely "commercialization, political polarization, ties between media and political institutions, and newspapers' judgments about reader preferences" (p. 300), they cluster Turkish daily newspapers into three categories: conservative, mainstream, and opposition. The authors further argue that "the predominant-party system [under the AKP rule] interacts with the clientelistic media ownership structure to increase the correspondence between political parties, their constituencies, and the media" (p. 299; also see Topuz, 2014). Similarly, C. Christensen (2007) observes the main problem of the Turkish media nowadays as the concentrated clientelistic ownership, the government's frequent interference, and restrictions on coverage, as well as the labor of the news. Such interference also is revealed in other studies, regarding particularly the cases of the assassination of the Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink in 2007, the police raid of *Nokta* magazine in 2007, the Kurdish question, and the Ergenekon investigation (M. Christensen, 2010; Sezgin & Wall, 2005).

In these regards, the media structure in Turkey can be categorized as the Mediterranean or polarized pluralistic model, according to Hallin and Mancini's (2004) comparative model, as with the cases of France, Greece,⁴ Italy, Portugal, and Spain. This model reflects low levels of newspaper circulation, a tradition of advocacy reporting, instrumentalization of privately owned media, politicization of public broadcasting, and broadcast regulation and limited development of journalism as an autonomous profession (Elmas & Kurban, 2010).

With regard to how this field structure reflects on the media's watchdog role as a check on the government's activities, our contribution to this burgeoning literature is twofold. First, we attempt to determine the undermining mechanisms at work in understanding media criticism in Turkey comparatively, applying a theoretical framework developed by Benson (1998), which incorporates the media's interactions with different fields: markets and the public/audience, as well as the state (Benson, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2010; Benson & Hallin, 2007; Benson & Neveu, 2005; Benson & Powers, 2011; Benson & Saguy, 2005). In other words, although we accept the basic findings of the aforementioned studies on media parallelism or censorship in Turkey, we introduce the field theory framework and suggest that media outlets are neither purely instrumental nor purely independent institutions, hence only focusing on structural factors at the expense of ignoring the impact of other fields on the media. Second, we make a genuine attempt to probe the plausibility of all of these different explanations methodologically, with an

⁴ For a discussion on the Greek case, see Leandros (2010).

extensive, mostly quantitative data collection both in terms of media content on criticism as well as variation within the journalistic field in terms of norms, cultural capital, and audience characteristics.

Fielding Journalism—A Theory of Bourdieu

The concept of field as a research tool was initially used by Pierre Bourdieu himself in journalistic analysis in 1996, as he wanted to

show how the journalistic field produce[d] and impose[d] on the public a very particular vision of the political field, a vision . . . grounded in the very structure of the journalistic field and in journalists' specific interests produced in and by that field. (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 2)

The idea of a Bourdieusian field is more akin to a battlefield where there are limits on what can be done, with its own rules, histories, and it is relational in that these semiautonomous spheres of action are constantly in opposing power relations (Thomson, 2008). Because of these intersecting fields of politics, journalism, and economics (market), as well as the accumulated cultural and economic capitals in each field, journalists are doomed, so to speak, to take into account the number of sales, stories that sell, accountability, ethics, responsibilities, ownership, the journalist–reader relationship, and censorship, among many other related parameters. As a result, they both affect and are affected by the field of journalism and, more important, play a detrimental role in constructing the common sense in the public, especially through political communication.

Three major contributions of the field theory and Benson's adaptation of it might be said to have special importance for this article. Theoretically, the Bourdieusian field study allows us to bypass the traditional (liberal or Marxist) understandings of power complexes and their assumptions based on common sense between the capitalist ownership and news making. First, with its emphasis on the objective structures of relations between institutions, it allows us to focus on the dynamics of each media outlet's relations with other fields, and second, it draws our attention to the habitus of social agents, resulting in different practices within the field of journalism (Bourdieu, 2005). Whereas the first contribution acknowledges the heteronomies to power and markets inherent in media, the theory also emphasizes the possibility of media as a semiautonomous field by drawing our attention to mezzo-level social and professional space/institutions as potential actors in political communication (Benson, 2013). Accordingly, a journalistic institution does not simply reflect but rather refracts the play of external influences (Benson, 2006; Benson, 2010). Similar to the new institutionalist theories of political science, this emphasis brings in the direct or moderating effect of institutions on the actor's behavior (Peters, 2011). According to this framework, not only cross-national variation among different media systems but also within-country variation across media institutions (see Yang & Ishak, 2012) call for investigating the internal dynamics of these institutions as a possible variable affecting the output of the field. With this additional information and field of analysis, we aim at transcending the media as power's slave inclination, and more important, explain how dispositions to ingratiate with power affect the level of criticism both externally and internally.

The methodological advantage of this approach, on the other hand, is to not take criticism as a given concept and instead to develop a template for classifying and measuring what should be understood by it. Over this template, questions are asked about the content and strength of critical statements of the newspapers, their news sources (investigating, reporting, etc.), and revenue sources (advertising, readership, government subsidies, etc.), and why and how they differ even among the same type of newspapers (mainstream, opposition, prestige, or other papers).

Hypotheses

In this article, we argue that the level of criticalness of Turkish daily newspapers in terms of content, tone, and style in communicating news between the political sources and the public is significantly affected by how journalists solve the dilemma between the varying and conflicting principles of intersecting fields. Along with many other fields, the field of politics in the country has been dominated by the governing AKP since 2002, and it might be fruitful to analyze whether such an instance of power consolidation has resulted in control of an important branch of the media (Norris & Inglehart, 2010). In other words, we argue that as much as the political power consolidates itself within Turkish society, journalists' ability and permission to criticize the government's actions, politics, ideology, and/or strategies wear off because of both structural and interactive relationships between the agents of the journalistic field and the agents of the political one.

To test this, we set forth four hypotheses:

- H1: Regarding the impact of structural factors, particularly the consolidation of power, we expected that the period of coalition governments between 1995 and 2003 would result in "multiperspectivity" (Benson, 2009) in critical and uncensored media regardless of the news outlet. This criticalness was also expected to continue in the first term of AKP rule because of the ongoing need for legitimacy (of the bureaucratic-military structure of the previous regime) and its lack of consolidated power. We expected criticism to plummet starting with the second AKP term and to reach its bottom after 2011.*
- H2: Regarding the factors that are likely to mediate the aforementioned structural impact, we argue that the media field's positioning of itself vis-à-vis other fields in relation to its consumer/reader base is critical. According to Hanitzsch et al. (2011), media outlets closest to the intellectual pole have relatively high autonomy and emphasize cultural capital over economic capital. Therefore, the increased cultural capital of the newspapers, be it defined through its audience (whether it is a "mass" or "intellectual" paper) or founding norms as "prestige" papers (Benson, 2009), may increase newspapers' willingness to represent alternative worldviews and hence their criticalness.*
- H3: Another mediator of the structural effects on the media is related to their positioning vis-à-vis the market mechanisms. The critical political economy literature suggests that the criticalness of the media may decrease because of market pressures (Baker, 1994). Corporate consolidations of media organizations and pressures from advertisers on content can limit the publication of politically or socially contentious material (Atkins & Mintcheva, 2006). In the face of ever-growing*

media monopolies as in the case of Turkey, news organizations may find it harder to resist commercial pressures and continue critical reporting (Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney, 2008). As a result, in consideration of maintaining their income, we expected newspapers with higher public or private advertisement revenues to give less voice to critical reporting.

H4: One final variable that can potentially mediate the effect of consolidated power structures on media criticism is the self-censoring of journalists, which may be a result of individual concerns such as demotion, layoffs, or even imprisonment. This can be a manifestation of consolidated power, but also it can have varying impact on specific media outlets because of its founding norms, self-characterization as prestige papers, or in the words of Bourdieu, nomos defining the habitus of social agents. In this regard, we expected that the mainstream and especially tabloid media outlets that lack this principle of freedom of expression would be affected disproportionately by this pressure.

Method

Describing the Data

To illustrate different forms of media criticism directed to the government (or lack thereof), we selected four Turkish newspapers. The first two represent the mainstream centrist and widely circulated tabloid media, namely *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet*, with average circulations of 400,000 and 200,000, respectively. Until 2011, both newspapers had been owned by Doğan Medya Grubu; however, *Milliyet* was sold to DK Gazetecilik and is now owned by Demirören Holding. The third newspaper is a center-leftist prestige paper, *Cumhuriyet*, which has its own independent printing company and an average circulation of 60,000 at the time of the research. The final newspaper is conservative-rightist *Zaman*, owned by Feza Gazetecilik, which has close ties with the religious Gülen movement. *Zaman* is the leading newspaper in Turkey, with an average current circulation of approximately 850,000.⁵

Although we are hesitant to attach any ideological affinity to the papers, extant literature has illustrated the voting biases of their readers and their parallelism with political parties via content analysis prior to elections (Çarkoğlu et al., 2014). We therefore used this cue to create variation in our selections. Other potential papers that would fit these selection criteria either did not have proper archives (as in the case of *Sözcü* or *Radikal*) or were not available for the entire 20 years of our analysis (such as *Habertürk*, *Star*, or *Posta*). To conduct a content analysis, we collected the sampling from the full front pages of *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, and *Zaman* on the 5th, 15th, and 25th day of each month for the selected years. The majority of newspapers were scanned from the hardcopies from the archives of the library of the Grand National Assembly and National Library in Ankara. When for some reason the paper for the predetermined date was not available in the archives, the next available day's paper was included in the sample. We then coded the content of the news stories concerning the government with regard to their

⁵ See <http://www.medyatava.com/tiraj/2014-08-11>; also see C. Christensen (2007).

criticism. We excluded excerpts of editorials given that our interest lay in the news reporting by the journalists.⁶

Measuring Media Criticism

To measure the concept of criticism and its different dimensions, we borrowed from Benson (2010, 2013), in which the American and French press in terms of their critiques of immigration policy was compared. Accordingly, we first identified the articles from each paper's front page that targeted the government or a government agency. We then identified whether there was extant criticism in a given news story, which we labeled as general criticism. Following that, we focused on the source of criticism to understand whether the criticism was directed at the government by the journalist himself or via an external actor/source such as an opposition MP or a nongovernmental organization. Our ultimate measure of criticism was an additive index of both.

Independent Variables and Operationalization

We first expected media criticism to be inversely related to the government's consolidation of power. To address this direct structural impact, we used election results and government formations for the respective years under investigation. Nevertheless, we were also interested in showing how pressure on the press is mediated across different media outlets because of their particular characteristics. To address these, we categorized our selected papers within the clusters of "prestige" or "mass" based on their circulation, the share of the high socioeconomic status individuals among their readers, and the time it takes for an average reader to finish reading the paper.

The impact of each paper's position vis-à-vis the market mechanisms and the state on its criticalness was gauged through its share of public and private advertising. As a second proxy of market integration, we explored the existence and extent of the commercial enterprises of the newspaper owners. Finally, to understand the impact of journalistic norms and possible reliance on self-censorship, we traced the careers of journalists following their visible criticism of the government and addressed the way criticisms were received by their media groups in relation to their promotions or demotions. The qualitative evidence on this aspect is augmented with quantitative data on imprisoned journalists gathered through the reports published by the European Commission, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters Without Borders, and Freedom House.

Periods Analyzed and the Consolidation of Power

Our analysis starts with an illustration of the current state of media criticism of the government by showing data from 2013. This year was important because it encompassed major challenges for the government such as the Reyhanlı bombings in May, Gezi protests in June and July, and the December 17 and 25 corruption allegations, as well as several tensions with Syria, discussions of a new constitution,

⁶ The rubric used for the content analysis can be found at the following link:
<http://ovuncongur.com/Yavcan-Ongur-Rubric.pdf>

rapprochement regarding the Kurdish minorities, and a possibility of a presidential system. Furthermore, 2013 was also the year when media reporting came under the spotlight of domestic and international elites because of its lack of multiperspectival reporting on critical issues. Most of the written and visual press was highly criticized for being deaf to those events and being sidelined by the government. Although some minor shifts occurred in the stance of mainstream media, the level of criticalness in newspapers, along with the level of press freedom in the country, began to be discussed nationally.

Upon illustrating the state of the media in 2013, we trace its evolution by illustrating snapshots of newspaper reporting from 1995, which was our beginning point when Turkey was governed by coalition governments and has been described as a power void. Between June 25, 1993, and March 6, 1995, Tansu Çiller, the first and only woman prime minister in Turkish history, established three coalition governments with her center-right True Path Party. The period in question was important for this article's purposes not only for the open controversy with several corruption claims between Çiller and what she called the "cartel media," referring particularly to the concentrated ownership of Doğan Medya Grubu, but also for the official entrance of the private media outlets into election propaganda (Secor, 2001, pp. 546–548).

We then continue our analysis with 2003, the first year of the AKP government, a period that signified optimism along with a slight skepticism, but still constituted a honeymoon period for the relation between the government in power and the media. Although not elected as an MP because of his political ban, the party leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became prime minister on March 14, 2003. The victory of the AKP was due to several domestic and international factors, primarily the social demand for stability after a series of coalition governments in the past 10 years, the economic crisis of 2001, and the party's moderate discourse, including the neoliberal as well as conservative policies, that would fit into both the U.S. and the EU international agendas (Bozkurt, 2013; Coşar & Özman, 2004). Domestically, support for the AKP government came from even the most unexpected sources, such as liberals, leftists, Kurds, and the military.

We then move to the year 2011. The July national election was a critical turning point in the history of Turkish politics, as it pointed out the first repercussions of consolidated power in the country as being in the government for the third consecutive term. It was conducted a year after the Turkish Constitutional Referendum, and consequently, not only did Erdoğan become the first prime minister to win three consecutive elections or to receive more votes than the previous election after a period of continuous economic growth, but also the judicial–military–political web of contestation (with the cases called Ergenekon and Balyoz) resulted in favor of the AKP-driven politics (Cengiz & Hoffmann, 2011). The major difference between the constitutional and the general elections was about the supporters: The AKP was no longer supported by liberals, leftists, or former military staff, who now became susceptible to the party's perception of democracy, liberalism, freedoms, and human rights; moreover, the bipolarization of society (and also of the media outlets) into two groups (the pro-AKP vs. the anti-AKP) was also reinforced.

Results

Going back to our first question of how critical the media were in 2013, we compiled Table 1, which summarizes the number of stories about the government on the front page of each paper, total size

of those articles, and whether or not they were a product of journalistic investigation. Furthermore, Table 1 illustrates the total number of articles in each paper critical of the government, their share among all stories concerning the government, and their source for criticism.

Table 1. State of Newspaper Reporting and Criticism in 2013.

Variable	<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	<i>Hürriyet</i>	<i>Milliyet</i>	<i>Zaman</i>
Stories about government, <i>n</i>	90	106	83	30
Photos, <i>n</i>	154	372	356	259
Total size of the articles in quadrants, <i>n</i>	136	167	150	65
Journalistic investigation, <i>n</i>	65	2	28	2
Source critical, <i>n</i>	46	20	1	4
Journalist critical, <i>n</i>	2	3	5	2
Total critical, <i>n</i>	48	23	6	6
Share of critical among all, %	53	22	7	20

As Table 1 illustrates, *Cumhuriyet* and *Zaman*, the two more ideological and intellectual-oriented papers, displayed fewer photos on their front page and included shorter articles about the government. *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet*, on the other hand, exhibited characteristics of tabloid papers with many photos, long articles, and especially compared with *Cumhuriyet*, these newspapers presented a lot less investigative journalism. More important, in 2013, except for *Cumhuriyet*, the prospects for investigative journalism were rather dim, with most papers printing stories about the government but presenting the news one-dimensionally, exemplifying high levels of political parallelism to the government. The number of critical articles among all 36 front pages we covered was only six for *Milliyet* and *Zaman*. The number was significantly higher for *Hürriyet* and was highest for *Cumhuriyet*, with more than half of the articles about the government exhibiting some criticism. As described earlier, 2013 was a year of challenges for the AKP government, and it is surprising to see a lack of multiperspective reporting on issues regarding the government and very low internal pluralism.

Having established the overall lack of criticism on political authority in 2013, we were curious whether this was always the case in Turkish media or whether it changed at a particular point in time. To address this question, we collected data for the abovementioned four years, which yielded 1,134 articles concerning the government, with 374 of them involving some criticism toward the government. The distribution of the critical stories among all four papers covered in this study across the four years is illustrated in Figure 1, which shows a major declining trend. Whereas about half of the stories about the government were critical in 1995, this ratio significantly dropped to 25% in 2003 and below 20% in 2011, and did not increase by much in 2013. This initial finding is a clear indication of a structural effect, which reflects itself in a lowering media criticism across the years given that the AKP had consolidated its power.

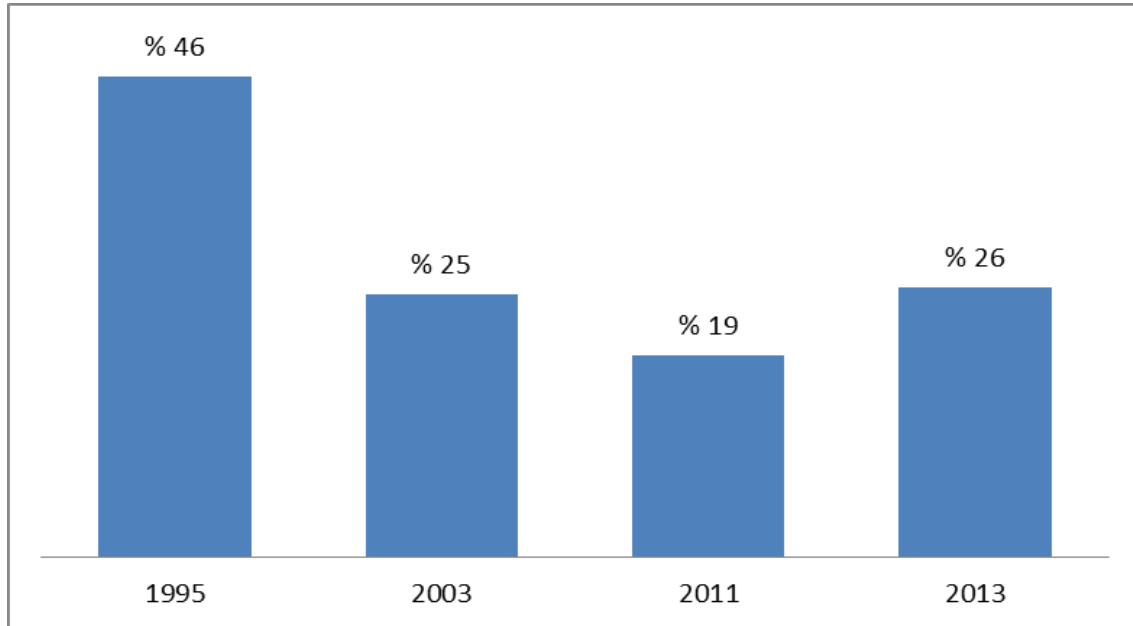


Figure 1. Share of stories with criticism among all stories concerning the government, by year.

Figure 1 illustrates the structural impact of the political power center in general and suggests that our first hypothesis is plausible at least until 2013. However, the similarity between the levels of criticism between 2003 and 2013 casts doubt on the structural expectations, reflecting either a possible impact of the former consolidation of power between 1995 and 2003 (i.e., perhaps the army) or an outcry of the reaction to the prolonged political pressures on society. Also, the numbers should be approached with caution because of the lack of data on in-between years and potential heterogeneity between media outlets. Although we cannot account for the former with these data, with regards to the latter, Figure 2 illustrates the change in the number of critical stories split by each of the four newspapers under investigation.

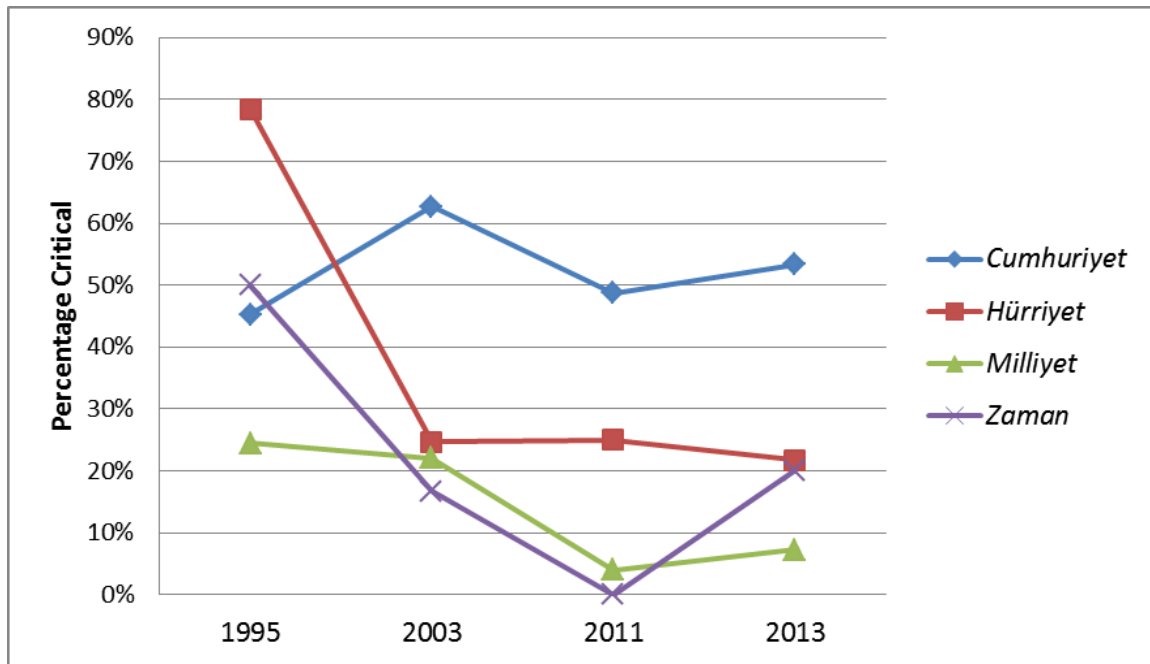


Figure 2. Share of critical articles among all those concerning the government, by newspaper and year.

Figure 2 demonstrates the striking differences regarding the variation of criticism in the four newspapers across the years. As can be inferred from the graph, except for *Cumhuriyet*, the level of criticism declined sharply with the first AKP government and even further after its consolidation of power in 2011. *Cumhuriyet* stands alone in portraying the news in multiperspectivity, which seems to be stable over time.

A small increase was evident for *Zaman* in 2013, especially in the last months of the year, because of the role played by the Gülen movement in revealing the corruption allegations against the members of the AKP government and their relatives. Although the reasons for this split between the Gülen and AKP movements are beyond our scope in terms of measurement, its consequences as a reflection of the rise of criticism against the AKP in the previously progovernment paper, *Zaman*, fits the Bourdieusian field theory presented here. The support of the Gülenist network that encompassed the intersecting fields of government, police, intelligence service, media, and so forth had a great impact on the consolidation of the AKP's power since the beginning of the AKP rule (hence, no change in the level of *Zaman*'s criticism was visible since 2003; see Hendrick, 2009). The recent breakup between the two sides stemming from the increased competition both between and within fields of power, however, manifested itself also on the journalistic field via criticalness of *Zaman*.

Although our analysis focuses on the criticalness of newspapers by measuring the number of critical stories, the varying magnitude/strength of criticism presented by each newspaper is also an important dimension of criticalness. It would therefore be fair to assume a correlation between the number of critical stories in a newspaper and the degree of criticism within each story. An example to illustrate this is how the Gezi Park protests were portrayed differently on the day after by each newspaper. On June 1, 2013, the headlines read "Halk Başkaldırdı" [The People Rebel], "Gazi Parkı" [Park of the Injured], "Ne Bu Şiddet Bu Celal" [Why the Anger, Why the Rage], and "Gerilim Taksim Aştı" [Tension Surpassed Taksim], for *Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, and *Zaman*, respectively.⁷ As expected, *Cumhuriyet* used the strongest tone in the headline, referring to the Gezi Park movement as a rebellion against the government. On the contrary, *Hürriyet* made a semantic play by changing the letter e in Gezi Park with an a, thus referring to the injured protestors because of the overuse of power by the police, whereas *Milliyet's* emotional headline that was excerpted from the Turkish National Anthem did not signify a particular party in the story. *Zaman*, lastly, indicated cautiousness and instead remained silent about the ongoing events.

The Role of Readership and Advertisement Revenues

To understand the heterogeneity across newspaper criticalness, we generated additional hypotheses, two of which relate to reader pressures and advertisement revenue. In H2, we argued that the readers/audience of newspapers were also expected to have an impact on its criticalness in that the readership provided an additional cultural space for the specific media outlet within which it operated. Defining and measuring cultural capital is not an easy task, but to converge onto this concept, first we should restate the daily circulation rates of these newspapers, through which we can tap the readership pressures and tabloidization. Furthermore, two additional types of data are available pertaining to this dimension. The first concerns the average time readers spend reading each paper, as papers with a substantive amount of information will take more time to read, which should help illustrate another dimension of cultural capital. The second concerns the socioeconomic status of the readers of the media outlet. Regular consumer reports illustrate this information by splitting them into A, B, C, D, and E classes, with the earlier letters of the alphabet indicating higher status,⁸ those who are likely to exert educated pressure allowing them to be more multiperspective in their reporting. Table 2 illustrates all three dimensions of this cultural capital.

⁷ This information is taken from http://gazete.netgazete.com/gazeteler_arsiv.php

⁸ See <http://www.slideshare.net/MediaComInsights/presentations/2>

Table 2. Indicators of Potential Reader Pressure.

Newspaper	Daily circulation (2014)	Average reading time (minutes)	Percentage share of different socioeconomic classes among the readers ^a			
			DE	C2	C1	AB
<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	56.023	46	3	10	22	64
<i>Milliyet</i>	162.280	34	3	19	27	52
<i>Hürriyet</i>	386.646	35	2	17	28	52
<i>Zaman</i> ^b	948.279	31	4	27	33	37

Note. Table generated using *MediaCom BIAK Türkiye Raporu*

<http://www.slideshare.net/MediaComInsights/presentations/2> and

<http://www.mediacom.com/en/contact-us/global-offices/europe,-middle-east-africa/turkey/istanbul.aspx>

^aIn market research the categories indicate the following: AB upper middle class and middle class, C1 lower middle class, C2 skilled working class, DE working class and those at the lowest level of subsistence.

^bThe data on *Zaman* should be approached with caution, as the paper is being subscribed to in bulk by supporters of the Gülen movement as a gesture of financial support; therefore, even though the paper is dense in terms of its news reporting and should be expected to be read in a longer time by people of higher socioeconomic status, the majority of its readership are not regular readers.

As expected, papers with higher circulation and that are read in fewer minutes are those that also are easily affected by consolidation of governmental power and eventually cease to be critical. Also, those papers with a larger readership belonging to higher status groups will be subject to an educated pressure driving journalists to be more multiperspective in their reporting. Table 2 demonstrates a comparison between the readership base of the papers with each other and with the average Turkish reader, and the results also confirm our expectations. *Cumhuriyet*, with the highest ratio of critical reporting, elicits characteristics of a prestige paper with a low circulation, the lowest share of C2 and DE groups of readers and the longest reading time compared with all other papers. Even though the larger circulation, shorter reading time, and significantly lower AB group readership base of *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet*—as compared with those of *Cumhuriyet*—confirm tabloid paper patterns, the socioeconomic status of their readers is still higher than for many other tabloid papers around the world.

The mediating effect of readership on the impact of structure on media criticism was also closely related to the media's relationship with market forces, especially via advertisement revenue. Several reports illustrate that advertisement in the media is a growing industry in Turkey and more funds are invested across the years on various means of communication with consumers (Çelikcan, 2014). Nevertheless, the advertisement market in Turkey is not immune from the state's impact as public advertisement still constitutes a major part of a newspaper's revenue. In particular, the Directorate General of Press Advertisement distributes to newspapers announcements and special notices of public legal entities not considered under the scope of private advertisement (Sözeri & Güney, 2011). Therefore, both the public and private advertisement share of a newspaper should be considered. Furthermore, studies point out that there are many companies for which the state remains the highest shareholder within private advertisement spending, which can impose restraints on critical reporting (Özpek, 2015). Although this seems to complicate the endeavor of disentangling the direct impact of market mechanisms, both market and structural pressures are expected to impact criticism in the same direction and the main structural impact of the government is expected to reveal itself through public advertisement.⁹

Table 3 illustrates how the public and private newspaper advertisement revenue alone was split across the newspapers in our analysis and how much public advertisement funds were spent on all newspapers for the years we are focusing on.

Table 3. Percentage Share of Public and Private Advertisement Revenue for Each Paper.

Newspaper	Public advertisement ^a				Private advertisement	
	1995	2003	2011	2013	2008	2012
<i>Cumhuriyet</i>	3.4	2.0	2.8	2.6	1.5	1.6
<i>Hürriyet</i>	20.0	12.0	8.0	8.6	39.0	36.0
<i>Milliyet</i>	1.8	6.1	5.6	5.2	8.5	5.5
<i>Zaman</i>	2.1	6.7	5.8	8.0	5.0	6.5
Total public advertising (US\$) ^b	31,912,430	25,451,130	63,135,041	88,548,059		

^aThe public advertisement data are provided by the Directorate General of Press Advertisement (BIK).

^bDue to high inflation rates in Turkey for the period under investigation, this figure is calculated using BIK data and converting them to U.S. dollars using the June exchange rate for the respective years.

⁹ The Freedom Research Association Report on Press Freedom in Turkey (Özpek & Yavçan, 2015) notes that in addition to the "carrot" of public advertisement, the government resorts also to the "stick" of fines and broadcasting bans through regulatory agencies, such as the 4.2 billion TL tax fine on DoğanGroup in 2009. Due to the lack of data on these fines for our 20-year period, we chose to focus solely on public advertisement.

As shown in Table 3, public advertisement is indeed an important part of the advertisement market. Also, consistent with our expectations, public spending on newspaper ads has grown more than threefold since the AKP came to power in 2003. *Cumhuriyet* retains a very small portion of these funds, and *Hürriyet*, while in decline, holds the largest share among the four selected papers. On the other hand, both *Zaman's* and *Milliyet's* share are increasing along with an increasing progovernment tone in their reporting.

Due to the limitation of data sources, we were unable to gather the shares of newspapers' advertisement revenues for all four years. Nevertheless, data illustrated in Table 3 and studies conducted so far (Sözeri & Güney, 2011) indicate that although the market is growing, the share of the newspapers from advertisement spending remains rather stable. Put together with the circulation rates, private advertisement revenue share shows that the papers with higher integration with the market tend to be less critical of the government in general, whereas a more independent paper such as *Cumhuriyet* maintains its criticalness thanks to its small share from the market both in terms of circulation and advertisement. It also should be noted that papers such as *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet* are a part of big media companies, which have even larger shares of the market.

Self-Censoring and Imprisoned Journalists

Stated in our last hypothesis, self-censoring might be a reason for declining levels of criticism, which is also closely related to pressures on journalists from the government in the form of litigations or imprisonment of journalists, and to pressures from the media owners in the form of layoffs and demotions. The European Commission and the Committee to Protect Journalists keep a log of imprisoned journalists and their reports explain the characteristics of each case. According to these reports, in 1995, before the AKP came to power and a series of coalition governments ruled the country, the number of journalists in prison was negligible. In 2003, at the beginning of the AKP rule, only five journalists were in prison. In 2012, this number went up to 49, followed by 40 persecutions in 2013, reaching an unprecedented peak for the past 20 years in Turkey and ahead of any other country in the world that year. The Freedom of the Press Report of Freedom House in 2013 describes the conditions under which the media operates as follows:

Turkey remained a regional outlier with a score of 56, deep inside the Partly Free range, as the government continued to crack down on journalists in 2012. Constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press and expression are only partially upheld in practice, undermined by restrictive provisions in the criminal code and the Anti-Terrorism Act. Thanks to detentions stemming from investigations into the alleged *Ergenekon* coup conspiracy and a crackdown on suspected Kurdish militants, Turkey remains among the nations with the most journalists behind bars in the world. (p. 12)

According to the report of Carnegie Endowment on Press Freedom in Turkey, "between 2005 and 2011–2012, Turkey dropped by 50 places in the Reporters Without Borders Annual Press Freedom Index to 148, two places below the Democratic Republic of the Congo and two places ahead of Afghanistan" (Pierini & Mayr, 2013, p. 4).

The fact that the number of journalists increased in the years under AKP rule is an indication of the decline in press freedom in the country. This might have two major consequences. On the one hand, this might cause journalists to self-censor their investigations and reports; on the other hand, it may cause media groups themselves to censor journalists because of further repercussions of the government's possible intervention. The mainstream media outlets are affected most by the latter, demoting or firing the opposing journalists, whereas the opposition media somehow feed on that as they argue that their criticalness shows the level of ethical behavior in their working field. The declining percentage of the critical news in *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet* (the demotion of Enis Berberoğlu; the firing of Emin Çölaşan, Yılmaz Özdil, Nuray Mert, Hasan Cemal, Can Dündar, and Bekir Coşkun), the almost stable level of *Cumhuriyet's* criticalness (the sales of the newspaper went up after their head journalist Mustafa Balbay was imprisoned in 2009 as a result of allegations regarding the Ergenekon trial, which was widely covered on the paper's front page; recently, *Cumhuriyet's* editor-in-chief, Can Dündar, and its Ankara representative, Erdem Gül, were imprisoned for the alleged accusations of violating state confidentiality, too), as well as the sudden increase in the level of criticalness in *Zaman* after the 2013 corruption allegations (their editor-in-chief, Ekrem Dumanlı, was taken into custody in December 2014) should be regarded as instances that provide evidence for our last hypothesis.

Conclusion

In this article, we have explored media criticism, a crucial aspect of modern democracy, in Turkey. The Turkish case represents a country that has been experiencing a democratic transition assumed to be on a positive trend by many spectators. Nevertheless, consistent with our initial findings and the growing literature on the Turkish media, this assumption did not extend to the Turkish press with regard to its multiperspective reporting vis-à-vis the political nexus. Applying Bourdieusian field theory, we traced the process of media criticism in Turkey by unpacking it in regard to the interaction of press with the fields of government, market, and public/readers. The results of our extensive content analysis over a 20-year span suggest that not only the AKP's rise to the power fortified the declining trend of media criticism in Turkey since the neoliberalization of the economy in the early 1980s but also that there are additional ongoing pressures from the public and the market on its freedom of press. This latter part is specifically important for understanding the variation of criticism across different media outlets with various positioning with regard to the market, to the cultural capital of their readers, and to their journalistic norms.

Although there is room to improve this research with additional data (particularly on measuring within-field variations via interviews, participant observations, etc.), it so far points to three major implications. On the theoretical side, it involves the applicability of the Bourdieusian field theory framework to an understudied case, using comparative indicators to explain media criticism and supporting its expectations. On the empirical side, this study simply moves beyond anecdotal and discursive evidence to a more rigorous methodological approach with an original content analysis data collection. Finally, some political implications might also include that heavy government interventions on the field of media via carrots (e.g., ads and subsidies) and sticks (e.g., censorship, tax penalties and other regulations, and imprisonment of journalists) pose a serious threat to multiperspectivity and press freedom in a transitory democracy. However, the analysis of within-field variations also suggests that

media outlets' institutional norms complicate this immediate implication by offering new forms of resistance.

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