

ZeMKI-Online-Forschungskolloquium

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Destruction of Journalism as an Institution in Turkey

Abstract:

Given its non-western normative context, the case of Turkish press with its multi-party system, polarized politics and democratic electoral tradition historically differs from the totalitarian or the developmentalist-statist authoritarian journalistic systems in Russia, China and the Middle East. Yet, there has been a transition in Turkish journalism from the liberal-democratic system to authoritarian system over the last thirty years. This is to say that the current control mechanisms and political pressures that stifle critical, investigative journalism in Turkey is not only an immediate outcome of the authoritarian ruling practices of the AKP but also a long-term result of neo-liberalization in news media since the 1980s. Elaborating on this process, the present study argues about the *destruction* (not *oppression*) of journalism as an institutional form of truth-telling activity as an unintended consequence of the AKP's intervention into the national mainstream news media. When the AKP came to power in 2002, the ruling party started a media war against Turkey's traditional and mainstream journalistic institutions that have a liberal-democratic tradition to silence their critical voices and make their editorial lines AKP-friendly by deploying i) media capture and ii) judicial strategies. However, AKP's efforts to seize the media power of the traditional mainstream journalism has ended up with the destruction of the journalism itself rather than the utilization of it. To explain this consequence, I discuss two combined reasons behind it: i) AKP's survival concerns, such as the protection of the political, economic and cultural gains that Turkey's Islamic conservatives have hitherto acquired, which tend to block the truth-telling on any scale in journalistic practice, and ii) the impact of the digitalization and the Internet on media business.

Bio:

Ozan Aşık is a researcher at Uludağ University (Bursa, Turkey). He holds a PhD from the Department of Sociology at the University of Cambridge in the UK. His research focuses on television journalists in Turkish mainstream news media, and how they represent Kurdish and Arab identities –Turkey's two significant national 'Others'– in the cultural production of news. He argues the case of new modes of representation that produces a new vision of investigative and democratic journalism through the perception of the national 'Other' as 'our fellows', aligning the imageries of the Kurdish and Arab communities with journalistic pro-democracy agendas.