



**NEWS SATIRE AS RESISTANCE:
A COMPARISON OF ZAYTUNG AND THE ONION**

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Master's Thesis

Graduate School
Izmir University of Economics

Izmir

2022

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ABSTRACT

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July, 2022

“Comic” has been used as a way to tell the truth to power, and discussions on defining “comic” and its usage on challenging the power are partly intertextual. A method of “comic” challenging the power is comic presenting itself as fact, thus challenging the legitimacy of the official language, the comic becomes satirical, ironic and parodic on this endeavour. The Onion and Zaytung are famous examples of this practice in the internet age. To explain political reflexes of The Onion and Zaytung I will analyze Zaytung’s coverage of the 2019 Turkish Municipal Elections and The Onion’s coverage of the 2020 US Presidential Election, for both of these elections have shown populist leaders de-legitimizing a legitimate election. In order to compare these two publications, I will discuss irony, satire, parody, discursive integration, carnivalesque, Turkish media under Erdogan’s rule, US media under Trump’s rule, and the 2019 and 2020 elections. In my findings, although they show variance dependent on the context, Zaytung represents a more direct dissent for it is situated in a strict environment,

whereas The Onion provides more insightful content that profoundly challenges those in power.

Keywords: 2019 Turkish Elections, 2020 Elections, Satirical News, Discursive I-Integration, Humour



ÖZET

DİRENİŞ OLARAK HABER HİCİV: ZAYTUNG VE THE ONİON KARŞILAŞTIRMASI

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Medya ve İletişim Çalışmaları Yüksek Lisans Programı

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Aysun Akan

Temmuz, 2022

“Komiklik” gerçeği güçlüye söylemenin bir yolu olarak kullanılmıştır ve “komikliği” ve onun gücü sınamasını tanımlayan tartışmalar kısmen metinlerarasılık gösterir. “Komikliğin” gücü sınamasının bir metodu, komiğin kendisini hakiki olarak sunmasıdır, böylelikle resmi dilin meşruluğunu sorgular, bu çabasında ‘komik’ hicivsel, ironik ve parodik özellikler taşır. The Onion ve Zaytung bu pratiğin internet çağındaki meşhur örnekleridir. The Onion ve Zaytung’un politik reflexlerini açıklamak için Zaytung’un 2019 Türk Belediye Seçimlerini ve The Onion’un 2020 Amerikan Başkanlık Seçimlerini ele alış şeklini analiz edeceğim, çünkü iki seçim de popülist liderlerin meşru bir seçimin meşruluğunu çürütmeye çalıştığı seçimler oldu. Bu iki yayını karşılaştırmak için, ironi, hiciv, parodi, söyleysel bütünleşme, karnaval, Erdoğan rejiminde Türk Medyası, Trump Rejiminde Amerikan Medyası, 2019 ve 2020 seçimlerini tartışacağım. Bulgularıma göre, bağlama göre farklılık gösterebilir, daha baskıcı koşullarda içerik ürettiği için Zaytung daha doğrudan bir muhalifliği

temsil ediyor, bununla beraber The Onion gücü daha derinden sınayan, daha fazla içgörüyeye sahip bir içerik üretiyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 2019 Seçimleri, 2020 Seçimleri, Hicivsel Haber, Söyleysel Bütünleşme, Mizah.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my mom, who is my *raison d'être* for so many reasons. She and my sister are the beams of support that I always rely on. Next, I would like to thank my advisor Assoc. Professor Aysun Akan for her faith in me. She believed in me and my work more than I did. She is walking proof of what a teacher can do with patience and belief in her students.

I must thank Donald Lee Dungan Jr. and Nilgün Dungan for their assistance with my writing.

I should also thank Prof. Y. Gökçen Karanfil and Asst. Prof. A. Özgür Gürsoy as their lectures have influenced me to apply for this master's program. I also should thank all my lecturers at Izmir University of Economics, whose lectures have always improved me. I should thank them and IUE for giving me the faith and passion for academic pursuits.

I must definitely give a special thanks to the staff of The Onion and Zaytung for answering my questions, particularly Mike Gillis and Murat Dural. And thanks to Caitlin for making my connection with Mike Gillis possible.

Thank my friends for simply existing, Emily, Emre, Faith, İsmail, Jorn, Leyla Laura, Selma, Semalinka and Uma. Perhaps no thanks would be enough for my therapist, who is definitely amongst the people I heavily relied on whilst writing this thesis.

Without the works of the authors that I cited, this thesis would not be possible.

Lastly, I thank my dogs for always being there for me, and annoying me at every opportunity.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA - (Anadolu Ajansı - Anatolian Agency)

AKP - (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – Justice and Development Party)

ANAP - (Anavatan Partisi – Homeland Party)

CHP - (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - Republican People’s Party)

DP - (Demokrat Parti, Democrat Party)

EU - (European Union)

İP - (İyi Parti – Good Party)

HDP - (Halkların Demokratik Partisi - People’s Democratic Party)

LWT - (Last Week Tonight with John Oliver)

MHP - (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi - Nationalist Movement Party)

NYT - (The New York Times)

RSF (Reporters without Borders – Reporters sans Frontières)

RTÜK - (Radyo Televizyon Üst Kurulu – Supreme Council of Radio and Television)

SP - (Saadet Partisi - Felicity Party)

TMSF - (Tasarruf Mevduatı Sigorta Fonu – Savings Deposit Insurance Funds)

TRT - (Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu – Radio and Television Institution of Turkey)

US - (United States)

USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

YSK - (Yüksek Seçim Kurulu – Supreme Election Council)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The reason I wanted to choose this topic was, one day I was watching Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (LWT), when I realized that I happened to know a lot about US politics, at least on a basic level and I acquired that knowledge by my pure interest in the topic. I think, me as a Turkish man, living in Turkey, knowing basic issues in the US had me excited for this concept by narrating a “boring” yet important subject in entertaining ways.

Initially, I wanted to have a comparison between LWT and its possible Turkish counterpart, however, that was unlikely to happen because the Turkish market was lacking a comparable counterpart to LWT. Which encouraged me to choose satirical news outlets as they both exist in Turkey and the US.

After that, the decision of choosing the outlets for analysing news satire were relatively easy, for despite not being the founding publications of news satire in their cultures, The Onion and Zaytung are the major news satire publications of their own cultures. The Onion is one of the most known publications of news satire worldwide to a level that it actually inspired Zaytung’s foundation. More than being popular or noticeable, Zaytung and The Onion are publications with political commentary, and it could be argued that their political positions are similar.

To compare Zaytung and The Onion’s political reflexes, I have chosen the events of the Turkish local elections of 2019, and the U.S presidential elections of 2020 for three reasons, first, for these elections show an authoritative reaction to the voters will, Zaytung and The Onion’s coverage of these events are not only more comparable but potentially could give a better insight. Second, I will present a contextual analysis that will give us a clear picture on Zaytung and The Onion’s coverage of these events and their positions. I will also discuss the issue of The Onion coverage of the 9/11 attacks, for it could be seen as a benchmark of how a sensitive topic should be dealt with using humour.

I find this discussion important, for not only studies regarding Zaytung, satirical news and comedy’s political function needs to be discussed, but also I believe the literature

lacks a comparative study, especially on Zaytung, that challenges satirical news by comparing it to another context.

When we consider decreasing trust on mainstream news channels and increased polarization in society and media institutions, the role and function of satirical news formats must be investigated. Such publications ranging from The Daily Show to Zaytung produce a very popular content which became part of their audience's media diets. Following the popularity (and trends in media ownership structure) these outlets produces a profitable content that also attracts investors and advertisers.

Moreover, the literature covering these outlets or programs tends to put less emphasis on these publications as a commercial commodity. In this endeavour, I will try to present Zaytung's and The Onion's profiles, and their place within the financial and political structure.

Although it is justifiable in repressive politics, the literature tends to focus on an optimistic explanation of comedy's role on subverting power relations. However, their subversion should be questioned not only on the light of efficiency but also in light of their political positions.

And in order to analyse the works of Zaytung and The Onion, I will discuss the theories of: irony, parody, satire, discursive integration and news satire, I will also discuss the critical approaches on the political humour and political power.

To provide the context to situate The Onion and Zaytung in the media structure, I will discuss Turkish media under Erdogan's rule and US media under Trump's rule, and to provide the political context, I will discuss 2019 Turkish municipal elections and 2020 US presidential elections. I will also discuss the concept of the fifth estate to further situate Zaytung and The Onion in the still developing internet media.

CHAPTER 2: TWO PLAYERS

2.1. *Zaytung*

“Zaytung” is the Turkish pronunciation of the German word for Newspaper, Die Zeitung. It was founded in 2009 by Hakan Bilginer. In 2018 it was reported that the website has more than 120.000 registered users (Güneş, 2018). In an interview (Kedi, 2010), Bilginer stated that the website has 5 editors including himself in the same interview it was also stated that the website gets more than 1.5 million visitors monthly.

Although not the first, Zaytung is the most influential news satire publication in Turkey. The role model for the website was The Onion (Durgun, 2012). However, the online culture formed prior to Zaytung was also influential, for Hakan Bilginer and the other editors were also users and writers¹ at ekşisözlük.

In Zaytung content is either written by the moderating staff or the registered users, the pieces written by the users is chosen and edited by moderators to be published on the website. Zaytung has 12 sections, which are: Video News, Photo News Blog, Films, Books, Gaming, Sports, astrology, Magazine, Survey, People’s Voice and Breaking News.

Similar to The Onion’s AV Club, Zaytung’s sections of books, cinema and blog, includes non-satirical, serious writings about its subjects. It is arguably not effective or popular as the AV Club, it achieved a level of popularity to maintain itself as a regular section within the website and hold an interview with a celebrated caricaturist (Zaytung, 2021).

In order to understand Zaytung better, I have sent my questions (that I was unable to find an answer to in my research) to Murat Dural (former editor of Zaytung). He has answered my questions by consulting to Zaytung when necessary.

¹ Bilginer himself was a writer for an ekşisözlük’s publication.

I introduced myself to Zaytung as a master's student at İzmir University of Economics who is writing a thesis about the comparison of Zaytung and The Onion. Mr. Dural was informed that his answers could become public in their entirety. It is possible that the political nature of these cases and answers being public could have influenced the answers. The full text of questions and answers are given in Appendix B.

In my correspondence with Zaytung, it was revealed that a project for a separate website was considered, however it was cancelled for it would be overwhelming for the staff. It was also revealed that these sections were intended to produce popular film critiques using humour.

Media attention on Zaytung is severely limited and mostly concentrated from its inception to the mid-2010's, it would be safe to say that the academic attention to the website also concentrated on these dates with the addition of this thesis concentrating on the years 2018-2019.

Another way of arguing that 2009-2014 has been the rising years of Zaytung would be that one of the rare video contents, which also includes some celebrities were also produced by Zaytung within this timeframe (Zaytung). In my correspondence with Mr. Dural, it was acknowledged that Zaytung was indeed influential in its early years and could have grown had the founding staff not split up.

Currently, Zaytung is the largest news satire in Turkey, one of Bilginer's interviews states that Zaytung has been sued only once, which was later dismissed. However, a Turkish college student has been convicted for the offence of "insulting a public official" on the basis of her retweeting a Zaytung piece (Mackey, 2015). In the same interview, Bilginer stated that Zaytung does not conduct any self-censorship unless the content may cause a problem with legal guidelines.

There are YouTube channels like "Kurcala" and "Röportaj Adam" that creates similar content on YouTube, the former being a former Zaytung employee. There have been

few rival publications, including one founded by former Zaytung staff (Onedio, 2015), currently they are either shut down² or remain inactive³.

In my correspondence with Mr. Dural, I asked a possible reason for Zaytung outliving their competition, and it was argued that Zaytung had a great start that boosted its profile with creative content, and it is possible to suggest that the current popularity of Zaytung is partly due to people's dissatisfaction and frustration with current politics. In the same interview, it was also revealed that not only Zaytung's editors produce content for other parties, but also the staff of Zaytung are able to list their experience in their CV and benefit from that experience. In other words, the web sector recognizes Zaytung as a reputable brand in online content creation.

2.2. *The Onion*

The Onion's foundation reaches back to 1988, The Onion got founded as a black and white tabloid, by two college students, in the University of Wisconsin (Shankbone, 2007). By 1989 its founders, sold The Onion for 16-19 thousand dollars to Scott Dikkers and Peter Haise, both of whom have been working with The Onion since its foundation and ran the publication for 13 years. The original founders, Tim Keck and Christopher Johnson, went on to open different publications on different cities.

The name's origin is long disputed, there are claims that it was referring to an old journalism term (Onion) for a juicy story (The Spectator, 2007) or that it was a reference to a campus newspaper called "The Union" (UChicago Institute of Politics, 2015). The most popular explanation is, the name being a reference to the actual onion sandwiches that the creators had to eat a lot because they were out of money (The Spectator, 2007), this vagueness was confirmed in my correspondence with The Onion, and was confirmed that to this day it's origin is unknown. Perhaps one of the most interesting facts about The Onion also underlies one of its biggest differences with Zaytung, one of the presenters of The Onion News Network actually got hired by CNN (Waisanen, 2011), similarly, writers at The Onion has been hired by programs like the Daily Show and Colbert Report (Finn, 2006) and the main difference that this

² Sahte Gazete or Uydurma Haber for example

³ Resmigaste

signifies is that, it seems unlikely for Zaytung to achieve such financial means to hire a professional cast member.

In 1993, the paper started an another non-satirical paper called AV Club, which consisted of reviews about films, music, restaurants, etc. The AV Club has its own separate website which is under the same ownership group of The Onion (Tower, 2008; G/O Media, 2022). In late 2000's, The Onion launched "The Onion News Network", combination of skits perfectly mimicking mainstream Television programs, in addition to ONN, The Onion also began producing radio sketches that was aired on radio and podcasts (Marx, 2015). The writers for the ONN and writers for The Onion are unionized under the Writers Guild of America-East (Associated Press, 2018; Luippold, 2011). The Onion has won a Peabody Award in 2008 with The Onion News Network, prior to the ONN. The Onion ceased its print publications at 2013.

In order to provide a detailed background information about the Onion, in addition to my web- search and the analysis of secondary sources, I have sent the Onion a set of 11 questions through email. I have introduced myself to The Onion as a master's student at İzmir University of Economics who is writing a thesis about the comparison of Zaytung and The Onion. I have informed Mr. Gillis that his answers will become public in their entirety. The questions I have asked and the answers I have received are provided in Appendix B.

Unlike Zaytung, The Onion does not accept any kind of user submitted story, as Gillis states The Onion seeks some criteria from their writers that is:

We rarely, if ever, accept candidates from mainstream media. The qualifications needed to write a good piece of satire—and particularly write one in The Onion's distinct style—are a deep knowledge of our archives, a love for our voice, and a unique/creative perspective (Personal Interview with Mike Gillis, 12/04/2022).

2.2.1. Benchmark Case: The Onion's 9/11 Issue

The Onion's first issue after 9/11 is noteworthy, even today, the HFS issue is noticeable within of the literature about The Onion, and the literature on this issue argues that the issue is a case for a comedic outlet's flawless response to a national trauma.

With this issue, The Onion received widespread praise and also the webpage's number of visitors doubled. Even before the 9/11, The Onion had secured the profile of a qualified publication winning Webby and Thumber Awards (Achter, 2008). In retrospect, it is evident that 9/11 changed the America thus it gave humourists a challenging task to show humour's function of healing and reconstructing.



Figure 2. The Onion Issue 37-34: The September 11th issue (Source: Twitter,2021)

It goes without saying that, neither the capitol riots nor a mayoral election is comparable to 9/11 attacks, therefore to compare the publications response would be irrational at face value. However, for the HFS issue is a praised example of humour's healing function, I argue that a brief look into the issue would be helpful to build an expectation for a comedy publication.

In the table below, the headlines for the pieces are given.

Table 1. The Onion Volume: 37, Issue 34 (27 September – 3 October 2001)

Headlines of The Pieces
Hijackers Surprised To Find Selves In Hell
American Life Turns Into Bad Jerry Bruckheimer Movie
God Angrily Clarifies 'Don't Kill' Rule
U.S. Vows To Defeat Whoever It Is We're At War With
Not Knowing What Else To Do, Woman Bakes American-Flag Cake
Jerry Falwell: Is That Guy A Dick Or What?
Talking To Your Child About The WTC Attack
We Must Retaliate with Blind Rage vs. We Must Retaliate With Measured, Focused Rage
On TV Tonight
Holy Fucking Shit Attack on America:
What Now?
Making America Safer
Hugging Up 76,000 Percent
How Have We Spent The Past Two Weeks?
Bush Sr. Apologizes To Son For Funding Bin Laden In '80s
Report: Gen X Irony, Cynicism May Be Permanently Obsolete
Arab-American Third-Grader Returns From Recess Crying, Saying He Didn't Kill Anyone
Rest Of Country Temporarily Feels Deep Affection For New York
Massive Attack On Pentagon Page 14 News
Dinty Moore Breaks Long Silence On Terrorism With Full-Page Ad
President Urges Calm, Restraint Among Nation's Ballad Singers

An interesting coverage is a coverage regarding Jerry Falwell, initially I mistook the coverage about an unrelated topic, and literature focusing on this issue emphasizes less on the Falwell piece as well. Reverend Jerry Falwell became a controversial figure after claiming god allowed 9/11 as a punishment for secularization of state, homosexuals, feminism and abortions (Goodstein, 2001).

Statements of these kind, seeing a disaster or an attack as a punishment against a group are often made, creating a huge controversy. Considering how outrageous the statement is, it is reasonable that Jerry Falwell received the second harshest coverage from The Onion, following the hijackers themselves. Apart from the headline directly

calling him “a dick”, The Onion also delves into this issue on “Making America Safer” by stating that gay marriage has been outlawed on America in hopes of gaining god’s protection.

On this approach, arguably The Onion delegitimizes a “culture war” approach, considering the Falwell’s picture combined with pictures of the civilians running away from the collapsing towers, the moment of explosion, the terrorists and even god himself. Falwell does indeed stays out of place and my interpretation is that such composition demonstrates the whimsical nature of these arguments, moreover The Onion taking Falwell’s arguments seriously and suggesting it as an actual security measure demonstrates lack of substance of Falwell’s argument.

On a similar line, looking at the images chosen for the pieces, The Onion presents a rather diverse picture of United States on its visuals and its text, looking at the visuals, an Asian man, a black man, a black woman and a black child are presented as well as white man and white woman, in addition to that on the texts we could observe an Arab-American and citizens from different parts of the United States such as Kansas, New York, Texas and Minnesota. I would argue that The Onion aims to present a diverse and united nation facing a trauma.

As I will discuss later, the arguments against irony fear is it promotes a nihilistic view that could de-legitimize social institutions, matter of fact critics of irony went so far to suggest that, today’s population wouldn’t take World War 2 as seriously as the people of the day (O’Rourke and Rodrigues, 2004), however this issue not only proves critics like Rosenblatt wrong, but it demonstrates the need for the constructive works of Irony. Let us recall two pieces from the issue, “American Life Turns into Bad Jerry Bruckheimer Movie” and “Report: Gen X Irony, Cynicism May Be Permanently Obsolete”, the first one presents citizens who are disappointed by the reality for it is not as exciting as it is in the movies, as others did, this is The Onion presenting US citizens being able to distinguish between the fiction and reality (Achter, 2008; O’Rourke and Rodrigues, 2004).

Looking at the latter piece, arguably, it further deflates the notion that the new generation is apathetic in face of a trauma, it partly notices the possible changes in US media and society,

Normally, I'd make some sarcastic wisecrack about something like that. But this time, I was deeply moved. (The Onion, 2001)

This presents a population that could distinguish an “earnest” act from a hilarious one, moreover, maybe unintentionally, it also refers to a sensitive and perhaps patriotic media that were to be cultivated.

The Onion’s imitation of the newspapers is also telling, comparing the image 2 to the image 1, the emphasis on the attacks itself and the administration’s response is expected, NYT’s high emphasis on the destruction, as the shown example is from the day after, is shared by The Onion to an extent, a reason for this may be that the issue was published around 1-2 weeks later than the attacks, moreover, giving a high visual representation of the destruction could work as a propaganda for the terrorists, on this line, The Onion further humiliates the terrorists by showing their experiences in hell, “Hijackers Surprised To Find Selves In Hell”, the emphasis on “hell” shows a failure and disgrace when we consider this is an act of religious fundamentalists, I will refer to the religious aspects later.



Figure 4. The New York Times, 12/09/2001, Front-page (Source: College of Coastal Georgia Library)

Visually, The Onion follows the design of the mainstream news, the title and date is at the top, the page is divided into three, at the centre is the main story of the issue presented with the largest picture, below the main story is another piece following the main story, at the right section there are other pieces given less weight and at the left section there are ongoing segments that are present in every issue. Moreover, slightly applied green colour (the brand colour of The Onion) is applied slightly in the paper's design, this combined with a line of American flag with the title 'special report' gives The Onion further credibility for it successfully presents a newspaper brand. Textually, The Onion strictly follows the Associated Press style of writing and utilizes an indirect speech.

However, The Onion was able to delve into topics that is sensitive such as a complicated history of US involvement in the Middle East and Afghanistan, involving, including the George "Papa Duck" Bush Sr's policies that directly funded Osama bin Laden.

Moreover, the media itself was one of The Onion's subjects, especially seen "On TV Tonight" and "President Urges Calm, Restraint Among Nation's Ballad Singers", The Onion shows the dramatic reaction of the media outlets that arguably works not only as a terrorist propaganda but also this dramatic reaction could have divisive consequences, as there were attempts by the conservative outlets to blame the liberals (Taibbi, 2019).

"We Must Retaliate with Blind Rage vs. We Must Retaliate with Measured, Focused Rage" is a critique of the internal pluralism and the objectivity of the news outlets, although the section is presented as "Point/Counterpoint", proposed points are poorly designed and does not necessarily contradict each other.

Furthermore, a disappointed message from the "God" condemning the actions, clarifying that Islam also follows the 'Don't kill rule' and thus transmits that the hijackers are radicals that represents a minority, this accompanied by hijackers getting tortured in hell, a punishment directly coming from God would further distance Islam and the fundamentalists.

Through this piece The Onion breaks the narrative of us versus them, “us” being the white Americans and “them” being Muslims or Arabs, on this issue “Islam” is cleared all of charges for terrorists themselves are radicals who cannot be used to generalize Muslims or Arabs.

Remembering the Booth’s conceptualization of Irony, The Onion builds a platform on which a diverse nation unites against radicals, Arab-Americans were already facing an instant discrimination after 9/11 (Achter, 2008), and The Onion’s proposed a ‘platform’ to the Americans proposes a levelled discussion and higher humane standards.

The Onion acknowledges and responds to feelings of trauma and anxieties. “Not Knowing What Else to Do, Woman Bakes American-Flag Cake”, “How Have We Spent the Past Two Weeks” shows a traumatised and confused nation, and The Onion does not reject or ridicule these feelings, it draws a comedy from the shared experiences and notions (dislike towards the New Yorkers for example) that arguably builds a community on shared experiences.

Moreover, The Onion reminds the nation, difficulties of the “war against terror” and challenges that the US government may face on “Making America Safer” and “U.S. Vows to Defeat Whoever It Is We're at War with”, the latter underlines the difficulties, the need of deliberation on fighting against al-Qaeda for unlike conventional wars, terrorists are not a country and war against them would require collaboration of ally countries and the countries that they are based in (Achter, 2008), the latter shows authorities anxiety on maintaining trust on airplane travel and possible security procedures.

In conclusion, I agree with Achter, The Onion sends an “invitation of understanding”. It can be seen especially on “Hugging Up 76,000 Percent” that the issue is not solely focused on laughter, this piece shows the much needed warmth and recuperation. And it succeeds on doing so not by poking fun of the traumatized citizens or discriminating

a group but by, expressing the trauma and showing citizens expressing empathy and warmth to each other.

2.3. Financial Structure

Publications exist within a financial market, not only they have to cover their costs through their profits, but also their growth and even their content could depend on the publications financial success.

Zaytung receives its funding through ads and content creation for other companies. In the past, Zaytung had a store which was similar to The Onion's, the store seems to be closed whilst the links to the store seems present in the website. The website also opened a restaurant in Ankara (Radikal, 2015), whilst they offer franchising on their website, there seems to be no deal made.

In a collaboration with April Publishing, Zaytung has published 5 almanacs, covering the years 2009-2017 (Habertürk, 2018). Bilginer stated that they were planning to add a section to the website in English in an interview (Ertan, 2018), however such a section was not realized. It was stated in the interview that the almanac project has been paused due to the increasing costs for print publication.

The Onion's funding comes mostly from advertisements; the paper was free from its inception. Although, The Onion had experimented with the paid subscription model in 2011, despite raising some interest at the time, The Onion seemed to have ceased their experiment for the website which is currently free to visit (Phelps, 2011).

The Onion also operates an online store for selling its own merchandise. In addition, they have published 13 books (The Onion). In early 2000's, there was an attempt to produce a movie based on The Onion, however, the end result was not satisfactory enough for the producers. In the late 2000's, The Onion launched "The Onion News Network", on television which is also present on its YouTube channel, the publications also produced skits for radio channels (Marx, 2015). In 2013, Amazon Instant Video tried to create a series, named "Onion News Empire", however, the pilot episode of

the series failed to gather enough attention for further episodes (McGlynn, 2013; Evans, 2013)

It appears that, funding for The Onion and Zaytung is similar, in a way that they are mostly dependant on in-site advertisements, although there is no data about it, it is assumable that book deals and merchandise sales make a small portion of the websites income.

However, there is a significant difference that is worthy of mentioning, The Onion is not only present on a larger market than Zaytung, but it is also part of a media group that has a very large number of visitors.

This is significant for The Onion can also sell advertisement and cross-buys, The Onion even had an opportunity to sell ad placements on its website and print version (Forbes, 2005). And, in contrast, Zaytung follows a more aggressive approach on advertisement, not only, there are visibly more advertising on Zaytung than The Onion. Zaytung also publishes sponsored content regularly, in contrast The Onion publishes almost no sponsored content. Another proof of Zaytung's being more interested in advertisements would be that, in an interview, an editor from Zaytung stated that, around half of the editors shifts are spent on decisions on advertisements and sponsored content (Top, 2019).

The aggressive nature of Zaytung is understandable, for Zaytung is in a market that is smaller than The Onion's. The media kits⁴, published by The Onion shows the websites growth from two million monthly visitors in 1999 to fifteen million monthly visitor in 2016, in addition the 2016 media kit claims that Onion Inc. websites gather more than thirty million visitors per month⁵.

It is expected to see that The Onion has higher numbers of visitors and followers than Zaytung. However, it is noticeable that, social media channels may be more important

⁴ The media kits were accessed through archive.org

⁵ This was when Onion Inc. was consisted of five websites, currently G/O Media consists of eleven websites

for Zaytung. Unlike The Onion, Zaytung does not offer any press kits that contains the visitor information. In 2014, in his interview with Ayşe Arman, Bilginer claimed that Zaytung has around one and half million monthly visitors (Arman, 2014).

In 2016, Başer and Yıldırım claimed that Zaytung is a website in decline for visits made to the website are decreasing (Başer and Yıldırım, 2016). This claim seems to hold water when the 1.5 million monthly visitors in 2014 is compared to the 791 thousand visitors in 2021⁶.

However, when the increase of the website's followers on social media is noticed (320 thousand Twitter followers in 2014 and 6 million twitter followers in 2021), the changing trends of the audience could explain the decrease in website traffic and increase of the social media following.

In an interview with Zaytung, it was stated that the readers who don't see a news piece on social media, tend to ignore or not view it on the website, and Zaytung considers their reader's online habits.

Another important difference is that, The Onion is operated more like a company, proof of that is, whilst there is no news or a report about Zaytung getting sold or changing ownership, The Onion's ownership has changed approximately five times since its foundation. As I will also point out in the following chapters, this falls in line with The Onion's identity being a mimic of a corporate news network, whilst Zaytung's identity is a blog.

The Onion was first sold to its own staff (Scott Dikkers and Peter Haise) by its founders for sixteen thousand dollars (Forbes, 2005). In 2005, it was sold to Schafer-Cullen Capital Management for four million dollars. Viacom was interested in acquiring The Onion, with speculations of a possible purchase, but such a purchase did not occur (Huffington Post, 2006)

⁶I used similarweb.com to check visitor numbers, I would like to point out that the same also shows a similar decrease for the Onion. The claim of Zaytung's "decreasing number of visitors" or shift on social media cannot be soundly proven.

In 2013, Univision bought The Onion websites. It is speculated that Univision bought the websites for less than two hundred million dollars. It is stated that, Univision's goal in acquiring The Onion was to expand its reach by including an English speaking millennial audience (Feeney, 2016).

Especially, Schafer-Cullen's purchase of The Onion is significant. Before the purchase, The Onion was actually losing money, despite having the annual revenue of five million dollars⁷. Therefore second purchase by Schafer-Cullen also indicates a time in which The Onion is operated as a business (Forbes, 2005). A result of this change can be seen in 2014, The Onion was declaring an annual revenue of twenty million dollars with a profit of three million dollars and promising an increase for the following year (Kafka, 2014). Although unconfirmed, some sources (Similarweb; Zoominfo)suggests that the yearly revenue of The Onion is around twenty to thirty million dollars.

Another aspect of The Onion getting managed like a business would be that, a common interest of its proprietors over the years, has been reaching younger demographic, which is a valuable demographic on terms of advertising sales. Although not specific as The Onion's, a similar demographic was also attached to early Turkish websites, including Zaytung (Oklay, 2015).

In contrast, Zaytung's unchanging ownership, also shows a fundamental difference between the markets. Despite being listed with other Turkish web giants like yemeksepeti.com and eksisozluk.com on Hürriyet's early internet entrepreneurs" list (Hürriyet, 2018). Despite having top advertisers on their list. Zaytung is neither a market item like The Onion nor is it flexible like The Onion.

Although, the Turkish market was successful to create websites that are valued by the market like yemeksepeti.com and gittigidiyor.com (CNNTürk, 2016; Arman, 2015), the speed of market mobilisation of Turkish websites needs further research. It is

⁷ It is suggestible that a part of this spike was because the Onion founded its website in 1996.

naturally not expected for Turkish website market to match the US market, which even had a Dot Com Bubble on late 1990's

Moreover, I believe that the media ownership structure of Turkey can also have an effect, for example, the structure shown by Aslı Tunç in her article written in 2018 (Tunç, 2018), shows that not only the Turkish media is concentrated on few conglomerates, but also the oppositional outlets are most likely to be owned by foundations or smaller corporates. It is suggestable that the structure of the Turkish media may be discouraging for the interested parties to invest in oppositional outlets. I don't believe that The Onion being recognized by investors and being able to produce more financial value than Zaytung does not necessarily make its level of opposition less insignificant than Zaytung. For, even more aggressive than The Onion, Zaytung also aims to attract advertisers and even the former editors of Zaytung claimed that "undemocratic" work environment of Zaytung influenced them to open their own website (Onedio, 2015).

2.4. Language, Visuals and Identity

The language and visuals of satirical news are an essential part of their criticism. As noted by numerous articles, satirical news aims to imitate the real news on its looks and on its language. This imitation of the language also works as a function to attack the language of Journalism. Through this attack on the language it undermines the authority of the "powerful" aesthetics (Achter, 2008; Berkowitz and Schwartz, 2016; Güneş, 2018)



Figure 6. Screenshot from Zaytung (Turkey continues its support on Ukraine through subliminal messages to not anger Russia). (Source: Zaytung, n.d. - n)

As noted by Güneş and Toker, there is a type of news made by Zaytung which is not seen on The Onion, on which the actual news from news outlets is presented with a title written by Zaytung. In this Zaytung piece, the screenshot from the news website Cumhuriyet, which describes the queues formed at Ukrainian gas stations due to Russian forces entering the Ukraine is juxtaposed with another screenshot from another news website T24, which describes the queues formed at Turkish gas stations due to an impending rise in prices.

Through the combination of this juxtaposition, Zaytung provides the context through the news (that it aims to parody) and it often uses screenshots of alternative news outlets to provide context. The visuals on The Onion are overwhelmingly edited, unlike Zaytung, there can be no screenshot seen on The Onion's pieces.

However, unlike the satire news, through this action Zaytung not only "twists" the news about ongoing events and presents the realities but it also takes its mimicry of the language to a different level. The audience can simultaneously see the title written by Zaytung and the title written by the actual news outlet (Güneş, 2018; Toker, 2019). Within this context, the contrast between The Onion and Zaytung on their ability of value creation, is also important for a larger difference between them. Which is that, the identity they aim to portray are noticeably different. The Onion's identity is a leading, professional news organization. In comparison, Zaytung's identity seems like a personal blog at best. The statements of these websites that describes themselves makes a sharp contrast.

The Onion's website provides a fake, exaggerated yet formally written history of a itself that is supposedly founded in 1756 and has a daily readership of 4.3 trillion, after the playful history, The Onion simply provides a short section for frequently asked questions, then proceeds to the contact information and cast information (The Onion). In comparison, Zaytung's approach is entirely different. Firstly, although the membership to Zaytung is free of charge, the closest thing to the about section is the frequently asked questions that members see on their profile. Which describes the rules of the website with few information regarding Zaytung. Moreover, the informal

language of the section seems more like a chat between an administrator and a user, rather than a description.

Especially compared to The Onion, Zaytung shows an almost anonymous identity, for free speech is not strongly protected in Turkey, in a famous example, a Turkish college student was sentenced because of a Zaytung article, however the website received no lawsuits or fines from any government officials. This contrasts the fines or sentences received by the media outlets and personalities for the offence of “insulting the government officials and institutions” (Cumhuriyet, 2022a; 2022b).

I suggest that, the identity we observe in Zaytung may function as a shield, because, unlike The Onion, the audience is less likely to see it as a corporation, moreover, the anonymity provided by Zaytung makes the task of determining the responsible party. Therefore, this vague identity and its combination with lack of market value may act as a shield for Zaytung.

It is also bizarre that, this contrast on identity, does not undermines or even weakens the function of Zaytung as news satire. The competitors of Zaytung were better at creating a website with more professional identity, however, if the portrayed identity were a determining factor, Zaytung would go out of business instead of its competitors. However, The Onion’s own website, seems authoritative through its perfect mimicry of mainstream news, as mentioned before, The Onion recognizes that they have their culture and seek to cast their writers that recognizes this culture. The “authoritative” identity is more apparent in The Onion for their mimicry is better.

In my questions, I was curious to learn if The Onion seeks expert opinion on complicated issues, and I learned that although it is not usual, they seek expert opinion when they have questions about their representation. Arguably The Onion seeks to perfect their mimicry, however they neither want to draw a false representation nor want to be seen as a legitimate source, this line, arguably, became more thin yet more important after the 2016 elections (Meade, 2017)

During my research within The Onion, I have encountered a strange headline from The Onion “Turkish Actor Thinks He's Cüneyt Fucking Arkin” which surprised me for Cüneyt Arkin is a Turkish actor who is unknown to the US audience. My initial thought was an attempt from The Onion to enter the Turkish market. The response I gathered had been surprising yet defining:

No, this wasn't part of our plan to dominate the Turkish market. The idea of that joke is that we're using a common English phrase (“acting like he's [insert famous person's first name] fucking [insert famous person's last name]”, e.g. “acting like he's Tom fucking Hanks”) used to mock someone who's getting a little too big for their britches, but using a famous Turkish actor who would be unrecognizable to almost our entire audience. The fun of this idea is decentralizing the dominant narrative about, say, the United States being the epicentre of the cultural universe. In terms of Onions in other markets, most countries have very particular references and unique sense of humor that make porting over a comedy institution difficult—but never say never! (Personal Interview with Mike Gillis, 12/04/2022).

This theme acts in layers, for it challenges the US-centrism even on the non-US societies, and whilst it challenges the US-centrism, it keeps its own aesthetics and its humour. In this piece The Onion walks in a thicker line between having a perfect mimicry and not having a wrong representation.

Returning to Zaytung, it's inferiority on design was recognized by Bilginer himself, Bilginer claims that, the designed this way to give an amateur looking website (Durgun, 2012). In my correspondence with Mr.Dural, this inferiority was recognized and it is suggested that in Zaytung's view joke matters the most and in the Turkish internet humour jokes are often given with bad aesthetics, moreover, it is suggested that Zaytung's inferiority of design could make the jokes even funnier.

Table 2. Screenshots of Mainstream news websites and News Satire Websites






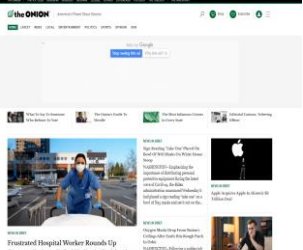
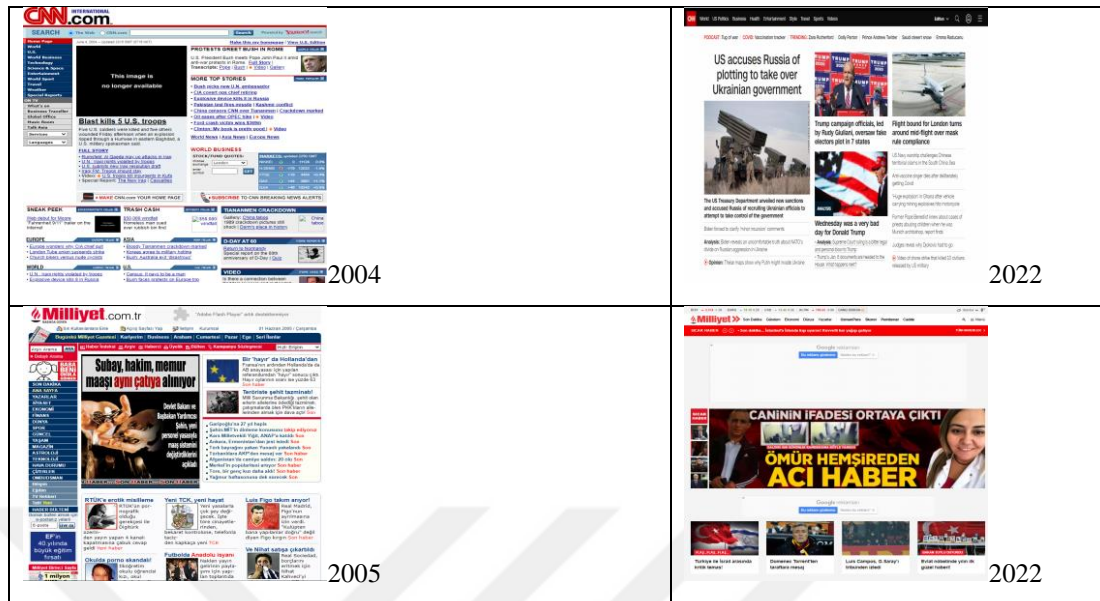
<p>Screenshots from Uydurma Haber, Zaytung, The Onion, CNN And Milliyet From The Years Of 2004,2005, 2006, 2009</p>	<p>Screenshots from Uydurma Haber, Zaytung, The Onion, CNN And Milliyet From The Years Of 2021 and 2022</p>
 <p>2006</p>	 <p>2021</p>
 <p>2009</p>	 <p>2022</p>
 <p>2004</p>	 <p>2022</p>

Table 2 (Continued). Screenshots of Mainstream news websites and News Satire Websites



Looking at Table 1, it is quite clear that, The Onion perfectly mimics the design of CNN or Uydurma Haber following Milliyet. However, Zaytung shows no discernible change within a decade, showing a dedication or procrastination on Zaytung’s part.

2.5. Political Positions

A defining difference exists between the media environments of Turkey and the United States, and that is the lack of news satire publications for different social or political motives in Turkey. Zaytung is not only the major publication for news satire, but past and current channels of news satire also are similar to Zaytung on their political positions.

Whereas, although, The Onion may also be the largest news satire in the US, and the liberal position may be more popular in the US. In contrast to the Turkish market, not only are there different news satire publications for different political positions, but there are also publications for more specific political positions.

As can be seen on. Brugman et al, there are “liberal satirical news” and “conservative satirical news” (Brugman et al, 2020, p. 7). In addition to their list, existence of satirical

magazines like Reductress, that specializes in women's issues, also suggests that satirical outlets are diversified further than conservative-liberal spectrum.

American conservatives, have long been stating that comedians and comedy outlets are mostly liberal, this is noticed by Brugman et al. as well, on their table it is clear to see that there are more liberal leaning websites. Although it is claimed that the Babylon Bee (conservative version of The Onion) gets as much web traffic as The Onion, it is arguable that the majority of the web traffic is on the liberal leaning satire websites (Roose, 2020).

In Turkey, news satire is politically unchallenged. The closest thing to a challenge comes from a website called cogitosözlük, whilst the format of the website is more similar to an internet forum rather than a satire outlet, the founders of the website stated that their intention was to create a "Zaytung-like" website for religious people to create safe humour that does not attack their values, the website is currently inactive (Cinmen, 2013).

The periodical caricature magazines in Turkey, are more diverse, however these magazines are often in opposition to the government, and may be argued to be on centre-left/liberal. Perhaps the closest thing to a conservative satirical outlet would be Misvak magazine which is published online.

There is a slight link between Misvak and the Özışık brothers – who are known to be close to the current government (Evrensel, 2021)-, Misvak was founded by a website called Haber Seyret in 2016 (Boxer, 2018), which was developed by Net Haber – another news website-. Currently, the editors of Net Haber are Süleyman Özışık and Sadık Albayrak (father of Berat Albayrak), and Net Haber's CEO of 2015 was Hadi Özışık (Haber Seyret, 2015; Net Haber, 2015).

This "connection" may be too far-fetched, however, setting Misvak aside, a pro-government or a conservative publication being dependent on government and government friendly personalities is not far-fetched scenario, moreover, it could be argued that, unlike the United States, Turkish conservatives may have failed in

cultivating an online culture that could sustain conservative leaning publications. Another example of that, Misvak magazine had sixty thousand followers on Twitter in 2018, increasing to ninety-eight thousand in 2022 (Boxer, 2018).

It seems that, the most popular conservative news satire in the US, is The Babylon Bee, which started as a satirical outlet for conservative Christians, however it is observed that it started to concentrate on issues as vaccine scepticism, transphobia and “baiting⁸” the progressives, especially after the ownership change in 2018 (Swift, 2021).

This “trolling” style of conservative online comedy is also noticed by Cody Johnston, a youtuber, on his video about the subject, he points out that conservative comedy is lately more concerned with angering the progressives/liberals online rather than making structured jokes (Johnston, 2021), Oliver Morrison of The Atlantic also notes that conservative comedians making political jokes “tend to be grounded in vague ideologies, not the attentive criticism to the news of the day” (Morrison, 2015).

American conservatives have been criticizing The Onion for being a “liberal mouthpiece” (Levy and Holland, 2017), whilst The Onion visibly has progressive/liberal bias, naming it as “liberal mouthpiece” would be shallow, for The Onion has also been criticized for being more critical of Joe Biden and being softer on Bernie Sanders during the 2020 primaries (Izadi, 2020; Robertson, 2020).

In comparison, there isn't much detailed information on Zaytung's politics. Most people visiting the website can notice that Zaytung is on the opposition of the current government. The most defining information on Zaytung's position also confirms this, for Hakan Bilginer stated his sport for the Gezi Park protests in his interview with Ayşe Arman (Arman, 2014).

In his thesis, Furkan Yazıcı analysed randomly selected Zaytung pieces, his analysis showed that the most mentioned political leader was Recep Tayyip Erdogan and

⁸ Content that is aimed to upset, frustrate or anger the progressive audience

Devlet Bahçeli, making up 80 percent of Zaytung pieces that features a political leader. In contrast Kemal Kılıçdaroglu and Meral Aksener only make up the remaining 20 percent. This conclusion also falls in line with Zaytung pieces that features a political party, AKP and MHP making up 80.9 percent, whilst CHP and IP only makes up 18.9 percent (Yazıcı, 2019).

Yazıcı's observations falls in line with my positioning of Zaytung, however, I also have to point out that, although the oppositional parties and leaders are represented noticeably less, the content on Zaytung are noticeably critical towards oppositional parties and leaders as well. This is something that can be noticed in The Onion as well.

More importantly, as I argued before Zaytung is noticeably vague, especially when compared to The Onion. Zaytung visibly holds a progressive stance on social issues, however, as Güneş also observed in her thesis, there are pieces published by Zaytung that contradict its progressive stance. This should be expected, when it is considered that a percentage of the Zaytung pieces are submitted by the readers. Although, the websites editors also function as moderators, it should be no surprise that Zaytung's political position is vaguer and harder to define on specific terms.

A similarity between The Onion and Zaytung would be that these publications are enjoyed and followed by many sides of the political spectrum, in his interview on A Haber, Hakan Bilginer stated that Zaytung has a lot of readers from the government (Ongun, 2012). And people like Robert Reich, Bernie Sanders and Nina Turner are followers of The Onion on Twitter and it was reported that during the Trump presidency, The Onion article that mocked Jared Kushner was passed around within the White House staff (Osborne, 2017), The Onion claims that Joe Biden actually likes its caricature of him, to the point of including it in a video at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner in 2014 (Little, 2016; Izadi, 2020).

It is bizarre that, The Onion was actually threatened with a lawsuit for defamation by Donald Trump, before he even ran for the presidency, in 2013 (Restuccia, 2018). Zaytung was not even threatened with a lawsuit.

Another similarity is that, both Zaytung and The Onion stated the difficulties of satire when the target of satire says “clownish” things, this notion was also stated by Jon Stewart during his programs on the Bush era (Kakutani, 2008; Little, 2016; Canlı Gaste, 2014). In an interview, a writer from The Onion explained that, real world politics becoming more strange than fiction is a challenge, for the aim of satire is not to be taken as a fact, but to show a different perspective (Meade, 2017).

2.6. Methodology

In my research I aim to question three things:

1-How do Zaytung and The Onion utilize irony, parody and satire?

2-What is the role of humour and satire on subverting power relations?

3-Do the content of Zaytung and The Onion challenge political power? Is it subversive?

I have chosen the coverage of the 2019 Turkish Municipal elections and 2020 US Presidential election for these two events has shown a populist leaders trying to change the results of a legitimate election. I especially focused on post-election coverage to focus on claims of voter irregularity.

For scanning news articles, I used Twitter’s function to search for account tweets within a specified timeframe, this was especially necessary for Zaytung, because Zaytung does not timestamp their posts, I also Twitter on The Onion to double check, for The Onion timestamps their posts and provide a chronologically classed archive.

For Zaytung, I scanned the timeframe 01/01/2019 – 24/06/2019, January 1 representing the beginning of the election process, June 24 representing İmamoğlu’s victory in the re-election.

For The Onion, I scanned the timeframe of 18/08/2020 – 20/01/2021, August 18 representing the announcement of Joe Biden’s candidacy and January 20 representing the inauguration of Joe Biden as President. I choose this timeframe for two reasons; first, to leave the coverage regarding the primaries for the candidacy and second to have a timeframe similar to Zaytung’s in length.

Initial criteria of choosing articles were their link to the election process, in the given timeframes, there were 112 pieces produced by The Onion, and 201 pieces produced by Zaytung that fits the criteria.

Because it produced significantly more content, I initially used these two criteria to filter Zaytung's pieces:

- Some of the pieces use political topics as a reference for an unrelated topic. For example, a Zaytung article disguised as a breaking news headline writes: "Başakşehir FC has appealed to the Turkish Football Federation for the recount of the goals in Galatasaray – Yeni Malatyaspor⁹", although the recount of the votes is referenced, the main subject of this headline is football.
- Secondly, Zaytung shares a lot of pieces that are just headlines without an image or text, moreover, the articles with a headline, image and text are a minority in Zaytung's pieces whilst it is the majority in The Onion. For this reason, I tried to prioritize the full Zaytung articles that could also be compared with the ones The Onion.

For the analysis and the comparison, I have selected the pieces that covers the coverage of politicians, election process, voters and media institutions. I have included Zaytung's coverage of the US elections and The Onion's coverage of the capitol riots and the inauguration of Joe Biden for a better understanding of these pieces' coverage of the election process.

For the pieces that covers the election process, I have chosen the pieces that depicts claims of voter fraud, conspiracy theories, attempts of re-counts and re-elections, for the pieces that covers the media institutions I have selected pieces that depicts the social media, media institutions and media personalities and their coverage of the election process. For the pieces that covers the political figures, I have chosen the pieces that depicts the statements and interactions of politicians.

⁹ "Son Dakika - Başakşehir FK, Galatasaray-Yeni Malatyaspor maçındaki gollerin tekrar sayılması için TFF'ye başvurdu..."

I have included the coverage of capitol riots and inauguration of Joe Biden, not only for it was a topic covered both by Zaytung and The Onion, but also because the capitol riots is an infamously exceptional event in the US history that is still being investigated and I have included the inauguration of Joe Biden for coverage of Biden shows a seldom example of an oppositional politicians being the focus of the pieces.

Following these criteria, 70 pieces from Zaytung and 44 pieces from The Onion was selected to conduct the analysis of Zaytung and The Onion. I also have analysed the representation of voters within the selected pieces.

The links and headlines to the chosen pieces are presented in Appendix A.

My reasoning is to analyse the given themes and compare how Zaytung and The Onion covers these themes regarding domestic politics. I have included the coverage of capitol riots to compare the coverage of Zaytung and The Onion regarding the same subject. The inauguration of Joe Biden was included to analyse how The Onion does cover the politicians of the opposition.

In my analysis of the selected news stories from the Onion and Zaytung, I will utilize the concepts of irony, parody, satire, news satire (or satirical news) and discursive integration. I also used discourse analysis to understand how The Onion and Zaytung rearticulated mainstream news stories from a news satire perspective to be critical or resist current news norms.

Considering a text aims to complete a task of the author/speaker, a discourse can be defined as "...the way in which a particular set of linguistic categories relating to an object and the ways of depicting it frame the way we comprehend that object." (Bryman, 2012, p. 528), discourse could situate and define its objects and then and the way the reader understands it.

A famous example is the discourse regarding mental illness defines the reader's conception of mental illness and mentally ill and within that framework, topics

regarding mentally ill and mental illness are discussed and justified. Discourse constructs a ‘social reality’ of a particular person or group that accomplishes acts in real world. The discourse analysis aims to discuss the function of the discourse within the context that it is located in and how it is constructed. (Bryman, 2012)

I aim to discuss and analyse how does The Onion and Zaytung constructs their own discourse through their imitation of mainstream news media? How is irony, parody, satire is incorporated in its rhetoric? What is highlighted and what is concealed? Who is presented as likeable or unlikeable?

Through analysing how the political figures, elections and voters themselves are represented, or how does Zaytung and the Onion situate themselves in the political compass and how do they cover the poles of the compass.

In Van Dijk’s conceptualization of “ideologically polarised discourse” for his conceptualization focuses on the polarisation between “we” and “them” (Davis, 2019), the questions of who is the “we” and who are “them” and what do “we” and “them” do in Zaytung’s, The Onion’s or other satirical outlets coverage would enhance our understanding of these outlets.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature covering Zaytung, attempts to explain the comedic effect. I will refrain from this discussion for two reasons, firstly, my paper is more interested in the fact of news satire pieces being funny and its meaning in political context instead of explaining why it is funny. A second reason is, involving more debate about comedic effect expands the scope that I limit for satire, parody and irony.

However, I would like to briefly refer to the incongruity theory, for later in my analysis I will refer to it. To summarise, incongruity arises when two unrelated, inconsistent or even opposing parts, themes or conditions are juxtaposed in a comedic, or even non-comedic setting, as Sümeyra Güneş states:

The incongruity theory of humor depends a lot on our expectations. The joke starts from what we have seen or lived before and then subverts these expectations formed by experiences. According to Kant these incongruities of humor are the major ingredients of laughter (Güneş, , 2018, p. 13)

“Inappropriateness” or the inconsistency, either intentionally or unintentionally, creates a comedic effect that remains even when the possible relation or explanation is discovered.

Robert Siegel, then editor of The Onion once told The Los Angeles Times “A part of the humour is in the tension between what is being said and how it’s being said.” (Little, 2016). On humour I will discuss three concepts, satire, irony and parody, for part of The Onion’s (arguably Zaytung’s as well) humour is constituted by a duality of meanings and these concepts respond to such duality.

3.1. Irony, Parody, Satire

In daily life, satire, parody and irony are almost interchangeable. This is somewhat justified for they employ a method of comedy on which the underlying meaning contradicts the content, for this reason, a brief introduction of parody, satire and irony is in order.

In the Oxford Reference, parody is defined as

An imitation of the style of a particular writer, artist, or genre with deliberate exaggeration for comic effect. (Oxford Reference,2022).

Oxford dictionary defines irony as

A subtly humorous perception of inconsistency, in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context” (Oxford Reference,2022)

Irony can be found in satire, for it emphasizes a hidden meaning rather than the literal one (Fife, 2016).

Satire, being very similar to parody, uses exaggeration or minimization to criticize any member, institution or trend in society. It is possible to suggest that satire is irony with a political¹⁰ focus (Booth, 1975; Simpson, 2003).

Within a work of art, irony, parody and satire could intersect with each other despite their differences (Waisanen, 2011). They require a knowledge of its subject for they are producing a product from a pre-existing convention, the receiver should recognise a cue or any indicator that what they are interpreting implies a different meaning and after recognising the text, the audience may or may not agree with the message of the joke (Fife, 2016, O'Rourke and Rodrigues, 2004).

Irony, from its inception as *eironeia* in Ancient Greece, has been a political practice, in Socratic technic, irony served as a rhetoric, serving Socrates to challenge a belief or a thought that was taken as certain. Irony had a place in literary, philosophical and political movements (such as romantic irony of German Romantics, Fyodor Dostoevsky, William Blake) a reason for this is, irony can be understood either by validating or invalidating the principle of non-contradiction¹¹, as Clara Colebrook

¹⁰ “Politic” as a term is widely used in this context

¹¹ The principle of logic that asserts something both is and is not.

suggests “Irony is the resistance to a single fixed point of view” (Colebrook, 2004, p. 79).

If we accept irony as an alternative meaning to the text, then how can we distinguish what is the intended meaning and how to distinguish the ironic text from a non-ironic one. In “A Rhetoric of Irony”, Wayne C. Booth’s argues that irony is a very large concept, for almost any word uttered could be stated as ironic when we consider that we interpret and load or subtract meanings or connections from the words we read. Accepting the common usage of Irony, Booth suggests “stable irony” in which (Colebrook, 2004), (Booth, 1975):

- The reader feels obliged to reject the literal meaning due to obvious incongruity.
- It motivates the reader to consider alternative explanations.
- Encourages the reader to make a decision about the author’s intention
- Reconstructed meaning emerges as an explanation (Booth, 1975)

Readers are compelled to reject the statement not because of literal truth but because they are uncomfortable with the proposed statement, this is only when readers have a legitimate reason to suspect the author is referring to another meaning. Only then, the reader attempts to see a new meaning by acknowledging the statement is ironic. The author and the reader should share an agreement on language and culture for ironic intent to function because irony works on the reader’s expectations (Booth, 1975).

The “reconstruction” shows irony’s discursive role, it requires the reader to move from their own platform to the author’s intended platform, the platform that is more “solid” than the reader’s. It is a “reconstruction” of a new platform that the reader takes a leap of faith to the ironists’ platform. “The movement is always toward an obscured point that is intended as wiser, wittier, more compassionate, subtler, truer, more moral, or at least less obviously vulnerable to further irony.” (Booth, 1975, p. 36). I will refer to the constructions and the leap of faith later by referring to Booth’s figure.

A critique towards irony, that Booth answers in his book, could be summarized as irony being elitist, not only does irony offer a feeling of superiority towards the imagined victim, but also the real people who do not get the irony or refuses to take the leap of faith are ridiculed as well. Booth argues that on imagined victims, the dominant feeling of reading irony is “finding and communing with kindred spirits” (p.28), the reader infers that author assumes his capacity to infer irony rather than preaching to them, moreover the ironist would write with the expectation that the reader would react to the literal statement as unreasonable thus the structure of irony is not to deceive some readers, it is to deceive all readers for a while until they realize they have been “duped” (Booth, 1975).

Another critique towards irony, as Booth states, is that irony is supposedly corrosive to society, so basically if irony is the “absolute infinite negativity” in which no structure could resist to an “ironic corrosion” than only one meaning remains, which is “no meaning” (Booth, 1975).

This critique towards irony, defining it as a corrosive force, may be more relevant, Roger Rosenblatt famously argued in Time magazine, merely two weeks after the 9/11 attacks, defines that age of irony comes to an end, for the pop culture promotes a form of detachment to a point that one could not differentiate a joke from reality, and only a tragedy like 9/11 could end this notion. (Rosenblatt, 2001). Daniel J. O'Rourke III and Pravin A. Rodrigues note that critics of irony were reiterating this point earlier than the 9/11 attacks, that ironic works were undermining people's beliefs of “social institutions and traditions” (O'Rourke and Rodrigues, 2004)

In David Beers' response to Rosenblatt and other critics of irony, Beers argues that critics show the examples of “cheapened grades of irony” and argues, especially the US after 9/11 needs a profound irony, that shows the contradictions in a society, a kind of irony that shows the contradiction of the US' self-image as a “beacon of freedom” and its image as an “imperial oppressor” in other parts of the world. The kind of irony to rebut the post 9/11 jingoism, that actually engages the reader (Beers, 2001). In another instance, Michiko Kakutani responded to “the death of irony” with historical instances where the interest on comedy rose after a tragedy (Kakutani, 2001).

Moreover, as O'Rourke and Rodrigues say "Critics of irony should realize that media events are common places shared by millions of people, but no sentient being would confuse the two events" (O'Rourke and Rodrigues, 2004, p. 25), that people not only have the capacity to distinguish fact from fiction, but also can analyse the content they consume to an extent. Moreover, irony intends to show a contradiction for moving to a higher ground instead of undermining the ground that the author and the reader stand on.

As mentioned for stable irony to work, the irony should encourage the reader to reject the very literal meaning of the statement and to decide that the literal meaning could not be the intention of the author. Considering this as the author's attempt to convince the audience and the audience's attempt to infer the intended meaning, stable irony then is not a "singular act" it requires co-operation, for the author tries to convince its audience to a better vision for society to move to and there could be no reformation without its reader's support (O'Rourke and Rodrigues, 2004)

I will present The Onion's headline as an example, a reader initially may mistake this headline as real, a few seconds later, in a fast process, the reader will find the idea of refusing to hold elections abhorrent, thus the reader would feel compelled to consider alternative meanings and to justify the author's possible intention.

"U.S. Praises Bolivian Leaders for Eliminating Voter Fraud by Refusing to Hold Elections" (The Onion,2020c).

Only after this brief process, the reader will "rise" to The Onion's platform, and will discuss Donald Trump's attempts to de-legitimize a legitimate election, using the suspicions of voter fraud. The reader who has a basic knowledge about Donald Trump's claims of voter fraud, and the knowledge of destabilized South American democracies (the further knowledge about Bolivia is not necessary) will understand the drawn parallels, and only when the reader co-operates, the irony is realized.

Irony can be damaging for the author for it can create a mixed message that can undermine the seriousness of its critique, or worse, the audience may miss the joke – thus being divisive- and mistake the irony as real. Additionally the humorous critique can be understated or overlooked for being a joke (Fife, 2016). However, irony can state a meaning that a non-ironic text may not state as efficient as an ironic one, because the ironic statement could offer a meaning that requires cultural and historical information to unlock it.

As Linda Hutcheon argues, irony is “ambiguity”, in Hutcheon’s description, irony has an edge, the ironic meaning is “unbalanced in favour of the silent and unsaid” (Hutcheon, 1994, p. 35) the imbalance occurs through the judgment of the ironist and the interpreter on what is implied. Referring to irony forcing people “to the edge”, or as Booth argued, the assumed victimization of irony, is lately employed in political discussions on viewing the irony as “cynic” (Hutcheon, 1994) we can take the critics of irony of post 9/11 as an example of this.

Hutcheon argues that irony has three semantic characteristics: relational, inclusive and differential. Irony occurs between meanings and people, a relational characteristic, inclusive and differential characteristic is about reconsidering irony’s meaning as “antiphrasis” and its “kinship” with other forms (Hutcheon, 1994).

In Hutcheon’s definition, irony is the third meaning that is a mix of the literal meaning and the intended meaning, in Hutcheon’s example it acts as two chords creating a new sound when played together or the new image appearing in the “photographic double exposure”. I especially like Hutcheon’s view because it includes the audience in the discussion as an active participant. The intention of the ironist is important, for it is argued that the ironist and the receiver should claim a ground and it is the ironist’s intention that is defining irony, but Hutcheon argues that the receiver’s interpretation matters as much as the ironist’s intention, it is the interpreter’s will to think an ironic utterance as well as the ironist’s (Hutcheon, 1994). Furthermore, Hutcheon argues that “intentional/unintentional” would be a false classification because:

...all irony happens intentionally, whether the attribution is made by the encoder or the decoder. (Hutcheon, 1994, p. 113)

In ironic meaning there is a shared responsibility for both of the parties

Although irony could be argued to be “polemical” for it is utilised to “break down attitudes of others” both the level of it could vary, moreover irony could have attitude of toleration, especially within a “homogeneous discursive community”, a classroom for example, similar to Booth’s argument, irony then can be seen as an act of elitist exclusion or “a utopian generation” (Hutcheon, 1994).

Irony has a political force, even an ironic piece presenting colonialism (and its violence) could unintentionally re-instate its premise “even in quotation marks” (Colebrook, 2004). Whereas even unintentional irony could reinforce the subject it criticizes, irony very well could be used intentionally as a shield, Fife notices, within her students, irony being used as a tool for deflecting criticism rather than constructing a critical argument. Moreover, in online culture, there is a tendency for persons and groups to spread hateful messages under the guise of “irony”, thus masking their danger and making it easier for such messages to circulate online whilst giving their author a shield to “deflect” criticism not only under humour but also under free speech (Dreisbach, 2021; Lewis, 2020; Wilson, 2017).

Let’s return to The Onion’s headline about Bolivia, although the reader will understand the USA as the main subject of the piece, however, regardless of literal or ironic meaning, the trope of a South American dictatorship is carried, the Bolivian context¹² becomes the punching bag, which is a tad tasteless when we consider Jeanine Anez’ coup was supported by the USA (Greenwald, 2020; Weisbrot, 2020; Chauvin and Faiola, 2020). However, even if the piece was comparing any other country to Bolivia, it would still enforce a stereotypical view of Bolivia.

There can be ironic texts that are not satirical or satirical texts that are not ironic, irony can be used in satire. Fitting to the nature of satire, ironic satire is often directed

¹² Evo Morales’ government was overthrown through a military coup on Nov 10, 2019, which gave way to the repressive governance of Jeanine Anez

towards “affirmative matters” (conventions of a specific context, whereas irony may be perceived as a “refusal of a closed context” (Colebrook, 2004)) , perhaps the defining difference between irony and satire would be satire’s focus on “interests of stability” whereas, irony would show a world that is “out of its joints” (Booth, 1975). Again, The Onion’s Bolivia headline could be presented as satirical irony, however, Booth’s example of the Relief Fund appeal “Ignore the hungry and they’ll go away” (Booth, 1975, p. 35) shows irony without satire or parody. Or Zaytung’s headline “YSK: “As we convince ourselves that a re-election is necessary in İstanbul, Ali İhsan Yavuz organizes a press meeting and it de-motivates us” is satirical but it is not ironic. In the works of Simon Dentith and Robert Hariman, parody is defined as language being put beside itself, mere repetition of words, with exaggeration or minimisation, I find Dentith’s argument on the similarity of language learning and parody, for repetition of speech not only plays a crucial role but also our own decisions on how to mimic the language defines how we speak a language to an extent, as we mimic others, in this sense, writing is intertextual in a way it is placed in its relation to prior texts, Dentith argues, “parody is one of the many forms of intertextual allusion out of which texts are produced” (Dentith, 2000, p. 6; Hariman, 2018)

Parody could be defined as reproducing a piece or genre, by ensuring that it turns something “organic” into something “mechanical”, it shows the inherent comic, and only then can it present in the same work in a different angle thus with a different context. In light of the different context the “target discourse” is destabilized, parody is similar to irony on its “echoic” effect. In comparison to irony, parody could be argued to be focused on the language, the “ways of saying”, it is the language of a text that is “echoed” in the parodic work (Hariman, 2018; Simpson, 2003).

Parody, captures a specific and a defining style of the parodied text, such as language, style, colours and it will play with mimicry to create the parodic effect, although we are accustomed to the parody as a comedic or a ludicrous effect (laughter definitely plays a part in parody’s political function), however, *ironically*, this act of parody “preserves”, protects, the parodied text, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery (Dentith, 2000).

Parody has been a topic of discussion within postmodernist art, as Linda Hutcheon states in *The Politics of Postmodernism*:

Postmodern parody is both deconstructively critical and constructively creative, paradoxically making us aware of both the limits and the powers of representation (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 98)

Parody is the fiction of a fiction, it destroys a text whilst producing a new one, through various practices (Dentith, 2000).

A significant quality of Hutcheon's definition of parody is that, the postmodern parody is a tool for artists and viewers to question the history of a representation as we know it, it challenges our assumptions on originality, uniqueness, ownership, property, reproduction, the capitalist way in which we view life, history and art. In this light, parody is a mean on art gaining a new meaning and significance. Postmodern parody is a mean to face history and challenge its representations (Hutcheon, 1989).

Hutcheon mentions the feminist artists use of parody to question history, it "deconstructively critiques" history, representations and "constructively creates" unseen versions of the world. It is important to present Hutcheon's definition of parody is a tad different than "ridiculing imitation", it is "repetition with critical distance" (Hutcheon, 1988; Hutcheon, 1989). In my opinion, the films of Quentin Tarantino like "Inglorious Basterds" and "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" shows a parody in Hutcheon's definition, it is not a ridiculing imitation through an exaggerated mimicry, it is, in Tarantino's case, challenging the historical narratives through providing an alternative.

Parody draws from the parodied text and presents the author's own view of the world, thus it can be revolutionary and challenge the status quo or it can be conservative and attempt to conserve the existing order, arguably cultural conservatism or conservatism in general may be inclined to dislike or limit parody (Dentith, 2000), interestingly upon reading Dentith's description of conservatives and parody, it reminded me the post 9/11 reaction to irony, and that reaction or scepticism on irony, is arguably culturally

conservative, I would argue that the criticism towards irony or parody by claiming it as a “parasitic” (naturally towards satire as well) would stem from the anxiety of a possible change, although satire, irony and parody could be conservatively employed as well, the possibility of questioning the power dynamics could cause anxiety against these types of humour.

We have to recognise, in other words, that parody’s direction of attack cannot be decided upon in abstraction from the particular social and historical circumstances in which the parodic act is performed, and therefore that no single social or political meaning can be attached to it (Dentith, 2000, p. 28).

Although I agree with the argument of parody, irony or satire being politically void for they serve as a discourse (Levy and Holland, 2017; Fife, 2016; Dentith, 2000), I paradoxically agree with Hariman’s argument on political parody’s democratising effects, as Hariman argues:

Parodic artistry crafts a productive articulation of public identity and agency through at least four operations: doubling, carnivalesque spectatorship, levelling, and transforming the world of speech into an agonistic field of proliferating voices (Hariman, 2018, p. 253)

To justify why this isn’t paradoxical, I want to explain Hariman’s explanation of political parody. Parody reproduces, replicates, “*doubles*”, it changes the meaning not by changing the form but by changing the context, the doubling removes the authority of the text. Although I will point to the carnivalesque in a later chapter, in Hariman’s context the “carnivalesque spectatorship” is the parodic texts ability to transform the parodied text to be ridiculed by public in a virtual world that provides a safe space without repercussions. Levelling is arguably also a carnivalesque concept, levelling inverses different sides with bodily functions the carnivalesque side in here is mixing of such ideas, is the mixing of ideas and possibly a new mode of equal communication (Hariman, 2018).

Hariman argues that, parody “nurtures” a notion of democratic public culture, for it provides a democratic area, or a market of ideas, of people commenting or critiquing each other. This, according to Hariman, is a “crucial feature” of democracy, for it indicates a functioning communication system on which discourses compete.

Just as democratic citizens are equals before the law and equally entitled to public speech, so democracy often is defined as an arena of public debate. I want to suggest that parody advances a rich conception of that model, and, in fact, parody is necessary to sustain that model (Hariman, 2018, p. 257).

Albeit politically void, I argue that parodic works (as well as satiric and ironic ones) have a democratising effect, they could be argued to be discourses of political argument competing in a market of ideas, moreover the parodic, satirical and ironic texts do question the possibility of alternative explanations, variations or scenarios, furthermore, the act of parody demonstrates that nobody or no topic is sheltered from the parodic act.

To elaborate I will present a peculiar example from Zaytung. “Erdogan: “Am I fool enough to call my own citizens terrorists?”. In this piece, the actual quote of Erdogan “Am I fool enough to call my own citizen a terrorist?” (Gazete Duvar, 2019) is given without an alteration but with three responses from fictional citizens. It may be arguable to not be parody, or it is not Erdogan or his quote that is parodied.

I would argue that, this work would not be parodic on the understanding that parody would mimic and maximize or minimize, however, this statement sounds outlandish enough to be mistaken to be unreal, therefore it looks almost as if Erdogan is parodying Erdogan and reading this statement in Zaytung could further confuse the audience for a brief period of time on decoding the statement as parody or real.

In this case, the statement is not levelled by inversion to the bodily acts, it would be a stretch to suggest the respondents’ answers are inversed to bodily functions. However, this piece also has an interesting design, for not only the politician but also the audience

itself is parodied, thus adding more layers to the piece's discussion and the reader's perception.

I asked the reasoning for directly presenting the politicians statements without a twist in my questions to Zaytung, and they replied:

the aim of the voice of people, is to show possible absurd responses of people to the absurd news. Most of the time, politicians discourse could be more absurd than our jokes – and these discourses are already shared within the social media that compares it to Zaytung's news. If we manipulate the discourse, it will disrupt the humour, for our irony is fed by the nation's reality. (Personal Interview with Murat Dural, 06/04/2022)

Returning to the discussion between satire and irony, Paul Simpson, in his book "On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour" refers to satire's definition as "militant irony" as satire is irony with a target. And I agree with Simpson on that, although satire's object could be intangible as well as tangible. Simpson presents a satirical triad, the satirist aims to criticize its target, this critic requires a form (writing, music, film, etc.) that projects the dislike and/or critique of the satirist towards its object (Simpson, 2003). For example, in George Orwell's Animal Farm, he projects his disdain for Joseph Stalin through the fable of an animal farm. The point of the author could be more overt or could be even more covert.

Satire, seeks a more specific context, in a broader term, satire can be defined as parody of a specific context, because satire has the ability to "assimilate" the forms of other genres. Moreover, the democratic expectations on parody, could also be observed in satire for it can be educating, entertaining and defy the hierarchy. Arguably circumstances of uncertainty, repression could stimulate artists to produce satire (Ödmark and Harvard, 2021; Colebrook, 2004; Simpson, 2003).

Similar to Booth's argument for irony aiming to lift its audience to a higher platform, Simpson argues that satire invites the satiree to a discussion for gathering a synthesis. Instead of a straightforward argument satire presents its statement in a complex

structure (Simpson, 2003). I argue, satire is a more personal and sweet way of presenting an argument, Orwell could have written a journal article about Stalin and Trotsky, although such article would obviously be personal, however, a satire would require a more inventive and creative language and narration that is more personal than the journalistic writing which has to adhere to a level of publication or literary standards.

Perhaps a distinct difference between satire and parody is that parody mimics its object and maximizes or minimizes in its mimicry, whereas satire assimilates or mimics its object but it presents a twist or a contradiction, moreover the “dialectic component” is obligatory in satire unlike parody (Simpson, 2003)

To all intents and purposes, then, this looks like the key disambiguating criterion: while satire embraces double-edged ironic phasing involving an in-text collision, parody displays the echoic form of ironic phasing only (Simpson, 2003, p. 119)

On their differences with irony, satire’s “militant” nature shows its difference than parody, although the parodic text could, parody utilizes an echoic function of irony. When considered that satire is more aggressive, parody remains “sincere” according to Simpson on top of everyday knowledge, satire requires “knowledge of typical text structures” whereas parody requires the knowledge of the stylistic (Simpson, 2003)

This is not to say that parody cannot be aggressive, however their target seems to differ for parody arguably targets the “system of expression” whereas satire’s target is the “system of content” (Simpson, 2003). Returning to *Animal Farm*, it could be debatable to say if it is the parody of the fable as a genre, however the parodic function could have argued to mimic the narrative of the fable, whereas satire arguably attempts to mimic the Soviet politicians through the parodied fable.

Simpson argues that in parody, the jokes are “mistakenly analysed as ridiculing or attacking the entity echoed in the parodic framework (Simpson, 2003, p. 121), although Simpson acknowledges that his analysis of parody is limited, I find his reduction of parody reduces its political effect, a bit unrealistic. Although it makes

sense in comparison to satire, we must not forget that parody exists in a socio-political structure, regardless of the “system of content” parodying any person, but especially one with authoritarian tendencies is ridiculing that person, for especially authoritarians do not want to be ridiculed.

The democratising aspect could be argued for satire as well as parody, in this regard Simpson shows the famous (or infamous) case of *Hustler Magazine V. Falwell*, for Hustler, out of all publications, was sued by Reverend Jerry Falwell for a parodic advertisement in the magazine depicting him, the piece stated the words “ad parody – not to be taken seriously”. Although Falwell won the case in Virginia, Flynt (owner of the magazine) appealed to the Supreme Court and his appeal was accepted and the U.S Supreme Court overruled the lower court’s ruling. The Supreme Court’s reasoning was that the Virginia ruling could set a dangerous legal precedent that endangers political debate for satire and parody is seen as a form of such debate (Simpson, 2003).

In a recent case, Bob Murray, chief executive of Murray Energy, sued *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* for their satirical news piece about Murray and his coal mining company, Murray demanded a gag order and monetary compensation (Locker, 2019), the case was initially dismissed, later Murray appealed, only to drop his appeal later due to bankruptcy. Murray dropping his case, prompted John Oliver to air another piece on SLAPP¹³ suits on which he stated “It is yet another Bob Murray attempt to bully people into silence and he has been doing this for decades. I will stand behind our first piece and I will stand behind this one.” (Locker, 2019) initial piece about Murray and the latter piece about SLAPP suits emphasizes the importance of satire and parody being protected under the law.

It is debated if a certain setting, be it private, open, democratic, repressive, stable, unstable, could be more engendering for of irony, parody or satire. I argue that, at least in satire’s case, repressive and unstable settings could be more provoking for satirists to produce satire. Although the same can be said about parody or irony as well, or it could perhaps be argued that conserving the social order could motivate these texts

¹³ Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation

(Dentith, 2000; Simpson, 2003; Hutcheon, 1994). In my opinion, these texts come from a humane position to express oneself, and although a certain setting could contextually be provoking, searching a certain setting would mostly end up a fruitless quest.

In my questions to The Onion, I asked if The Onion (and its humour) was more related to the facts about events of the world or about the truth of the word.

...but satire tends toward criticism, in the sense that it points out the world's flaws or foibles. It's also hopefully realistic in that it's grounded in fact or contingent on popping a bubble of illusion created by ideology or ignorance (Personal Interview with Mike Gillis, 12/04/2022).

In a closing note, whilst writing this, I realized I mistook lampoon as harpoon, both French origin words entered English in the 17th century (Etymonline), the former has a reference to the French “scurrilous songs” the latter referenced masonry. Strangely, more than rhyming French origin words that entered to English in a similar timeframe, these two words describe a similar act, satire (and partly parody) is launched into the target by the satirist. Albeit, this description of satire is a tad aggressive and exaggerated, the pointed similarity between the act of harpooning and satirizing shows a great deal between satire and parody or between satire and irony.

3.2. Carnavalesque

Carnavalesque is a term used by Mikhail Bakhtin to describe a mode of a creative action – that can de-stabilize the power structures and challenge an authoritarian order (Oxford Reference,2022). Or in Bakhtin’s words “It is to some extent...life turned inside out,”, "the reverse side of the world" (*monde à l'envers*) (Bakhtin, 1984, p.122).

Literature tends to regard Zaytung and The Onion as carnivalesque text, for they fulfil the foundational characteristics of carnivalesque. I agree with that because satirical news does indeed create an atmosphere on which the hierarchy is suspended and “free and familiar contact amongst people” is provided (Güneş, 2018; Ünsal, 2019; Achter, 2008; Özdemir, 2018; Levy and Holland, 2017).

Bakhtin, when describing the serio-comic literature of the Hellenistic epoch, explains a breakthrough of the genre, which is its subject, the present reality, for serio-comic describes the present without an epic or a tragedy, therefore its narration is independent from legends. Another noteworthy contribution of this literature is its “multi-styled” narration, which can bring opposing themes, different genres or even different languages together (Bakhtin, 1984).

Bakhtin considers the serio-comic¹⁴ as part of carnivalistic folklore, and Bakhtin’s quote below can further strengthen this connection

(...) the heroes of myth and the historical figures of the past are deliberately and emphatically contemporized; they act and speak in a zone of familiar contact with the open-ended present (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 108).

Just like the serio-comical of the Hellenistic era, freed itself from the legends, it can be argued that the political function of the “carnavalesque text” is that it can free itself from political myth and bring down the political language to “present reality”.

Although carnivalesque can be seen in texts, and Bakhtin can point out carnivalesque folklore in the ancient literature, in Bakhtin’s description, carnival itself is something that participants experience, the “carnivalistic life” is an experience with its own rules, it is “life drawn out of its usual rut”. Arguably carnival is more performative than substantive, as Bakhtin noted “Carnival is, so to speak, functional and not substantive.” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 125). Carnival can provide “the reverse side of the world” through people experiencing the carnivalistic life. Bakhtin mentions the “parodia sacra” of the Middle Ages, which is the parody of “sacred texts and rituals”, which is presented as proof of the privilege of laughter, for laughing about authority was permitted in comedic context and banned in serious form (Bakhtin, 1984, p 122).

Bakhtin describes four categories of the carnival:

¹⁴ An advanced reading of Carnavalesque would benefit from the Bakhtin’s descriptions of Hellenistic literature genres like, serio-comic, Socratic dialogues, menippean satire

The First category of carnival is free and familiar contact, public squares being the place of carnivals and the fact that carnivals are still being performed in public domain follows the idea of free and familiar contact, arguably this is the ground on which a carnivalesque sense of the world is built on. Through this people can become active participants

Carnival can provide such a “category” by suspending the mechanisms of the real world, in carnival, hierarchical structures, laws, piety, or any means of “socio-hierarchical inequality” is suspended. Suspension gives birth to a “half-real and half play acted form, a new mode of interrelationship between individuals” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 123), Bakhtin defines this as the individuals being liberated from defining hierarchical position

“Eccentricity” is the second characteristic of the carnival sense of the world, through eccentricity

...the latent sides of human nature to reveal and express themselves. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 123)

“Carnivalistic *mésalliances*” is the third category of carnival sense of the world, this characteristic shows the dualistic nature of the carnival that is the direct result of the “free and familiar attitude”, *mésalliances*’ weds the concepts that are polar opposites, such as lofty and low, wise and stupid, themes like “pregnant death” are also a product of this unification. The fourth category is the “profanation”, profanation “debases” and “brings down to earth”

In summary, these categories removed the “tragic distance” between people and moved them to a zone of familiar contact, in this zone it brought a mechanism of *mesailances* and “debasement” of the profanation, as result of these it “exercised a powerful transforming influence on the very verbal style of literature.” (Bakhtin, 1984)

Bakhtin notes that these categories are “not abstract thoughts about equality and freedom”, Bakhtin suggests that these are experienced thoughts that “survived” through the years in European mankind. This also complies with the performative nature of carnivals, moreover this lack of “abstract thoughts about equality and freedom” make the carnivalesque a genre or a practice, rather than an ideology.

Bakhtin suggests that the very core of carnivalesque is “shifts and changes”, “annihilation and renewal”, as Bakhtin writes “Carnival celebrates the shift itself, the very process of replaceability, and not the precise item that is replaced” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 125). However, Bakhtin again emphasizes that this is an expression of a “living sense of the world” rather than a studied thought.

Bakhtin describes that the primary act of carnival as “mock crowning” and “decrowning” of a carnival king, according to him this is encountered in all carnivals and this act not only suspends the power hierarchies of the non-carnival life, but it also embraces the “shifts and changes” pathos of the carnival.

This act of crowning and decrowning is exemplary of the dualistic nature of the carnival and its categories, not only crowning and decrowning shows a kind of duality, but also who is crowned, a slave or a jester presents the *mésalliance* category of the carnival, this duality is also grounded on “decrowning” in which free and familiar contact is instituted.

The presentation of “things” is also inside out, “...putting clothes on inside out (or wrong side out), trousers on the head, dishes in place of headgear, the use of household utensils as weapons...” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 126). This is the function of eccentricity; it takes accepted life out of its “usual rut”.

The aspects of actual crowning are presented (symbols, clothing, rituals), and thus they acquire a new meaning, contrasting their authority in non-carnival life, this also presents the profanation category of the carnivals, in which the legitimate symbols are given contrasting meanings.

Parody and laughter itself are important on the practice of carnival, Bakhtin adds that within carnival laughter is “death and rebirth” for the laughter that is directed towards the higher end of a society, is a carnivalistic laughter. Furthermore, Bakhtin suggests that parody is the laughing aspect for everything, adding that parody is the “creation of a decrowning double” and for this reason parody was an inseparable part of carnivals. Considering that parody is a text re-written with a minimalized and/or a maximized aspect, and a core aspect of carnival being the reversal of roles and suspension of order, the tie between parody and carnival becomes clear.

Before continuing to discuss Umberto Eco’s criticism towards carnivalesque, it is worth mentioning that Eco’s critic of carnivalesque focuses on the “comic” aspect of carnivalesque and separates the humour from it. Eco’s critique of carnival is that carnival is an “authorized transgression”, that recognized and respected rules should exist for carnival to parody, thus it reminds the rule and acts as comedy as reinforcement of the rule.

Two prerequisites of a “good carnival”, according to Eco are:

(i) the law must be so pervasively and profoundly introjected as to be overwhelmingly present at the moment of its violation (and this explains why 'barbaric' comedy is hardly understandable); (ii) the moment of carnivalization must be very short, and allowed only once a year (Eco, 1984, p. 6).

As well as law being recognised, limited nature of carnival on time and/or space, carnival can happen and/or broadcasted in a certain time and in a place, Eco also mentions the difficulty of carnivalesque in a “world of everlasting transgression”, “comic” therefore becomes a tool of social control rather than social criticism.

At this point it is important to discuss Eco’s definition of “comic”, in the first paragraphs of his article, Eco admits that an overarching definition of comic is difficult and he defines comic with a contrast to tragedy, in Eco’s terms, a likeable character breaking a social rule or norm is tragic (Oedipus for example) whereas an unlikeable character breaking a social rule is comic.

Eco continues to argue that comic is more dependent on social norms, laws and customs compared to tragedy, for tragedy could reiterate the rule it violates thoroughly, thus becomes more universal than comedy for it is less related to the social norms, he exemplifies eastern tragedies being more easy to comprehend in comparison to eastern comics.

His point on authoritarian regimes censoring satire and parody but allowing circus and clowneries is an example of how Eco defines carnival and comic. Following this, he claims that only a sudden and “non-authorized” carnival is revolutionary, he shows ghetto riots as an example of that, on medieval carnivals he goes on to state that “carnival is revolution (or revolution is carnival)” (Eco, 1984, p. 3)

Moreover, Eco recognizes humour as a more critical form in composed to the comic for the humour could invite the reader to question the frame and social rule that the joke is built on, thus presents the reader the limits of a society and a larger structure through this presentation

Humour provides a bittersweet experience in which the bitter truth is shown through a joke. Eco states:

Humor does not promise us liberation: on the contrary, it warns us about the impossibility of global liberation, reminding us of the presence of a law that we no longer have reason to obey. In doing so it undermines the law Very seldom does the business of entertainment display real humor. More frequently it sells carnival (Eco, 1984, p. 8).

This approach on humour as a critical and/or constructive form of comedy is present in other theses regarding Zaytung as well.

It is wise to remember that Bakhtin himself presents carnival as a performance rather than “abstract thoughts about freedom”, moreover the primary act of carnival for Bakhtin is crowning and decrowning, and criticism towards authority is also present

in Bakhtin's discussion on carnivals. Arguably, Eco's definition on comic is a tad narrow, moreover it should be underlined that Eco's definition of "comic", that he criticizes the carnival on, does not include humour. And as Achter also argues, participants of the carnival engage in a recognition of what they are doing (Achter, 2008).

It should be clear that, without humour any carnival is as liberating or revolutionary as a circus.

Although I will discuss it in a further chapter, it is noteworthy to remember that such works could act as a sort of pressure valve, as Hariman argues:

Modern laughter becomes a small consolation within a system of social constriction, while medieval laughter remains a lost carnival of unbridled excess. In this account, both liberalism and feudalism are conveniently forgotten (Hariman, 2018, p. 261)

I argue that authoritarian regimes do act as a multiplier on humour's role as an expression of dissent. I agree with Güneş on Zaytung showing a remarkable function on dissent towards authority despite reinforcing existing norms in some situations. As Levy and Holland mention, The Onion provides a "cathartic release" through mockery, however it's not effective against the status quo.

Perhaps this quote from Achter would make a good summary of the entire discussion: "The point here is that we need succumb neither to a blind enthusiasm regarding the revolutionary power of carnival nor to Eco's either/or binary that presumes a parodic, carnivalesque transgression either leads to real/true/actual liberation or it is illusory/false/fake. For Bakhtin, the effect of the carnival is an act of renewal and a regeneration of hope and new possibilities among a people." (Achter, 2008, pp 282) News parodies and satires could act as a pressure valve despite their transgressions and even if they are not liberating or subversive. A realistic approach would be to expect these works to work as a wedge within the existed beliefs that a "regenerating" discussion could find its way in.

3.3. Critics of Political Humour

It goes without saying that approaches towards political humour as an oppositional form is not unchallenged, perhaps the most defining critic is stated in Holland and Levy's article about The Onion:

Thus, it is not the capacity to speak truth to power that undergirds The Onion as an oppositional format, but how powers co-opt countercultural notions of resistance and monetize them as "authentically cool" rather than genuinely subversive (Levy and Holland, 2017, p. 9)

I find Levy and Holland's discussion defining the critics of political parody, I will refer to two articles that were cited by them. The first is Tom Frank's article entitled "Why Johnny Can't Dissent" (1994)

Although he does not specifically criticize political parody, Frank argues a frame in which any form of dissent can be turned into a profitable commodity.

The elements of Frank's criticism simply could be argued as:

- Concentration of ownership in entertainment (of which Frank addresses as Culture Trust)
- "Free expression of daily life" (such as TV, cinema or arts in general) becoming not only an economic commodity, but a political force.
- Instead of a single role model, now American business promotes a cultural diversion by means of a "never ending self-fulfilment".
- "Dissent" in this frame, is not subversive, it does not criticize or challenge "the cultural faiths of Western business" (Frank, 1994)

These elements may sound like "old news" to some, the culture has been a way in which the public learns about the latest developments and model citizenry, and a cultural industry has always been a measure of a nation's power. And status quo and/or Western business has been shaping the culture and culture industry.

However, calling his points “old news” or viewing him as a “doomsayer”, would be unjust, whilst Frank is pessimistic in his article, he is correct at pointing certain “updates”.

To quote Frank:

Corporate America is not an oppressor but a sponsor of fun, provider of lifestyle accoutrements, facilitator of carnival, trusted ally of the people, our slang-speaking partner in the search for that ever-more apocalyptic orgasm. The countercultural idea has become capitalist orthodoxy, its hunger for transgression upon transgression, change for the sake of change (Frank, 1994, p. 14).

Indeed, there has been a development within business and advertising that supports cultural diversions as a means of self-fulfilment for economic gain, it is a form of self-expression through consumption. The mantra of “customer is king” is a defining mantra in this approach and the case of “New Cola” is a fine example of the updated relationship between consumers and products. Alongside Frank, a similar analysis could be found in Adam Curtis’ documentary “Century of the Self”.

Although Frank’s view, new culture not being subversive and critical, is a bit harsh, it is a tad consistent when Frank reminds us that a corporate concentration, that used to be alarming for many citizens, now meets with less protest instead of meeting with political responses like the “New Deal”

In my opinion, one of Frank’s most important points is that “Culture Trust” dominates public opinion with the individualist ideologies of CEO’s, although it may sound harsh, it does a lot to explain the diehard fans of billionaire CEO’s like Elon Musk or Jeff Bezos for the Western business could still promote faith on its practices and existence.

As I return to Frank's article, I want to point out the second article used by Holland and Levy, "The Joke's On You: Presenting...The Daily Show and The Colbert Report" written by Steve Almond in 2012.

In Almond's take, news parodies like the Daily Show or the Colbert Report, are more therapeutic than critical, they function as an "opiate for progressive angst" and lack critical context, mockery is not subversive or confrontational.

These shows are also a product of profit oriented content creation, Comedy Central (that hosts TDS) is owned by Viacom, one of the largest companies in the entertainment industry. Almond goes on to suggest that, TDS would go bankrupt without "blowhards" like corrupt political figures and celebrities.

Moreover, there are times in which TDS had coverage that is at best worthy of critique and at worst blatant propaganda for the US, Almond mentions TDS' poor representation of occupy wall street protestors, platforming "neocons¹⁵" like: Lou Dobbs, Ron Paul, Michael Steele, Juan Williams, Ralph Reed, Dick Armev unchallenged, whereas more critical figures would be in the minority.

In another instance, Almond, criticizes the lack of confrontation of Stewart's interview of Condoleezza Rice, on which Rice successfully "commandeers" the interview to portray herself in a better light.

A more contradicting example, in Almond's article is Colbert's visit to American troops in Iraq, and despite TDS and TCR being very critical of the Iraq war, TCR's visit to Iraq was a "week long infomercial for the US Military".

Almond, recounts an instance in which Stewart had to apologize for considering the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima with nuclear weapons as war crimes in which a self-censorship system becomes apparent, these programs could self-censure themselves at financial costs (Almond, 2012).

¹⁵ Neoconservative

At this point, it is hard to disagree with Almond, TDS, TCR and other political comedies, despite being critical of the political system, they seem to be trusting the inherent values of the US government, because of this, some of their values like bipartisanship or creating a civil debate becomes tone deaf when a party in the discussion is committing war crimes (Almond, 2012).

According to Almond, news parody shows continue a rule of television shows, that reassures and flatters the audience rather than challenging them, in this line these shows attack “easy targets” instead of providing criticism that challenges the audience’s pre-existing beliefs. Furthermore, Almond argues that challenging comedies meets with restrictions on becoming mainstream. In this frame, political parody diffuses a protest movement for citizens choose a passive way to resist (Almond, 2012).

Although Almond wrote his article in 2012, similar critics are still popular, especially within left leaning social media channels. For example, the image below, ironically, parodying the advertisement for the show, claiming that John Oliver’s Last Week Tonight is not subversive because it does not challenge the faith towards the “capitalism”.

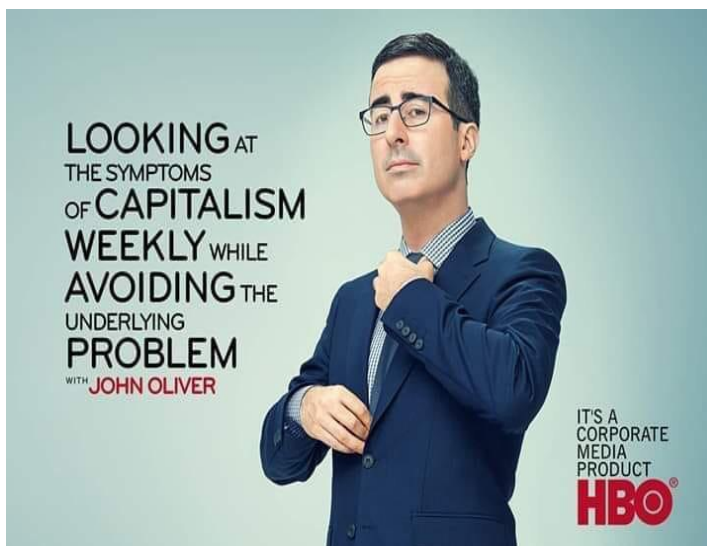


Figure 8. A meme critical of LWT. (Source: Reddit,2019)

I agree with Almond in that harsh comedic criticism may create an illusion of a functioning democracy, there is an often used statement in Turkish politics/history that “if he was a dictator, you wouldn’t be able to ask him this question¹⁶”, equating the parody to a functioning democracy is most apparent in the nostalgic remodelling of the pre-AKP era as more democratic for pre-AKP press had more freedom in comparison to current press¹⁷.

Moreover, Almond’s case only holds water on a restricted view, without a doubt news parodies do have a political agenda that could reinforce a political belief or figure as well as criticizing. But it is far-fetched –even then- to suggest that TDS (or any mainstream comedy) cannot produce any critique out of the accepted frame. A very easy example is Jon Stewart’s short bit about the coverage of Israel and Palestine’s crisis that arguably outlies the “allowed scope” (The Daily Show, 2014).

Even in a pessimistic frame, it could be argued that TDS or TCR has to find a new transgression to “sell” new dissent. Even Almond himself acknowledges that news parodies like TDS may produce beneficial work within the allowed scope.

However, it is easy to understand Almond’s pessimism and lack of faith in shows like TDS because whilst they can pick the low hanging fruits like shameless political figures and circus-like political news productions, they are as hesitant on criticising the US-centric values as much as they are willing to boast a positivism of the American system.

Almond himself comments on another Comedy Central production, South Park, and how it is better at challenging the audience’s pre-existing views. As Almond also notes South Park has its own problems, it is a tad pessimistic to suggest subversive or genuinely critical content cannot become mainstream whilst also arguing that TV executives do not discriminate on content as long as it brings profits and such content does not actually cause a tangible protest.

¹⁶ Ben Diktatör Olsaydım Bana Bu Soruyu Soramazdınız

¹⁷ It is arguable, especially on Christen Christensen’s article that pre-AKP era had unhealthy environment of press

Returning to Frank, he mentions the neo-liberal argument that with the collapse of the Soviet Union, business has ended history, in which “universal capitalism” will ensure universal happiness, because now a homogenous consumer culture is more or less adapted globally and business interests will remain unthreatened (Frank, 1994).

Although justified in some aspects, the pessimism almost recognizes the mentioned neo-liberal argument, because, to suggest that new forms of dissent will be emptied and transformed into commodity, however this not only projects capitalism as a flawless structure, but also people as participants who cannot comprehend the structure around them.

Both Jon Stewart and John Oliver repeatedly state that they are not journalists. However, there have been responses that, on the basis of their ability to dissect the complicated issues, they can be considered journalists given the fact that their shows fulfil the role of informing people and performing journalistic practices like serious interviews and research (Carr, 2014; Poniewozik, 2014; Robinson, 2015; Steinberg, 2018; Suebsang, 2017; Taibi, 2014; Wilkinson, 2019; Uberti, 2014).

It is important to remember that hosts of such shows call themselves comedians for a reason, alongside comedy’s protection of their speech, they also knew the fragility of the topics they are discussing and calling themselves anything but a comedian would break the illusion.

Moreover, it is clear that their first objective is to tell a joke, although they work with a group of researchers, hosts of these shows are comedians themselves, more than that they have grown up with their own set of values which may be reflected in their work. To a level, arguments made against news parody shows and news satire publications are interchangeable. As we will see in the profiles of The Onion and Zaytung, although it is much more applicable to The Onion, these criticisms could be applied to both

publications. The Onion is a website that started as a college newspaper but ended up being part of a multi-million dollar media company¹⁸.

The position of The Onion within a company was also noticed by Holland and Levy, they write:

The Onion and other satirical news media should be situated besides the mainstream journalistic outlets that they critique within a profit-oriented political economy, a position that lends security to their position while at the same time undermining any notions of radicalness in their critique (Levy and Holland, p. 9, 2017).

Following this quote, they make a similar point to the “authorized transgression” that the satirical news provides a “cheap and powerful opiate for progressive angst and rage¹⁹” (Levy and Holland, 2017). Whilst they recognize the critical role of The Onion and they place it as an oppositional format, because The Onion can monetize the oppositional content (Levy and Holland, 2017). However, they also recognize that The Onion cannot be reduced to a publication that is solely motivated by profit. For it can engage and could make legitimate critique towards political actors.

In different levels, The Onion and Zaytung have shown a very prominent growth over the years, both of these publications had published pieces that reinforces the status quo instead of criticizing. Similar to TV shows, senseless statements from politicians and the corrupt has been the bread and butter of these publications as well.

In discussing laughter as dissent, neither Frank nor Almond completely rejects the role of laughter on dissent, Almond presents Bill Hicks as an example, however laughter as dissent needs further explanation.

¹⁸ The Onion is currently owned by G/O Media.

¹⁹ Almond, S (2012), The joke’s on you . . . Presenting The Daily Show and The Colbert Report quoted by Levy and Holland

I want to point to Hariman's argument again. Hariman argues that political humor in general is necessary for a democratic public culture. As he suggests:

As they provoke modern laughter, parody and other forms of political humor provide an education in the conventions, intended effects, and limits of persuasion. Anyone recommending instruction in rhetoric always faces the question of whether it is imparting mere skills or something better than that (h, 2018, p 265).

The educational function of political humour is often underlined, matter of fact, it is arguable that political humour is subversive through its educational function. Moreover, a substantial critic of political humour can be argued to be the content that it "teaches" rather than how it teaches.

Hannah Arendt once famously stated "To remain in authority requires respect for the person or the office. The greatest enemy of authority, therefore, is contempt, and the surest way to undermine it is laughter." (Arendt, 1970, p. 45). To understand Arendt's argument, it is important to explain her depiction of power and authority.

In Arendt's argument, violence, strength and power are different concepts, she describes that violence is not power, for, be it a democracy or tyranny, power is given by the people and people's recognition, whereas violence relies on apparatuses. Power is the ability of people to act in harmony instead of an "aura" belonging to a person. Thus, power disappears when public support disappears (Arendt, 1970).

Moreover, the use of violence, although able to bring victory, often results in a loss of power, for the impotence to garner the support of the people ends up in implementation of violence. Thus violence, especially in domestic affairs is the last resort (Arendt, 1970).

Even the most despotic domination we know of, the rule of master over slaves, who always outnumbered him, did not rest on superior means of coercion as

such, but on a superior organization of power-that is, on the organized solidarity of the masters (Arendt, 1970, p. 50).

Thus authority, “institutionalized power in guise”, requires respect and recognition from people, therefore “laughter and contempt undermines the authority”.

The tie between laughter and authority is a theme on Ünsal’s thesis on Zaytung as well, on Arendt’s notion Ünsal acknowledges that violence is not the backbone of authority, he then argues that Zaytung acts to ridicule authority and produces a disconnection thus questioning the authority (Ünsal, 2019).

In her thesis Güneş suggests that Zaytung creates a “catch-22” situation for the authority figures for when they ignore the joke it keeps mocking them and when they take action the joke gains a deeper meaning that further decreases their power (Güneş, 2018). I agree with Güneş’ argument, however, I think that this situation works on authoritarian regimes where a joke can harm the image of the authority. However, a politician; for example, can simply play along with the joke and can even gain something from it.

A good example of this is an interview between Pat Buchanan (an American politician) and Ali G (a fictional character played by Sacha Baron Cohen). After some questions about the Iraq War, Ali G asks the question “Is it ever worth fighting a war over a sandwich?”, Buchanan answers “Yes”. In the comments of the video, Buchanan was praised for his witty answer (Da Ali G Show, 2006).

To give more context, President Obama himself became a guest in Between Two Ferns; a comedy program aired via YouTube, for promoting the affordable care act. Obama also made an appearance on The Jimmy Fallon Show, before the end of his term (Funny or Die, 2014; The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, 2016).

In an interview with Rob Lowe, comedian David Spade talks about the benefits of actors making fun of themselves (Spellberg, 2020). Essentially, he argues that it brings

out a human side of the actor that the audience can relate to. Spade does not refer to politicians. However, accepting jokes can be beneficial towards any public figure.

Although their definitions may vary, laughter, humour, parody, satire or any other means of comedy has the potential to be subversive and/or revolutionary. However, two things should be kept in mind, a work of comedy can be a profitable intellectual property and the fact of this could damage its production and/or reception, moreover comedians have their own political bias as well and they may be revolutionary in a topic whilst staying rather conservative in another.

3.4. Discursive Integration

Satirical political comedy is a widespread media genre. From Zaytung to The Daily Show, satire and parody have been used in political discourse for their function to be corrective (Achter, 2008; Davisson and Donovan, 2019; Güneş, 2018). Although a form of comedy and irony may act as an obstacle for an audience to take seriously, the audience may just accept the provided information or engage with a civic issue (Waisanen, 2011; Fife, 2016).

Sara Ödmark and Jonas Harvard, on their study of Swedish political satire, point out that satirical shows do perform democratising roles such as reporter, eye-opener, unifier, questioner, explainer and solver they argue, satirists argues that political satire works as reporter, eye-openers and questioners whereas it stays weak as explainer or solver (Ödmark and Harvard, 2021).

The term “discursive integration” refers to the hybrid texts of satirical talk shows like The Daily Show, which is a hybrid of news media and the entertainment media, I will refer to works of Geoffrey Baym.

Baym and Jones mention that the roots of televised parodies of news programs could be traced back to the UK in the 1960’s, to a popular program called “That Was The Week That Was”, although on the televised space, the news parodies²⁰ are dominantly from the UK or the US, Baym and Jones underline other forms of parody programs

²⁰ I will be using the term “News Parody” to stay loyal to Baym’s text

from other countries and cultures, I will come back to this, I want to point out the importance and relevance of televised news parodies first.

It appears that intergenerational decrease of trust in mainstream media outlets and increasing trust and engagement towards satirical shows like the Daily Show is highlighted in literatures concerning The Onion and the Daily Show (Achter, 2008; Baym, 2006), hence, an increase of interest in these programs and publications are accompanied by a decrease of trust and engagement to traditional news outlets.

Arguably, the audience's reception of news parodies is useful to enhance our understanding of news satire, not only for the damaged relationship between people and mainstream media, but also because news parodies and satires offers a constructive alternative that could contrast mainstream news.

As I will point out later in this section, a study also suggests that the term discursive integration could be used for news satires like The Onion, for they have a hybrid language of news and entertainment (Brugman et al, 2020). However, in the following chapter I will mention the characteristic differences between news parodies and news satires.

A term often used for TDS and similar programs (also for Zaytung and similar publications) is fake news, although the term is unsuitable for the recent socio-political connotations it receives, Baym suggests – in 2006 – that the term fake news is also challenging for it needs a “legitimate” way of journalism to be assumed, which is rare to encounter he argues. Baym continues to argue that TDS is “an experiment in the journalistic” (Baym, 2006, p. 261).

Apart from the declining trust of mainstream news, technological developments that increase the speed of global journalism, decreasing the threshold of production, increasing the news outlets and consolidation of media ownership and therefore “redrawing the boundaries of journalism and public sphere” (Baym, 2006, p. 261), adding the national trauma of 9/11 to these developments, it is arguable that TDS, The

Onion and other parodies of journalism acquire a different context than its predecessors.

On defining the hybrid nature of TDS, Baym examples its opening sequence, as Baym narrates, TDS starts with a very serious tone, that is supported with an American flag, serious music and the narrator announcing the date and introduction of “From Comedy Central’s world news headquarters in New York, this is The Daily Show with Jon Stewart.” (Baym, 2006, p. 262).

Whilst this part of the introduction seems authoritative through techniques used in the news media, it transitions to a camera in the studio swinging in the studio followed by more upbeat music which resembles other entertainment shows. Discourse from news media and entertainment media are present in the rest of the show in a “complimentary arrangement” thus the show “functions as both entertainment and news” (Baym, 2006).

In his article Baym argues that TDS performs three important functions, it questions “power”, it critiques the news and it offers an authentic democratic discussion.

- Baym argues that, whilst borrowing from the traditions of entertainment media’s way of creating “fake news” (that is less politically oriented), TDS offers more elements to the audience, such as soundbites from political figures and contextual information. Baym suggests that the way that TDS breaks the journalistic conventions on that achieves a different and critical representation of the news²¹. As a result, TDS could offer a different criticism of political leaders.
- Contrasting TDS to the post-9/11 news outlets that does miss to engage in critical reporting that could put light into the consequential matters. Baym argues, TDS does function as a criticism of media, the incompetence of media becomes the subject of TDS and its way of parodying mainstream news.

²¹ Baym shows the choices of soundbites between TDS and mainstream news as an example, that TDS by showing the footage that mainstream media misses, breaks the conventions to offer a criticism.

- Baym states that TDS invites a lot of guests from the political world to be interviewed by Jon Stewart, and loyal to the show's hybrid form, the interviews are neither oriented on entertainment nor on serious news-making. Baym suggests that, as an alternative to the discussion panels of mainstream news that eventually fails its objective, the interviews and discussions on TDS are focused on having a levelled discussion towards the nation's issues through a dialogue thus advocating for a deliberative theory of democracy²² (Baym, 2006).

Unlike legitimate news sources, TDS is a form of news that is entertaining in an engaging sense rather than amusing. In a similar conclusion Rodrigues and O'Rourke (2004), quotes Marshal Sella's article about TDS in *The New York Times*, "Americans prefer to take their news sweet." As I will point out, as well as being a hybrid text, *The Onion* and other satirical news publications can be viewed as sweet news.

An important aspect is that, despite mostly dealing with American issues, TDS was aired in 85 countries, and currently the social media pages of such shows has followers from various nations and culture, demonstrating that news parody is a globally attractive concept for people to follow in democratic and authoritarian countries (Baym and Jones, 2012)

Although TV stations from the UK and US produced genre defining shows and may have the strongest following, news parody is obviously a global concept. It is worth mentioning that successful formats, such as *The Daily Show*, *Splitting Image* (UK), *Les Guignols* (France) have been recreated in different countries. A significant question then becomes the differences and similarities between news satire shows. Baym and Jones, in their article, evaluate different news parodies of countries ranging from Iran to Mexico

²² "A theory of deliberative democracy can be distinguished from a market theory of politics, which begins from the assumption that the polity is comprised of instrumentally rational individuals who enter the debate with fully formed preferences, intent on maximizing their own self-interest. In such an economic theory of democracy, politics is seen as conflict between divergent interests, while political discourse becomes competition that at best can produce functional compromises (see Elster, 1997)." (Baym, 2006, s. 272)

A position towards the unquestioned legitimacy of the mainstream news can be seen in news parodies in news parodies in different countries, additionally the sphere of politics is questioned within the shows as well, Additionally, the hosts of these shows, gain public trust matching real journalists, thus blurring the lines between “real” news and “fake” news globally. Arguably, the characteristics that Baym discusses about TDS can be seen in the news parodies of other countries, however, the differences seem to be more about the reinterpretation of the news parody in a different cultural context of political humour (Baym and Jones, 2012).

News parodies play a different role in different political economies. For example, in the US the Daily Show has strengthened the position of Viacom (Comedy Central’s parent company) whereas in different countries that have a different structure of public and private broadcasting, news parodies play a more intricate role than solidifying a company’s position (Baym and Jones, 2012).

News parodies have globally become a part of political information, although it is suggestible that these shows, whilst mostly on a progressive-left leaning side, attempt to offer levelled political discussion, it is not only apparent that these shows are having an influence on the political system but also political actors could endorse and support such shows as a political strategy (Baym and Jones, 2012).

Arguably, laughter as a Bakhtinian sense of resistance to power, plays an important role in Baym’s conceptualization, parodies could deconstruct an official narrative and break the “vertical” line in which passive citizens receive “truths” from the privileged news.

Several studies concluded that The Onion and other satirical newspapers can be classified as discursive integration (Berkowitz and Schwartz, 2016; Brugman et al, 2020; Waisanen, 2011)

In their study, Brugman *et al.* aim to find the level of discursive integration on satirical newspapers and whether the political differences within the papers are affecting their integration level. In order to do so they took examples from newspapers and political

fiction, and they suggest that if satirical news employs the language of both genres then it suggests a discursive integration.

Although I accept their sampling, considering that discursive integration is a mix of journalistic and entertainment practices, that taking political fiction may not be the best option for neither the political fiction, nor newspapers employing comedy. However, considering that their analysis focuses on the language, political fiction is still a valid example.

Their hypothesis is that satirical news would score in middle of the “linguistic register” between two genres. The claim is that fiction and journalistic language have their differences but their aims are deviating¹⁰² and can use the different speeches. They found that satirical news in general was using a more “involved discourse” than news texts, however their language contained more “informational discourse” than fiction, and in their analysis, they scored in the middle of the two genres thus confirming their hypothesis. They also found that, on discursive integration, the liberal and conservative news satire scored similarly.

I agree that news satire does contain discursive integration, and the discursive integration may be on the same level as conservative and liberal satires. The research paper also answers the previous discussion between the possible differences in humour based on political bias. And within their findings they reinforce the opinion that differences of humour in political bias are mostly insignificant or can be explained by the subjects’ bias.

Considering that their paper focuses solely on the linguistic aspects of the news satire and does not claim any superiority to one website or another, I find it valuable to argue that, despite scoring the same, the reactionary nature of conservative outlets excludes them from being anti-authoritarian or being a healing force.

As youtuber Cody Johnston also noticed, online conservative comedy has changed in a way that conservative comedians aim to troll and frustrate the left-wing rather than making jokes (Johnston, 2021). In accordance with Johnston’s observations, Oliver

Morrison of the Atlantic also notes that conservative comedians making political jokes are:

...tend to be grounded in vague ideologies, not the attentive criticism to the news of the day (Morrison, 2015)

In her study about recent news satires such as Last Week Tonight with John Oliver and Full Frontal with Samantha Bee, Allaina Kilby notes that satirical news is more appealing to the millennial audience who want to understand political issues but are tired of “packaged news”, that such shows, although rarely, could have a real life impact (such as Stewart’s effect on Zadroger Act), moreover, they could criticize their audience as well as the politicians (Kilby, 2018).

3.5. News Satire

News satire is a genre within the discourse of political humour. Satirized or parodied news such as The Onion or the Daily Show is neither a new genre nor is it an inherently American²³ (Hariman, 2018). The War of the Worlds (Schwartz, 2015) segment of Orson Welles or the satirical works of Mark Twain are famous examples of the genre. There are various news satire websites and news parody shows in various countries, stretching from Russia, Venezuela, Iran, Germany, France, Turkey to Cuba, bringing their own culture of political humour to the genre.

Arguably, The Onion is the largest and the most recognized news satire publication in the world and Zaytung is the largest and the most recognized news satire publication in Turkey. I will focus solely on The Onion and Zaytung for not only are they well recognized, but to some extent satirical news methods or critiques towards The Onion and Zaytung are interchangeable.

An important reason for this is that news satire employs a political humour as the Daily Show or comic magazines do. However, both the publications implementations and

²³ It is recognized that especially US and UK media has been a frontrunner of this genre.

cultural-political context may limit or counter the interchangeability of their methods or their analysis

'No Way To Prevent This,' Says Only Nation Where This Regularly Happens



Figure 10. The Onion Example. (Source: The Onion, 2022b)

LUNA'da Kriz Büyüyor: TL'ye Karşı Bile Değer Kaybettiği Ortaya Çıktı...



Yağadığı %99.8'lik değer kaybıyla 2 gün içerisinde 64 dolar seviyesinden 0.2 dolar seviyesine gerileyen Terra Luna Coin'den kötü haberler gelmeye devam ediyor.

Kripto Para piyasasında deprem etkisi yaratan düşüşün ardından bugün bir açıklama yayınlayan Terraform Labs CEO'su Do Kwon, yaptıkları incelemede Luna'nın sadece ABD dolarına karşı değil TL'ye karşı bile değer kaybettiği yönünde bulgulara eriştiklerini belirterek, "Şu son 2 günde olmaz dedüğümüz ne varsa hepsi oldu. Çok üzgünüm" ifadelerine yer verdi.

Durumun ekibe moral vermek için yaptığı bir toplantıda ortaya çıktığını belirten Kwon "'Bakin işte durum o kadar da kötü değil. En azından TL cinsinden hala değer kazanıyoruz' şeklinde bir motivasyon konuşması yapmak için ekibi topladım. Öncesinde 'nasılsa TL'den de daha kötü durumda değilizdir' diye bakma gereği duymamıştım. Esas hata o oldu" derken, grafiği ekranda açmasıyla birlikte acı gerçeği fark ettiklerini dile getirdi.

"O an zaten ekibin yarısı binayı terk etti. Halen daha kendilerine ulaşamıyoruz. Katanlar da ofiste satılabilecek ne var ona bakmak için duruyor zaten," sözleriyle Terra Labs'daki son durumu da aktaran deneyimli CEO, kısa vadede Türkiye tarafından yapılacak saçma sapan bir hamleyle ya da TCMB'nin son döviz rezervlerini de harcamasıyla birlikte TL'deki değer kaybının Luna'yı geride bırakmasını beklediklerini belirterek ileriye dönük iyimser mesajlar vermeyi de ihmal etmedi.

Figure 12. Zaytung Example (LUNA crisis is growing: It is revealed that it has less value than Turkish Lira). (Source: Zaytung, n.d. - 1)

Examples of pieces from Zaytung and The Onion are shown above. As noted by numerous articles, the satirical news aims to imitate the real news on its looks and on its language (Achter, 2008; Berkowitz and Schwartz, 2016; Ersoy and Balyemez, 2013; Güneş, 2018; Oklay, 2015; Waisanen, 2011). Especially The Onion attempts to

textually and visually recreate the news source that they are imitating, the same can be said about Zaytung but is inferior to The Onion in visuals. To reiterate:

[The Onion's print issue] was minimalist, favoring text and news photography and eschewing audio and video altogether. The arrangement of headlines, pictures, and stories is more or less consistent with online political opinion journals and online papers like USA Today or Variety. Taking not a specific newspaper as its subject, but the generic layout of all online newspapers, The Onion parodies the formal aspects of news language and news stories and the topical choices of mainstream media (Achter, 2008, p. 287).

Achter, describing a print issue of The Onion in 2001, naturally ignored audio-visual aspects. As reiterated, to parody these publications attempts to recreate a perfect replica of the medium that they are parodying and then they add a twist to create the comedic affect. Matter of fact, unlike news parody shows, there are numerous instances where pieces from these publications were mistaken to be factual due to their success of imitation.

This imitation destabilizes the language of journalism for it speaks “non-sense with the same language thus not only crippling its power but also putting the legitimacy of the news under scrutiny. In addition, although it mimics news media, through this mimicry it creates its own aesthetics (Achter, 2008; Berkowitz and Schwartz, 2016; Güneş, 2018).

Also noted by Güneş and Toker, there is a type of news made by Zaytung which is not seen in The Onion, on which actual news from news outlets is presented with a title written by Zaytung. It strangely falls in line with shows like The Daily Show, requiring the works of actual journalists.

Returning to Stewart's interview, the process of The Daily Show looks similar to conventional news programs, their meeting begins with the collection of the day's events and a discussion on what to put on the show, heavy topics are accepted for they

have potential. After that jokes gets discussed, the script gets written then rehearsals are made (Kakutani, 2008).

Despite being outdated, Tower's paper on The Onion gives a recount on the publications news-making progress. Tower defines The Onion's process as the "inversion of the traditional process" where the headline comes first then the body of the article written according to the headline. The writing staff comes up with several ideas for headlines and after a discussion the staff works on the selected headlines and possible jokes in it (Tower, 2008).

For example, Kakutani compares mainstream news channels that "mix news and entertainment" and the Daily Show that can cover "super depressing issues", highlighting the professionalism of the Daily Show. On Tower's paper, Robert Niles, commenting on The Onion's success, was also making a similar comparison between The Onion and dailies (Tower, 2008).

This gives the news satire publications a short-cut. For people don't expect news satire to be on journalistic standards, whilst they expect journalists and politicians to be above standards.

As I will elaborate, news parody shows could pursue legitimate journalistic work, moreover works of these programs can start a news cycle thus could bring some issues to the public's interest. The Onion's Miley Cyrus story or the pieces of John Oliver's regarding the topics like net neutrality, the coal industry in the US can be presented as examples (Davisson and Donovan, 2019).

Publications like The Onion and shows like the Daily Show, The Colbert Report and Last Week Tonight have won prestigious Peabody and Emmy awards throughout the years²⁴. These works have won critical acclaim and noticeable profits throughout their inceptions.

²⁴ All the dates of the awards were taken from the websites of the Emmy and Peabody awards.

Shows like TDS and publications of The Onion could be defined as satirical news or news parodies however, although I will draw from the literature regarding news parody shows, I will focus on news satire publications such as The Onion and Zaytung and call them news satire for they have slight but important differences than TDS or TCR. A major difference is that on TDS, there is a recognition of comedy. The host and the audience expect to hear jokes. Whilst the audience expects to hear jokes on The Onion as well, the content aims to be recognized as legitimate news then to be found as a joke, hence the instances of The Onion thought to be legitimate news are occurring more often (Berkowitz and Schwartz, 2016).

A second difference would be that shows like TDS depend on the performance of the host (Berkowitz and Schwartz, 2016). The host tells an entire story which is supported by guests and reporters. However, there is almost an anonymity on The Onion and Zaytung news The Onion lists its staff on its website. On Zaytung, sometimes there is a mention of the nickname of the author. However, there is intentionally no credit given to the authors of the story, unlike the TDS who put the story forward.

I believe that there is another defining difference; shows like TDS can actually pursue works of actual journalism. For example, there have been cases that in The Daily Show, The Colbert Report and Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, the crew of the shows did serious journalistic work as comedy.

In my correspondence with The Onion, the difference between The Onion and news parody shows is also acknowledged, as Gillis states:

Every Onion story creates its own unique little universe. Whereas an episode of John Oliver or The Daily Show pitch a number of jokes on a particular topic—and operate as if they’re using jokes, similar to a stand-up routine—our headlines are contingent of the idea of “if this, then what?” They tweak some small part of the real world in a funny way and then pursue that ridiculous change as if it were the most serious thing in the world, using dry AP-News style and the overall newspaper format to help hammer home the seriousness of that idea (Personal Interview with Mike Gillis, 12/04/2022).

Furthermore, these shows, can have important interviews with high ranking officials such as former and sitting presidents, aides, ministers, academicians, etc. In an instance, the Pussy Riot, a punk rock band that was arrested for political reasons in Russia became the guests of Colbert. In another issue, John Oliver was able to interview the former premier of Queensland, Australia and Ugandan LGBTQ rights activist Pepe Julian Onziema.

It would be unrealistic to expect works of such scale from The Onion and Zaytung. However, this also reinforces that Zaytung and The Onion are more interested in making critical comments on the political sphere rather than explaining or investigating it. In a New Republic article The Onion was declared the country's "best op-ed page" for its ability to comment on the news in a hilarious way (Malone, 2013). Terminology on defining news satire is often varied. Satirical news, satirical fake news and parody news are often preferred definitions. The emphasis relies on these publications function of satirizing or parodying the news.

Fake news (or satirical fake news), fake newspaper or hoax news are also used, especially in the pre-2016 era²⁵. And because of the shift in the post-2016 environment, neither the term fake news is used to describe news satire, nor do I find it appropriate. For "fake" can create the illusion that the aesthetics of the "news satire" are an end, rather than a mean. Additionally, I am not in favour of "fake news" and "parody news" being interchangeable. Such usage ignores the difference of intensity and confuses the two. Unlike The Onion, some pieces of Zaytung work as a caption-like-commentary on the real news they quote.

An interesting definition comes from Gülben Toker's thesis. She defines the Zaytung as "Caps²⁶" (memes²⁷), although I don't agree with defining news satire as memes given it undermines their informative role. I can understand her choice for two reasons:

²⁵ Although definition of *fake news* include the joke part, the phrase *fake news* gained a different political meaning after the 2016 US elections (Sarlin, 2018; Cambridge Dictionary,2022).

²⁶ Caps can be seen as the Turkish version of the Meme, on a broad definition. Although stylish and structural differences should be noted, the Cambridge dictionary defines the "Meme" as "an idea, image, video, etc. that is spread very quickly on the internet" (Cambridge Dictionary,2022)

²⁷ I will use the word 'meme' interchangeably caps

1. News satire pieces function as memes. In the sense that memes are interesting images shared on the internet and screenshots or entire posts of the news satire websites (Zaytung, The Onion, etc.) are shared in a similar manner. Memes are also the products of internet humour, which could be influential especially in Zaytung's case. Given that, unlike The Onion, Zaytung is a publication that was started exclusively online. Therefore, the definition of memes also highlights the role of internet culture around news satire.
2. Another reason that Toker's definition of Zaytung news as memes makes sense is that her thesis is more concerned with the reality of social media and how the "Zaytung Caps" function in it. Given the meme culture, and meme-like function of news satire, her definition, although insufficient, makes sense.²⁸
3. Another important conclusion of hers is that, within social media, the initial information given by the Zaytung (the satire news) enables the production of other information, as her case demonstrates, within the comments on the Zaytung news. Information that gives us perspective or additional information about the initial subject.

In Eşitti and Işık's article on which Zaytung is defined as satiric infotainment. The term refers to a website that has the potential of mocking the authority and journalistic genres. It is worth mentioning that their definition of infotainment comes with a context of rapid de-politicization and tabloidization of the Turkish media in the post-1980 coup.

An important issue to note is that the satiric infotainment, is given as a good alternative to infotainment shows, like tabloid news (Televole in Turkey for example), which could have harmful effects like "passive citizenship" or "lack of faith in political institutions".

²⁸ In a part of her study she uses the term "caps news" (caps haber)

The authors adds:

In this context, the Turkish website Zaytung constitutes one of the most important example of satiric infotainment. The website, in a sense, can also be counted as a new type of journalism in which it uses informative entertainment which is, in a critical and catchy style (Işık and Eşitti, 2014, p. 267).

Although infotainment (information + entertainment) is appealing as a term to define news satire, I have reservations about accepting infotainment to define news satire. The dictionary definition of infotainment is“(in television) the reporting of news and facts in an entertaining and humorous way rather than providing real information” and “information that is provided on television, the internet, etc. in an entertaining way” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)

As I stated although it is not wrong, infotainment more often refers to the attempts of “legitimate” news sources to make the information more appealing to the audience, moreover this framing would suggest the primary function of the content is to inform the audience then to entertain, and although political and informing function of news satire cannot be denied, arguably the primary function of news satire is to entertain then to inform.

As recognized by Işık and Eşitti, the infotainment phenomena have been criticized for creating passive citizenship but also has been praised for its function of involving and attracting the audience, thus being more informative.

Albaek et al divides infotainment into two categories, personalized infotainment, which shows emotional “human interest” stories and a privatized infotainment, which focuses on personal lives and scandals of politicians. They acknowledge that “tabloidization” of the news increases cynicism, and even that their analysis shows that personalized infotainment decreases cynicism it is only on less politically engaged, or in other words, both types of infotainment increases cynicism on politically involved audiences (Albæk et al, 2014).

Carpini and Williams suggests that infotainment is not entirely useful for the boundary between news and non-news were implemented to increase the legitimacy of news. A similar argument, questioning the legitimacy of “true news” can be found in Baym’s paper about TDS. They suggest that walls separating news and entertainment, fact and opinion and the media and public has eroded (Carpini and Williams, 2005).

By the fall of 1998 all notions that one could make clear-cut distinctions between serious and less serious news outlets, even between news and non-news genres, had been effectively destroyed. Whether one started the day by listening to National Public Radio or Howard Stern, watching Good Morning America or CNN, reading the New York Times or the Star, the topic was the same (Carpini and Williams, 2005, p. 168).

As a result, news has started to lose its authoritative gatekeeper function, considering the concentration of media companies, with the increasing political relevance of popular culture, the groups with their own political agenda began to influence the public, as they stated, Clinton scandals is a good example in which conservative groups insistence kept the issue in the news (Carpini and Williams, 2005).

Be it infotainment or news satire, it should be kept in mind that Zaytung, The Onion or any other publication has its own political agenda for they are produced by people who are shaped by a political system.

Returning to Albaek et al’s discussion, it becomes harder to frame news satire as infotainment is a tad difficult for they lack the tabloidization of the news, however, it should also be noted that even if The Onion or Zaytung were defined as infotainment, it is important to remember they most likely do not cause a remarkable increase of cynicism on its audience.

However, considering Carpini and Williams’ argument, “satiric infotainment” becomes tad acceptable however I argue that news satire or satirical news does a better job at defining publications like The Onion and Zaytung.

Another discussion for Zaytung is that it could be placed as alternative media in opposition of mainstream media. Göçer puts this discussion at the centre of his thesis. In his conclusion, alternative media is different from mainstream media in manners of ownership structure and financial structure. Alternative media aims to be pluralistic, transparent and horizontal on its structure (Göçer,2019).

After examining the news pieces of Zaytung, Göçer comes to the conclusion that Zaytung can be considered a part of alternative media, on the grounds of:

1. Zaytung being an ad-free website that is not involved with any media institution. Its income comes from the yearly book sales.
2. Users within the website publishing their own news pieces without moderation.
3. Zaytung has a team of editors who operate independently and as a team of individuals who operate together for publishing ironic news.

I find his conclusion baseless for two reasons: first of all, Zaytung visibly is a website that is funded with ads. Not only does the website have advertisements but there is also sponsored content within the news pieces that are disguised as news. In addition to that, users within Zaytung cannot share news pieces without moderation.

Secondly, to have “ad-free” as a rule for alternative media, is at best, very restrictive. For example, latest independent news sources of Turkey that operate mainly on the internet²⁹, accept advertisements on their channels/websites in addition to monthly subscribers. Furthermore, Göçer is solely focused on alternative media’s claim of being an alternative to the mainstream in positive aspects. However, alternative media can have negative aspects. For example, hate groups like neo-nazis also have their own media channels. Funnily enough these channels have fewer advertisements, if any at all, because of the desire of brands and financial institutions to not be associated with them³⁰.

²⁹ Websites like: T24, Bianet, Medyascope. YouTube channels like: Medyascope and personal YouTube channels of journalists like Nevşin Mengü

³⁰ For Example, PayPal actively researches and blocks transactions that funds hate groups and extremists. Many major companies expressed their hesitation on their advertisements played on

In the discussion relating to alternative media, I find Özdemir's approach more suitable. She suggests, in line with the previous arguments, that satirical news can be an alternative to mainstream news for criticizing authority directly. I believe that this approach is essentially more suitable for Turkey, where political authority has more control on mainstream news (Özdemir, 2018). Berkowitz and Schwartz also make a similar point about satirical news making social critique that the mainstream news cannot possibly make (Berkowitz and Schwartz, 2016).



extremist channels, prompting Google to blacklist extremist content (Irera, 2021; Sankin and Yin, 2021).

CHAPTER 4: MEDIA AND POLITICS

4.1. Turkish Media and Politics

When discussing the late Turkish Media, “clientelism” would be the defining word. Role of the state is defining the Turkish media structure, for several reasons, most importantly, Turkish media, especially the Turkish press has never been, in any meaningful way, independent from the state. Although it is more apparent in the post-1980 coup neo-liberal media model, such clientelism could be traced back to the DP (Democrat Party) (Kaya and Çakmur, 2011; Yılmaz, 2016).

The first newspaper was printed by foreigners for promotion of their interests in the Ottoman Empire, and the first newspaper in Turkish was published by state authorities to counter the foreigners’ press. Only after three decades was there privately owned oppositional newspapers, challenges of press freedom and the political impact of newspapers emerged. Only after the Press Law of 1931, a tangible space for oppositional views began to exist. During the multi-party system, following the increase of commercial press, clientelistic structure became more clear for not only a financial relationship became more apparent, but also the oppression of press based defamation of public figures emerged as well (Kaya and Çakmur, 2011).

Arguably, from the 1960’s, after the 1960 constitution that aimed to cultivate a civic society and gave more emphasis on (Demirel and Heper, 2006), newspapers have seen an increase in the circulation numbers which began to create a rich environment for media, this combined with the neo-liberal politics of post-coup ANAP (Homeland Party) attracted Turkish businesses to purchase newspapers that were previously family owned, this accompanied by Turkish business operating TV stations prior to legal framework through a loophole that de facto allowed an unregulated TV. As a result, Turkish mediascape had a concentrated ownership structure for Turkish business was motivated to acquire media institutions to promote their relationship with the government (Kaya and Çakmur, 2011; Yılmaz, 2016).

Moreover, this structure gave birth to a media structure, which prized sensationalist media content and lacked interest in quality journalism, not only for political reasons but also to be more profitable in a competitive environment, on this regard, private

ownership, although increasing the production quality, did not cultivate a free press, the Turkish business that owned the media institutions, intended a benefit for their business in the clientelistic relationship or even pressuring government officials to their demands (Yılmaz, 2016; Işık and Eşitti, 2014; Alemdar, 2014; Yeşil, 2018; Kaya and Çakmur, 2011; Christensen, 2007).

A key development during this era is anti-union campaigns, a famous example is Aydın Doğan forcing the journalists of Milliyet and Hürriyet to leave their unions, and tactics that avoided legal frameworks (such as hiring journalists as contractors and hiring them as normal labour instead of journalists) were common (Christensen, 2007; Tunç, 2018).

On AKP's (Justice and Development Party) attitude towards media, I agree with Yeşil's division, she divides AKP into three periods, 2002-2013, 2013-2016 and post-2016, her division is focused on AKP's control mechanisms of media (Yeşil, 2018), similarly this will be somewhat consistent with Yılmaz's division of Turkey's Europeanisation process, the only difference being Yılmaz divides it as 2002-2007 and 2007-2011, I don't necessarily view this as a contradiction, whereas 2007 indeed marked a time when AKP had enough political power to distance itself from its moderate stance (Kaya and Çakmur, 2011), Yeşil's division regards 2002-2013 as a mix of coercive and non-coercive strategies on AKP's media discipline.

Coercive strategies include the prosecution of media professionals, closing down of media outlets, expropriation of assets, and levying of fines. Non-coercive strategies are primarily related to the discretionary allocation and/or withholding of state largesse (subsidies, tax breaks, advertising, and privatisation deals) to/from media organisations (Yeşil, 2018, p. 240)

In accordance with Yeşil's periods, after 2013, AKP was more inclined towards coercive strategies towards press, even before the 2016 coup attempt, the AKP government was appointing trustees to media channels and institutions that were linked to the Gulen movement (Koza and İpek most noticeably), seizing Gulenist

media channels strengthened pro-AKP media further (Yeşil, 2018; Yılmaz, 2016), after the 2016 coup attempt, AKP's governance of media became more strict.

In contrast to this, before 2013, AKP's strategies had utilized non coercive strategies efficiently, having a crisis in 2001 aided AKP to expropriate media companies and using the "patronage relationships" with Turkish businesses, however, even during this period there were coercive measures, especially with regards to regulating the internet and Kurdish journalists (Yeşil, 2018; Alemdar, 2014)

An important development within this era was the Ergenekon trials³¹ (BBC Türkçe, 2019a) . Journalists, academicians and NGO's faced prosecution and lawsuits through the Ergenekon trials, most notable arrests were the journalists Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener on the suspicion of being a member, based on Şık's unpublished book inspecting Ergenekon and Şener's investigation about possible ties between Ergenekon and the assassination of Hrant Dink. This was met with suspicions on the aim of trials as it being a tool for oppressing the opposition rather than investigating a coup attempt (Gürsoy, 2011; Alemdar, 2014; Yılmaz, 2016; Akser and Baybars-Hawks, 2012)

Another way of AKP government's discipline of critical media is sudden tax fines. the most mentioned example of this is the case of Doğan Media Group (DMG):

DMG had been the largest group dominating Turkish media, and after AKP refused to grant a property demand of Doğan Holding, in 2008 DMG publications began covering the Deniz Feneri scandal, an embezzlement scandal which included MPs of AKP , after their coverage then Prime Minister Erdogan publicly instructed the authorities to fine DMG for tax irregularities, DMG was fined 3.75 billion Turkish Lira which resulted in Aydın Doğan stepping down as CEO, closing down one and selling two of DMG's newspapers to Demirören (a pro-AKP conglomerate) and firing critical journalists (Yılmaz, 2016; Kaya and Çakmur, 2011; Dursun, 2012; Akser and Baybars-Hawks, 2012).

³¹ Former military staff and civilians were accused of forming a plot named "Ergenekon" to overthrow the government, the trial begun in 2007, defendants were cleared of all charges in 2019.

The AKP government could directly intervene in the media's coverage of critical reporting, the most famous one, the Prime Minister's office calling media outlets to ignore or understate the Gezi Park protests, moreover government officials could directly require (already self-censoring) outlets to fire dissident journalists (Akser and Baybars-Hawks, 2012; Yılmaz, 2016).

More than censorship and pressure, AKP was also able to incentivize favourable coverage through a pro-AKP media, one of the early ways of cultivating this group was acquiring media institutions, that were bankrupted or in financial trouble, through TMSF (Savings Deposit Insurance Funds) and selling them to the friendly conglomerates through state tenders (Akser and Baybars-Hawks, 2012; Tunç, 2018; Yeşil, 2018; Yılmaz, 2016). The AKP government was able to build a "loyal business" that increased its power through the usage of public and private funds and resources that deepen the clientelistic relationship, this of course involves its grip on media through its relationship with conglomerates, in which media outlets are encouraged to pressure journalists to use self-censorship to ignore or undersell critical topics (Balta and Demiralp, 2021; Akser and Baybars-Hawks, 2012; Akser, Farmanfarmaian, and Sonay, 2018). As Kaya and Çakmur states:

In fact, journalism in Turkey, where a formal protection of editorial autonomy has never existed, has to a significant extent not been an autonomous institution (Kaya and Çakmur, 2011, p. 528)

A significant tool is advertisements given either directly by the state or businesses that are owned by the state, for example, Tunç observes that pro-AKP papers get the largest shares of the advertisements given by state owned companies, curiously this occurs whilst independent press or the smaller outlets are more dependent on government subsidies (Tunç, 2018).

This grip is enhanced when we consider the government's role in, AA (Anatolian Agency, a news agency owned by the state) and TV and Radio stations of state owned TRT (Radio and Television Institution of Turkey), AKP's politics could be observed in these institutions as well, for example, AA has stopped updating the election results

in İstanbul (Euronews, 2019) which was won by İmamoğlu, RTÜK (Supreme Council of Radio and Television) fined the TV stations which aired Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's claims about suspicious money transfers of pro-AKP organisations (Cumhuriyet, 2022c) and not only TRT's high budget productions like "Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu", "Diriliş Ertuğrul" and "Barbaroslar: Akdenizin Kılıcı" promotes nationalistic Ottoman narratives, but also appoints pro-AKP figures to its executive board (Dünya, 2021).

I've explained that the Turkish media has been accumulated under the Turkish business, charts of media ownership structure presented in Aksoy and Robins in 1996, Dursun in 2012, Yılmaz in 2016 and Tunç in 2018 not only demonstrates a saturated market, moreover, it is arguable that oppositional media are not attractive to Turkish businesses because it could impact their business with the government, oppositional outlets in Tunç's table has no parent company, Fox Turk may be an ironic exception to that for it is owned by News Corporation, based on that I assert that Turkish habitat discourages dissent in media.

Parallel to the principles of the founding cadre (Alemdar, 2014), Europeanization has been a theme of the late Turkish press, moreover I would argue that discussing freedom of press under the theme of Europeanization is sensible for freedom of speech is a fundamental issue in the Europeanisation process.

Visibly, accession to the European Union is the defining process of Europeanization, in this regard EU's demands on media freedom involves a legal structure protecting the press, internal responsibility on production and open access quality journalism (Yılmaz, 2016). Before continuing on the process of accession, I find this quote by Zeynep Alemdar useful for the discussion of free speech:

The main political actors, such as government representatives, military officials and members of judiciary, see themselves as protectors of this hierarchical interaction. Therefore, their ideas about freedom of speech and expression are fashioned by what they think represents the state's best interests. If people use their right to free speech and expression to critique the

state, then, according to the authorities, that right can be rescinded (Alemdar, 2014, p. 569).

Taking a step back, the Turkish press on its inception in the late Ottoman era had a role of responding to foreign publications with the aim of protecting the state, censure was applied to publications, following this line single party era of the republic followed this censure for they were a shaping a new found state, that struggled with internal and external threats to its existence, following this state controlled press was instrumental (Alemdar, 2014; Yılmaz, 2016; Kaya and Çakmur, 2011)

The reason I went to the foundation era is that, I would argue, especially within the Europeanisation context, Turkish political culture inherited a characteristic from the Ottoman Europeanisation (Tanzimat) era, Özbudun argues that, during this era, the Ottoman bureaucracy was divided into two camps, reformists and traditionalists, however there is a division within the reformists as well, liberals and authoritarian reformists, although they both aimed for reform, and within this division the liberal wing has a dilemma for under free and fair elections, the traditionalist movement could slow down, stop or even reverse the new reforms (Özbudun, 1994). Furthermore, the Turkish republic has inherited a legacy from the Ottoman political culture that almost does not separate opposition with treachery (Özbudun, 1988) that demonstrably still exists.

Traditionalist movement being a threat may be up to debate, and such dilemma may be justified in the late Ottoman era or even the early Republican era. However, what was inherited is an inherent distrust towards the other in Turkish society. And thus, even when media had freedoms, the state was able to find a short-cut to “protect” the state (Yılmaz, 2016). At least in the context of Europeanization and De-Europeanization, due to distrust, society is seen as something to be shaped by the ruler’s will.

In line with this, as Kaya and Çakmur observes in the Republican era, the press was then divided into Kemalists and traditionalists, moreover they also observed a tendency in these camps that seek freedom of speech for them whilst suppressing the

opposition of their view (Kaya and Çakmur, 2011) and I believe that this characteristic continues in modern Turkish press, for not only the government itself plays an active role to cultivate a friendly press, but also Turkish society is extremely polarized if not the most polarized of its history.

In Demirel and Heper's article, they argue that the Turkish press could be favouring a participatory democracy, however they also recognize, the profit seeking practices of the press and undemocratic practices (their example is some journalists supporting a military takeover) and they conclude that Turkish press sees itself as an active player rather than "neutral brokers" (Demirel and Heper, 2006). On Tunç's interview with Ruşen Çakır, Çakır points to the current nature of politicized journalists by saying

In the past we were trying to prove that we were objective, right now a journalist is being asked to take a position. This is the result of extreme polarization in society (Tunç, 2018, p. 15)

As Akser, Farmanfarmaian and Sonay discuss, Constitution, Press Law, Broadcasting Law, Internet Law (Anti-Terror Law and Penal Code as well) structures the legal framework of Turkish media, whereas Articles 26 and 28, guarantee freedom of speech and press, an amendment made on October 3, restricts these freedoms on the rationale of maintaining security and public order, Press Law, Broadcasting Law and Internet Law have also been influenced by this amendment, interestingly the same rationale within the law has been used against Erdogan in 1999 (then mayor of İstanbul), for inciting hatred within the nation for a poem he read in Siirt (Akser, Farmanfarmaian, and Sonay, 2018).

"Broadcasting news and publishing documents that were deemed to be injurious to the reputation of the state or conducive to agitation of the public became criminal acts" (Alemdar, 2014) as noted by Aksoy and Robins, as well as Alemdar, since the foundation of the republic, the aimed "official culture" was a homogeneous culture that arguably aimed to shape a homogenous nation (Aksoy and Robins, 1996).

Along this line, ethnic and religious divides were seen as credible threats as they can threaten the homogenous and secular state. However, during the Cold War era, there was a synthesis of Turkish-Islam that hoped to combat the spread of communism in Turkey. However, in this regard Islamism was not off the hook, especially after the collapse of the USSR, Islamist expressions were penalized under the Anti-Terror Law, Anti-Terror Law was changed in the 1990's, easing it to restrict freedom of speech, especially on topics regarding Islam and Kurds (Alemdar, 2014; Yılmaz, 2016).

As Alemdar states, officials, even during the harmonization process with the EU, could find ways to suppress the press either through a different law or through a "narrow interpretation". For example, when the Press Law was amended to reduce prison states, officials could then press charges using the Criminal code (Alemdar, 2014).

An important aspect is, the Turkish law could be vague on topics regarding insults towards the state and state officials or insulting 'Turkishness', public intellectuals like Orhan Pamuk and Hrant Dink (who was later assassinated for political motives) were charged with Article 301, Erdoğan himself sued journalists, academicians and others for their critic of him through Article 299 that protects the president from insults (Alemdar, 2014; Yılmaz, 2016; Akser, Farmanfarmaian, and Sonay, 2018; Yeşil, 2018). Moreover, journalists could be directly implicated for spreading or producing terrorist propaganda, as Kadri Gürsel, Chairman of the Turkish National Committee on International Press Institute was arrested and jailed for terrorist propaganda, Can Dündar and Erdem Gül of Cumhuriyet were publicly accused of treason for their coverage of illegal arms shipments to Syria, Dündar later escaped after being shot at in front of a courthouse and 12 staff members of Cumhuriyet were arrested, after the 2016 coup attempt, outlets that were associated with the Gulen movement were handed over to government appointed trustees and journalists were arrested and/or denied accreditation (Tunç, 2018; Akser, Farmanfarmaian and Sonay, 2018; Yılmaz, 2016).

In addition to this, according to Tunç's interview with the Turkish Journalists Association, journalists are working against each other to have them arrested, moreover, foreign journalists reporting in Turkey are strictly regulated and punished if their coverage is found critical (by denial of residence or accreditation) a reporter

speaking to Tunç, mentions that they are required to hand over their questions to the authorities before an official interview (Tunç, 2018).

Observations of Alemdar and Yılmaz would suggest that, during the accession periods, the Turkish government indeed introduced new laws or changed/ annulled problematic laws with regards to freedom of speech. However, they both observed that Turkish officials did manage to fine and charge journalists with different laws, however noticeable changes were still observed (Alemdar, 2014; Yılmaz, 2016) In her article, Gözde Yılmaz observes 4 periods of Europeanisation and de-Europeanisation³² (Yılmaz, 2016):

- 1999-2002: This period launched various reforms for accession to the European Union, but remained limited.
- 2002-2006: AKP's first term continued Europeanisation of its predecessors with new amendments, reforms and harmonisation packages, however various obstacles still remained.
- 2007-2011: Whilst the trend of Europeanisation continued, restrictive measures such as the 2007 internet law, increased charges against journalists, banning of websites, and banning of media outlets.
- 2011 and onwards: This period shows a trend in favour of de-Europeanisation. In this period press freedom decreased with increased charges against journalists, forced resignations, increased censorship and self-censorship, in addition to increased bans on websites.

Yılmaz observes, on her elaboration of the Freedom House reports, that media freedom shows a correlation with the Europeanisation process, when Turkey worked for an EU accession and implemented official steps, then these steps produced effects that increased media freedom and when Turkey moved towards de-Europeanisation the press freedom deteriorated. The AKP government may have lost its appetite for EU membership, after its consolidation of power with Abdullah Gül becoming president a need to be moderate (Yılmaz, 2016; Kaya and Çakmur, 2011).

³² Alemdar's observation's although not dividing into four periods, follows Yılmaz's observations

Internet and free speech on the internet changes occurred around 2007, banning of websites were and are still common, websites could be banned if it proves an appropriate reason to commit a crime that is defined in the Turkish Criminal Code, these crimes could vary from promotion of illegal drugs to insulting Ataturk, in 2011, the government proposed an internet filtering program that would be decided by the authorities, the filtering conditions were kept secret, later during the Gezi Protests, AKP utilized the Internet Law and Anti-Terrorism Law to block websites and social media platforms that “were deemed dangerous, immoral or against national values” (Akser, Farmanfarmaian and Sonay, 2018; Alemdar, 2014)

Arguably, the tightened grip of the government is a sign of a weakened state, as Kalaycıoğlu states:

A weak state extends its resources and boosts its capacity by ignoring large swathes of civil society, which it is not, in any case, able to regulate and control. Accordingly, only those associations that are perceived as bent on sedition and radical conspiracy, and hence deemed to be security risks, are seriously monitored, prosecuted or suppressed (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002, p. 261).

I would argue that the government’s tendency to control the press and conglomerates undermines its power, remembering Arendt’s arguments, the government’s aim to censure the press only solidifies the lack of trust and legitimacy it receives.

4.2. US Media Under Trump Administration

Benjamin Franklin, being one of the first American media moguls, would be a defining factor in the media in the United States (Noam, 2016), from its foundation, the United States enabled a social-political habitat that engendered influential media moguls and unrestricted press.

A growing concentration of ownership is observable in US media, alongside with more positive interpretation, this development is received as worrisome (Frank, 1994; Noam, 2016).

Eli Noam, in his study of US media confirms a trend of concentration within US media, albeit different levels on different media sectors, print media has a slower increase of concentration whereas audio-visual media is faster. Although he confirms a noteworthy increase of concentration, in Noam's findings, the US media sectors are either still unconcentrated or show low/intermediate levels of concentration according to antitrust guidelines. Ownership levels of founding families in large media companies has decreased whereas the institutional ownership levels have increased (Noam, 2016).

Based on these sectoral values, the top 10 owners of US media own about \$350 billion worth of US media holdings, accounting for 21.2% of all US media. The top 20 owners of US media hold \$503 billion worth of US media holdings, accounting for 30.5% of all US media assets. The top 35 hold almost \$598 billion, amounting to 36.2% of all US media assets (Noam, 2016, p. 556).

Although large owners have shares, Noam underlines that media moguls have small shares in numerous media institutions, instead of owning everything, US investors have a sizeable stake in top media companies around the world, the largest US institutional investor (Vanguard Group) is 13 times larger than the largest non-US institutional investor (Legal and General) in total value of their media assets (Noam, 2016).

Furthermore, Noam finds that concentration is higher at the local level and lower at the national level in printed press, moreover, almost exceptional, the US has a local and national media, on his findings I would argue that the difference may arise from the different rates of market saturation (high saturation in national media and – comparatively- low saturation in local media) and/or the difference in the cost of concentration. On broadcast TV, dominance of 4 channels (ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox) continues with comparatively lower levels of viewership.

Although Noam states that concentration is not high enough to justify the media critic's worries, I am hesitant for the increased concentration is accompanied with

increased polarisation of politics, moreover given the size of the US market, a small increase could be alarming.

Related to polarisation, I find the concept of “culture wars” interesting, the term itself could be traced back to the 1870’s as “kulturkampf” (Culture Struggle), the culture wars in the 1990’s refer to Otto von Bismarck’s policies to promote a protestant German state to undermine Catholicism, in the 1990’s the term was referred to describe issues that divide US society, issues like “funding for the arts, gay rights, abortion” (Davis, 2019, pp. 2-3).

In light of this, the increasing number of conservative outlets in the mid-1990’s is sensible (Townhall.com, Fox News, Breitbart.com, etc.), the proliferation of such outlets deepened polarization, influenced the foundation of the Tea Party. The culture wars talking points, also used by Trump, has a binary logic, (individualist versus collective for example). In this light, modern culture wars mostly just added updated concepts such as “snowflake” (Davis, 2019). A simplified binary narrative is also observed in Donald Trump’s discourse.

Steve Bannon, chairman of Breitbart.com – a website defined as “a rallying point for the ‘alt-right’”- became a part of Donald Trump’s 2016 campaign and later a part of his administration. A Breitbart executive, a website known for its advocacy for white nationalism, anti-feminism, anti-Semitism, anti-Islamic, anti-immigration and anti ‘political correctness (Davis, 2019), reinforced the fears regarding a repressive Trump administration.

The anti ‘political correctness’ and ‘cancel culture³³’ are important aspects of the conservative outlets, conservative outlets tend to represent progressives oversensitive “snowflakes” or “SJW³⁴” in order to ridicule and/or present them in a negative light. The scope of the anti-political correctness or anti-cancel culture, ranges from denying

³³ Referred to a strong social media backlash after a statement or a social media post of a celebrity, that deemed controversial. Attitude towards cancel culture is different on different political views, whilst conservatives/republicans tends to view cancel culture as a censure, progressives/democrats tends to see it as a harsh critic (Pew Research Centre, 2021)

³⁴ Social Justice Warriors

or undermining rape allegations, to protest the design changes on ‘the green M&M character’ (Davis, 2019; Hurley, 2022)

Recent American media mirrors a polarised news environment that “provides an ideological clearinghouse” and “a binarist identity system”, conservative outlets could focus on “patriotic” coverage, for example threats of “Islam”, immigrants and a naive or incompetent democratic party, in another example, as Taibbi argues, democratic leaning media has lowered its threshold for reporting during Robert Mueller’s investigation of Trump campaign’s alleged ties with the Russian government (Davis, 2019; Vultee, 2009; Yglesias, 2018; Taibbi, 2019; Halimi and Rimbart, 2021; Frank, 2020; Zelizer, 2018).

It is discussed that Trump’s presence on Twitter, is fitting to the culture of Twitter, Twitter’s design as a platform blocks a complex conversation and allows a more offensive tone, fitting to Twitter, researchers have observed patterns on Trump’s public discourse are simple, aggressive and impulsive, moreover, Twitter allowed Trump to directly attack his critics without going through an editorial process, moreover far right groups had already built a community that would support Trump’s statements (Ott, 2017; Kellner, 2019; Fuchs, 2018; Carpini M. X., 2018; Turner, 2018) During his presidential campaign, Trump famously attacked mainstream media by calling them “fake news”, his campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski, was fired for assaulting a reporter, following this was his administrations statements, adhering media as “the enemy of the people”, allocating more time, space and resources of the White House to conservative outlets that align with the Republican party, cultivating an “unhealthy” relationship, this is noticeable in context to the American people’s decreasing trust towards mainstream media (Kilby, 2018; Chen et al, 2018; Taibbi, 2019; Kellner, 2019; Russell, 2018).

Matt Taibbi, in his book *Hate Inc.* argues that mainstream media follows a divisive approach that narrows people into two categories, as he defines it as the “Ten Rules of Hate” the media institutions covers politics in opposing binaries, that tends to focus on sides and lessens the coverage of an institution, the current media structure, Taibbi argues, provides a narrative that shows a single party as good and the other as bad and

on this line it supports a partisanship that aims to make the partisan superior against a vilified opponent (Taibbi, 2019).

Moreover, as Taibbi argues, this division, is actually profitable for large media institutions, Donald Trump's coverage increased the sales, subscriptions and ratings of so many liberal/progressive leaning TV stations and magazines, this phenomenon was called "the Trump bump", moreover, the blatant money grab has further decreased the trust in mainstream news even by their own base. Not only did Donald Trump get free press coverage worthy of millions of dollars, he was also able to slap media institutions which were already lacking trust, moreover in this period, at least for newspapers and magazines, -because of digitalization-subscriptions gained more importance than ad revenue, however instead of inspiring more quality journalism, it provoked publications to write articles favouring their readers opinions (Taibbi, 2019; Halimi and Pierre, 2021; Frank T. , 2020; Barkan, 2020; Anderson, 2018).

Study of Chen et al, finds a negative correlation between the trust in mainstream media and support for Donald Trump and a positive correlation between the "consumption" of conservative news and support for Donald Trump (Chen et al, 2018).

Arguably, Trump understood the sensationalist nature of media coverage, and turned it into his advantage for he knew how to put on a show and provoke the media, partly because of his already celebrity status, this arguably eased his task in utilizing a populist discourse, Trump was able to bash corporations whilst receiving large donations from them, a common theme of authoritarian leaders. Trump's toying with mainstream media were hard to respond to by media without taking responsibility and promising tangible challenges (Kellner, 2019; Fuchs, 2018; Taibbi, 2019; Carpini M. X., 2018; Caplan and Boyd, 2018).

As Trump liked to accuse critical outlets as such, fake news was indeed a problem within the 2016 elections, and remains to be a problem to date, circulation of fake news, either pro-Trump or pro-Clinton has seen a surge in the campaign process, fake news supporting Trump was higher in numbers and it was argued to be a part of his victory against Hillary Clinton (Fuchs, 2018; Happer, Merrin, and Hoskins, 2019;

Carpini M. X., 2018). Although social media platforms introduced fact checking services, including fact checking Trump's tweets, the service was met with hostility by conservative (Wemple, 2017).

Trump was focusing on the feelings and anxieties of white, Christian and conservative people and promised them to return to a never specified time, and arguably what he was promising was a reaction against progressive policies that produced anxiety on conservatives on the possibility of losing the spot (Kellner, 2019)

Trumpism in essence is an antithesis of soft power, confrontational and adversarial. Trumpism is not an ideology but appeals to belonging and group loyalty. In practice, the Trump administration's domestic and foreign policies of anti-immigrants, anti-Muslims, economic nationalism, and anti-establishment convey Trumpism (Knuckey and Kim, 2021, pp. 3-4).

Trump's strategy heavily depends on a division of us/them or friend/foe (Kellner, 2019; Fuchs, 2018; Zelizer, 2018). This is in the context of conservative media cultivating a family-like bond with its viewers, and in the context of a family-like media, Trump bonded with the anxieties of white Christian conservatives (Kreiss, 2018), or in other words, in the polarised media environment, to his voters, Trump is the one who's telling the 'inconvenient truth', because he was the one telling a great myth of an America that can be 'reversed' to be great (Sonnevend, 2018)

Recently, conspiracy theories have become more popular online and in mainstream media, mostly on conservative channels, Fox News' Glenn Beck or Alex Jones' "Infowars.com" would push outrageous conspiracy theories, such as plans to add chemicals to tap water that turns people gay (Higgins, 2018), to millions of viewers, Donald Trump himself used conspiracy theories quite often on his 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns and even during his presidency, claims such as voter fraud, his communications being tracked by the Obama administration (Happer, Merrin, and Hoskins, 2019).

Another area that Trump presidency provoked was TV comedies, ranging from Saturday Night Live to LWT, producing content criticizing and mocking Donald Trump, SNL itself had a sketch, showing a worried staff/people losing a topic they can make fun of, Trump's reactive personality arguably provoked comedians for presidents before Trump (Obama for example) were using these shows to boost their public perception (Russell, 2018).

Trump's presidency arguably provoked journalists to be activists, this has and could produce poor results for it does and could lower the journalistic standards, but moreover it could also provoke journalists to challenge the system they operate under (Russell, 2018; Taibbi, 2019)

4.3. Fifth Estate

The term fourth estate is used to describe media as a power in the political system. One of the very early usages of the term comes from Edmund Burke. On Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, he writes:

Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all. It is not a figure of speech, or a witty saying; it is a literal fact, —very momentous to us in these times...invent Writing, Democracy is inevitable (Carlyle, 1948, p182).

Carlyle continues on that the press's ability to speak to a whole nation makes it a power like "branch of government" that has a say in law-making. It's possible, when combined with his writings on the French Revolution, after the press and pamphlets of the French Revolution, Carlyle was optimistic on the role of press, and such optimism can be related to Carlyle instead of Burke, as Julianne Schultz notes that, Carlyle was indeed surprised to see that Burke was using the term to mock the press (Schultz, 1998).

According to Schultz, the age of enlightenment played a central role in creating the notion of the fourth estate as an independent watchdog. During this time, media was

recognized as a power and freedom of speech got more legal protection. The notion of a fourth estate was criticized for being lofty. It is also worth mentioning that the fourth estate has been a very flexible term over years (Schultz, 1998).

As mentioned in the discussion regarding infotainment, the walls that separated news media that granted an authority has eroded, this is accompanied by scepticism towards news media's credibility, its commercial nature, political interests of its owners and entertainment values penetrating news media, as a result the lofty ideas of a fourth estate was met with more scepticism for public interests and commercial interests that do not often align (Schultz, 1998).

To quote Schultz:

[...] Australian news media progressed along the path from being a 'co-operating servant' to becoming 'an equal contender' in the political system. (Schultz, 1998, s. 19)

Noticeably, more than its lofty aspirations, within the context that news media contesting the state is a tangible worry, that arguably is a global phenomenon, as well as observed by Christensen in pre-AKP Turkish news media (Christensen, 2007).

It is possible to define the fifth state as some sort of internet news media comprised of bloggers, columnists, youtubers and streamers. Noticeably, similar to the fourth estate, it can be the watchdog of the state, the fourth estate and itself, it can provide boundary defining work (Reilly, 2012; Berkowitz and Schwartz, 2016).

Although user generated content is defining, it is important to point out that the fifth estate is not exclusively amateur. There are cases of professional journalists/commentators opening their proving the reach of the fifth estate, a study of Pew Research Centre found that 26% of young adults in the United States use YouTube as a source for news. And almost half of them prefer "independent" channels whilst the other half selects news organizations (Pew Research Center, 2020). YouTube is

arguably a strong platform in the Turkish market for it is found to be the top social media site used in Turkey (BBC, 2020).

However, at least in the US, there has been concerns about the existence of “pipelines” within YouTube and other social media platforms that are suspected of radicalizing young people towards hate groups (Roose, 2019; Scully, 2021; Martineau, 2019; Guynn and Carless, 2021)

It is also worth noting that fifth estate channels are not independent from the conflict of financial interests and journalistic interests. For example, the youtuber David Pakman revealed that he was offered money to turn into a conservative streamer (Pakman, 2021). Ana Kasparian shared a similar story on the Michael Brooks’ YouTube Channel (Kasparian and Brooks, 2018). This suggests that within the fifth estate, it is possible for a political group to purchase influence.

Through such actions as buying the influence of a channel, politically interested groups can cultivate a self-sustaining political culture of doctrines. Let’s take famous conservative webpage/YouTube Channel “PragerU” as an example.

There are estimates that approximately 100 million Americans (nearly 1/3 of the entire USA) has seen at least part of a PragerU³⁵ video, the channel has a 2.9 million subscribers and a mostly young audience (60% under 35 years old) (Oppenheimer, 2018).

And interestingly enough PragerU and other conservative channels/webpages have rich conservative donors³⁶. However, I believe the case of PragerU, and the buy-out offer towards David Pakman has differences. Dennis Prager (founder of PragerU) was a conservative talk radio host before the PragerU project. He holds a belief that the “liberal media” is dangerous for the USA, one of his publications offers parents advice on how to raise their kids to prevent them from becoming liberals (Shea, 2015).

³⁵ A conservative YouTube channel of the non-profit organization called Prager University

³⁶ PragerU – Wilks Brothers, Steven Crowder – National Center, Liberty Alliance, Daily Wire – Wilks Brothers: (Oppenheimer, 2018) (Bergen, 2020) (Daily Wire)

It is also worth mentioning that channels like these (including PragerU) have supported and broadcasted messages like climate change is debatable, US police are not racist towards African-Americans, increasing the minimum wage is a bad idea, the civil war wasn't about slavery, covid scepticism, and vaccine scepticism (Oppenheimer, 2018) (Bergen, 2020).

It is possible to argue that, instead of collectively challenging the state, Turkish business interests have a tendency to collaborate with the state in their interests against their competitors, instead of collaborating with their competitors to challenge the state, thus bestowing a dominancy to the state (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002).

As I will elaborate on discussion regarding the Turkish media, the relationship between the Turkish state and the media is clientelistic in nature. Instead of private interests manipulating social media through influencers, the manipulation comes from the government through something called “Aktrolls” or as The Guardian puts it “state stooges” (Benedictus, 2016).

Aktrolls can be defined as politically motivated internet trolls who are pro-AKP. The term trolling could be traced to hacker communities of the 1980's, and although an assumption that the term comes from Scandinavian mythology, it is more likely to come from the fishing community on which the term refers to a fisherman trying to literally bait a fish (Davisson and Donovan, 2019).

The manipulation of the internet and social media through trolls is not something unique to Turkey, countries ranging from China to England use this strategy for various reasons. In the Turkish experience, the government employed trolls, are aiming to spread government propaganda and suppression of dissent (Benedictus, 2016).

The term trolling refers to making controversial comments online in order to outrage and/or engage people in an online debate. Although early trolling could be argued to be more entertainment oriented than what currently exists, politically motivated trolling began to emerge globally as well as in Turkey (Saka, 2018). As we experience aktrolls in Turkey, candidate oriented trolling does exist in the USA, troll groups like

Obama Boys, Bernie Bro, Hillbot (Hillary Clinton), Liz Lads (Elizabeth Warren), Yang Gang (Andrew Yang), etc.

Before the end of 2013, around 6,000 were employed by the government. The narrative of the government is that these employees combat disinformation with valid facts and positive language. However, as I will present the main function of this division is to harass oppositional pages and spread government propaganda (Albayrak and Parkinson, 2013).

President Erdogan and social media have had a rough history that includes censorships and some social media sites being closed for a time (including Wikipedia (BBC News , 2020b). A notable instance is the leakage of the audio “tapes” of high ranking government officials on YouTube, which resulted in a ban on YouTube (Dorell, 2022). Currently, Turkey is listed as “Not Free” on Freedom House’s, Freedom On the Net scorings (Freedom House, 2021). Whilst there were temporary bans for the internet and social media (Başaran, 2020), it can be said that the Gezi Park protests had been influential for the government, as Saka notes, amendments to the internet law that aims to easily ban or block internet sites were passed in 2015-2016 and it is evidenced in the post Gezi era that the budget for internet regulation was noticeably increased and “software-based surveillance” gained remarkable prominence (Saka, 2018). It is claimed that funding for Aktrolls comes through government channels (Saka, 2018).

Aktrolls functions as:

- A means of oppression towards dissent, lists ranging from journalists, artists and even the “families of fallen soldiers” can be the target of the troll army’s smear campaigns. In an instance, activities of the trolls can influence a real life attack towards a newspapers bureau (Sözeri, 2015).
- Promoting the party events of AKP (Saka, 2018).
- An instrument within the intraparty struggles, a famous example is an infamous blog post named “the Pelican Declaration” that is believed to be operated within the instructions of Berat Albayrak (Erdogan’s son in law) that had a share in the resignation of then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu (Başaran,

2020). And recently, congressional speaker, Mustafa Şentop was targeted by an Aktroll in twitter which suggests that intraparty struggles exist and is still on-going (T24, 2022).

- Spreading pro-AKP propaganda through various means, Aktrolls, as well as postings from their own accounts, can also acquire political accounts to spread propaganda (Saka, 2018).
- Launching virtual attacks to dissent, such as bot attacks, spamming, phishing, these attacks could be aimed to be annoy, hack or even publish incriminating evidence of its victims (Saka, 2018).
- Aktrolls are observed on non-Turkish pages, however, these attacks noted to be more random and personal rather than planned and political (Saka, 2018).

As Saka argues “The nature of AKTrolling protects the AKP from accusations of direct involvement. This also gives more autonomy to those involved” (Saka, 2018 , p. 7). As also mentioned by Saka, a study of Turkish graduate students has shown that the official account of Mustafa Varank, one of President Erdogan’s advisors, act as a bridge of information, between the party lines and the troll lines (Hafiza Kollektifi, 2015).

By 2020, Twitter actually shut down more than seven thousand accounts that were suspected of being an aktroll (Medyascope, 2020). A similar approach was used by Twitter after the capitol riots that deleted more than seventy thousand accounts (Romm and Dwoskin, 2021).

And on this level, both Zaytung and The Onion can be placed on the fifth estate for being a watch dog/critic of the fourth estate and the fifth estate itself, however, it should be noted that there are noticeable differences between Zaytung and The Onion, arguably the fourth estate news receives a similar treatment from Zaytung and The Onion however on fifth media, whilst Zaytung’s attention is more directed towards the AK trolls instead of news bloggers, The Onion could be argued to be political blogs. To give examples from Zaytung and The Onion.

Considering Zaytung pieces with headlines such as “Good News from the Ministry of Justice: The required number of 400,000 Tweets for a suspect to be arrested for the murder of a woman has been decreased to 250,000” (Zaytung, Bir Müjde...), “200 AK Trolls who learned to type “perception” and “operation” have been certified to begin their jobs.” (Zaytung, “Algı” ve...), “UN Has Confirmed the Allegations: “Yes, We Check Terrorist Organizations through Twitter” (Zaytung, Birleşmiş Milletler...), “AK Party is looking for options for journalists and trolls that will show no function for 4 years after the local elections: Put down until 2023 is considered” (Zaytung, AK Parti’de...), “Good News from the Government: Additional 20,000 High School Graduates will be hired by Aktroll with an average salary of 5,000 TL for supporting the appointment of a government trustee to Boğaziçi University.” (Zaytung, Hükümetten...)

And considering The Onion pieces with headlines such as “High Production Values Most Suspicious Part Of Conspiracy Theory Video” (The Onion,2020), “Secret Service Worry Major Biden’s Behavior Influenced By Time Spent On Far-Right Dog Forums” (The Onion,2021), “It’s Been 11 Minutes Since The Onion Was Banned from Twitter. So Why Isn’t The Mainstream Media Covering This?” (The Onion,2022), “Study Finds First 72 Hours Crucial To Determining Whether Missing Person Case Goes Viral” (The Onion,2021b), “InfoWars Offers Readers Guide To Staying Psychotic, Violent During Stressful Election Day” (The Onion,2020b)

It appears that blatant bias of pro-AKP media and AKtrolls are dominant on Zaytung’s coverage of the traditional and online news media, a common point is blatancy, shamelessness, lack of merit and chauvinism. Whilst traditional media could be argued to be given in a context of its clientelistic nature, Aktrolls are presented as “state stooges” that are a de facto part of the government communication.

Zaytung, as well as The Onion, points out social media’s effect on the judiciary, or social media justice, arguably the “viral” cases are prioritized due to attention, thus it underlies an influence of social media on implementation of law, however, a Zaytung piece also suggests that argued influence may be a bit exaggerated.

The Onion presents the unhinged nature of far-right blogs on chosen pieces, that radicalizes its audience through conspiracy theories which are deemed as “worrying”. Another point on The Onion’s coverage of the media would be the vilification of mainstream media, in this context the main subject is the “vilification” rather than mainstream media itself.

On a definition of the fifth estate being the watch dog of the fourth, Berkowitz and Schwartz suggest that The Onion can be the watch dog of the fourth estate. Their analyses rely on two pieces written by The Onion relating to CNN putting the “Miley Scandal” on its top page, The Onion ran a mock interview with the editor of CNN on why it was necessary to put that story on the top page. The other piece of The Onion is the ONN (Onion News Network) report predicting that Miley Cyrus will be “depleted” by 2013 (Berkowitz and Schwartz, 2016).

Funnily enough, CNN’s digital editor, Meredith Artley, retweeted The Onion’s piece by adding:

To clarify, I did not write this. But I accept all compliments and deny all accusations. Tx for the page views. (Artley, 2013)

This dialogue combined with the earlier piece of the ONN that suggests the total depletion of Miley Cyrus by 2013, created a news cycle, that not only several blogs and online news websites reported the early Onion piece, but also were adding their own commentary (examplimg Britney Spears or Amy Winehouse) and time to time it was becoming at best “blurred” that The Onion was a satirical news website within these pieces (Berkowitz and Schwartz, 2016).

The conclusion of Berkowitz and Schwartz is that The Onion can be considered a fifth estate publication on the sense that it can –with other fifth estate publications- be a watchdog of the fourth estate to bring it back to “its professional boundaries” (Berkowitz and Schwartz, 2016). I believe that in a sense, the Miley and CNN case show, perhaps the most powerful function of The Onion or any other satirical news publication, which is to create a story that propels participants to a dialogue.

External to Zaytung or news satire, a Twitter profile called Limon Haber (Lemon News) retweets misleading or clickbait news from the twitter pages of mainstream news, in these retweets, the author provides a brief explanation that simplifies the retweet.

Although Zaytung lacks the capacity of producing a news cycle, it could partially enter the fifth estate on terms that it is still engaged in critical work, moreover Turkish internet media is less developed than its American counterpart, thus the internet may be premature for Zaytung to create a challenging news cycle³⁷

4.5. 2019 Elections

2019 Mayoral Elections were held to designate 30 metropolitan and 1,351 district municipal mayors (Balta and Demiralp, 2021). A brief timeline of the 2019 Turkish municipal elections is:

- January 1, 2019: Beginning of the elections (Mevzuat).
- January 2, 2019: YSK announces the 13 political parties that are eligible to participate in the elections (Erem, 2019).
- March 3, 2019: Mayoral candidates are announced (Gazete Duvar, 2019).
- March 31, 2019: Election day.
- April 1, 2019: Ankara and İstanbul projected to be won by CHP (BBC Türkçe, 2019c).
- April 1, 2019: AKP announces its objection to the Ankara and İstanbul elections, before the end of the counts, demanding YSK's inquiry (Aktan, 2019; BBC Türkçe, 2019; Göksedef, 2019).
- April 16, 2019: AKP demands a re-election for İstanbul (BBC Türkçe, 2019b).
- May 6, 2019: YSK officially cancels the İstanbul elections (Cumhuriyet, 2019b).
- June 23, 2019: Election day for İstanbul (Cumhuriyet, 2019a).
- June 23-24, 2019: İmamoğlu wins the re-election.

³⁷ Zaytung does create a news cycle but it is often daily life stories about a celebrity or an institution mistaking Zaytung for real news.

In 2018, the AKP-led government introduced the 2018 electoral law that permits political parties to form electoral alliances, the alliances formed for the 2018 presidential elections remained for the 2019 municipal elections as well, in this regard, the loss of İstanbul and Ankara can certainly be seen as an electoral punishment for corruptness or inefficiency (Balta and Demiralp, 2021; Evrenk and Doğan, 2020).

Although the new election law was met with opposition's criticism as it was designed to bypass the 10% voting threshold without removing it³⁸, however, arguably the new electoral system benefited the opposition for the İP (Good Party) which had not satisfied the voting threshold and was allowed into the parliament because of the alliance, moreover with the new electoral system AKP shot itself in the foot for not only did it received fewer seats and weakened its position against MHP but it allowed political parties to maintain their alliances in upcoming elections (Evcı and Kaminski, 2020).

These are the competing alliances in the 2019 elections:

- **Cumhur İttifakı (People's Coalition):** Formed by AKP and the ultra-nationalist MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), supported by few smaller parties.
- **Millet İttifakı (Nation's Coalition):** Formed by secular centrist CHP (Republican People's Party), moderate nationalist right wing İP (İyi Parti, Good Party), centre-right DP (Democrat Party) and Islamist SP (Felicity Party)
- Not included in either coalition, pro-Kurdish HDP (People's Democratic Party) supported the Millet İttifakı, indirectly.

I believe that these forms of coalition show the polarizing effect of populist policies for the rhetoric of populist policies divides the nation into two camps, the "people", that populists claims to represent and the "corrupt" that it opposes, in that respect "demagogic" and "opportunistic" perceptions towards populism is justified, Populism arguably has an anti-establishment characteristic that views the political establishment as elitist and corrupt, it claims to represent the 'pure people' of the nation and its

³⁸ AKP's partner MHP was feared to fail the threshold.

sovereignty goes unchallenged for it represents the will of the nation, the populist divides the nation by causing people to antagonize each other (Balta and Demiralp, 2021; Mudde, 2004)

Erdogan is argued to be a leader who became populist over time (Aguilar et al, 2019; McKernan, 2019; Akser and Baybars-Hawks, 2012), arguably the early AKP was more centrist, arguably accession to the European Union played a major part in this, because the compliance to the EU standards not only put the “republican elite” to a paradox that weakened it against AKP, but also the promise of the EU helped AKP to position itself in the centre (Gürsoy, 2011; Bürgin, 2016). Arguably, the Gezi Park protests, along with other developments, have been breaking moments on the centrist position for arguably AKP recognized the Gezi Park protests as a threat to its existence (Girit, 2013), following that was Erdogan’s dispute with the Gulen (BBC News, 2016a) movement and failed coup attempt in 2016. Arguably, Erdogan is a leader with an “emotional appeal”, although his early terms could have argued to be less populist, Erdogan is a populist leader who evokes feelings of his voters, and arguably presents himself as a “father of the nation” of which was already attributed to state way before him (Balta and Demiralp, 2021; Aslan, 2020)

AKP under Erdogan has been successful in elections, thus making it possible for Erdogan not only to claim he represents the people, but also his regime to be an authentic one for he came to power through the ballot and thus arguing the illegitimacy of any dissent or protests (Balta and Demiralp, 2021).

An important factor in this strategy is that Turkish society lacked any trust on “other” even before AKP’s first term, Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, on/ his 2002 study mentions that interpersonal trust is low within Turkish society, individuals lack tolerance towards lifestyles that are different from their own (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002).

It is argued that Turkey shows the characteristics of ‘competitive authoritarianism’, that were exasperated after the failed coup attempt of 2016 (Balta and Demiralp, 2021; Hekimci and Selçuk, 2020; Özbudun, 2015; Yavuzılmaz, 2021). Competitive authoritarianism could be described as a political system on which elections are still

held, however, the excessive incumbents advantages (that exist in all democracies in lower levels) creates an “election-winning machine” by the means of: strictly regulated media, controlled judiciary and state funds being used as a “patronage” (Balta and Demiralp, 2021; Özbudun, 2015).

In 2010, Constitutional Court (Anayasa Mahkemesi) and High Council Judges and Prosecutors (Hakim ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu, HSYK), were subjected to the changes as accepted by a referendum, on which, changes towards HSYK was aimed towards a more pluralistic structure, by giving more representation and independence towards the HSYK that was in conformity with the Venice Commission and Consultative Council of European Judges (Özbudun, 2015).

However, AKP’s liberating role faded when cabinet members were charged during the scandals of 17-25 December 2013. The AKP government initially brought a change that necessitated public prosecutors to inform the government of any open or secret investigations which enabled the government to take measures, upon facing a protest from HSYK, AKP presented a bill that restricted the HSYK and limited its independence that was passed despite being deemed unconstitutional, with the efforts of the oppositional MPs the bill was reviewed by the Constitutional Court that annulled 19 provisions of the law for undermining the independency of HSYK (Özbudun, 2015).

Only after the elections for HSYK, AKP was able to install pro-government members to the HSYK and dominate the judiciary with a new law that proposed changes on Court of Cassations and Council of State that further enabled AKP’s dominance (Özbudun, 2015; Akser, Farmanfarmanian, and Sonay, 2018).

Most of the provisions are rather ambiguous and open to different interpretations. Given that the AKP government describes many kinds of opposition activities, from the Gezi Park demonstrations to corruption investigations, as “coup attempts” against it, such severe measures may very well be used by pro-government judges and public prosecutors to intimidate and silence opposition... The year 2014 can be described as a period in which the AKP government made a sustained and systematic effort to establish its

control over the judiciary. Through laws of dubious constitutionality, it seems largely to have accomplished this aim (Özbudun, 2015, p.53).

Özbudun's narration of Turkey's drift towards competitive authoritarianism also falls in line with AKP's drift towards populist policies, indeed the Gezi Park protests, and AKP government's dispute with the Gulen movement accelerated the process, for not only did AKP lose the centrist or even liberal standing but arguably the government perceived these events as an existential threat, and indeed the Gulen movement was an existential threat to the Turkish state for having so many members in the armed forces, law enforcement and judiciary, and this fight for existence arguably motivated AKP to "instrumentalise" the judiciary.

In late AKP rule, that experienced the Gezi Park protests, 17-25 December investigations, that increased authoritarian practices, and deepened the fault lines such as secularism and nationalism. In this regard, in some scholar's opinion, the election alliances could be argued to be defined as pro-democracy and pro-authoritarianism that "overshadow" the existing cleavages, arguably, the constitutional referendum of 2017 that installed an executive presidential system played a role in this (Balta and Demiralp, 2021; Hekimci and Selçuk, 2020; Yavuzylmaz, 2021)

It is important to remember that AKP's control does not only come from the threat but also rewards and motives, through using state funds, as Balta and Demiralp argues:

Meanwhile, the government has built a loyal business class through three mechanisms: public spending, privatisation of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and public goods, and transfer of private capital from disfavoured groups to its privileged circles (Balta and Demiralp, 2021, p. 8).

Whereas AKP maintained a tight grip on media institutions and "instrumentalised" the judiciary, thus discouraging the opposition and encouraging supporters, the distribution of state funds and social programs not only acts as an encouragement but as a possible loss for the "defectors" (Balta and Demiralp, 2021).

The populist politics of AKP and Erdogan is apparent in the rhetoric of “us vs them”, on which AKP represents an ignored and repressed majority whereas they could represent a vague enemy that opposes the nation’s will, it could be the “republican elite”, protesters or vague, unspecified forces, such as “foreign forces”³⁹, in this regard more than the ideological lines, voters are discouraged to vote opposition in fear of being “them” and even facing repercussions (Ünsal, 2019; Balta and Demiralp, 2021). The language of AKP and MHP were extremely harsh, Millet İttifakı were called as Zillet İttifakı (Gazete Duvar, 2019; Sputnik Türkiye, 2018) (humiliation alliance) by Bahçeli and pro-AKP press whereas the People’s Alliance defines itself as “not only an electoral alliance but also a historic solidarity against Turkey’s domestic and foreign enemies” (Yavuzylmaz, 2021; Hekimci and Selçuk, 2020, p. 9), the alliance therefore is equated with the unity and the interests of the nation, moreover the opposition, at best unwillingly, serves the enemies of the state.

Populist strategies force the opposition to be careful with their strategies, for an aggressive approach could backfire in favour of the populists, considering the polarising effects of populism. I agree with Balta and Demiralp that “inverted populism” helped the opposition to perform a miracle in Istanbul, their definition (inverted populism focusing on the positive aspects of populism) (Balta and Demiralp, 2021; Hekimci and Selçuk, 2020), reminds me of the Turkish adage “one should embrace the positive aspects of the west⁴⁰”.

As Hekimci and Selçuk also notice, the Nation’s Alliance promotes its diversity on its foundation, and underlines pluralism, democracy, prevalence of law and freedom of speech, this calm approach completely in contrast to the People’s Alliance.

Interestingly, especially considering the pluralism of the People’s Alliance, almost dichotomous nature of the coalition is somewhat similar to the two party system of the United States, for not only it encourages the winner takes it all system, but also the opposing institution is encouraged to have a political pluralism that could range from centre right to far right or centre right to centre left. Curiously, just as the American

³⁹ Dış Mihraklar

⁴⁰ Batının iyi yönlerini alacaksın.

Democratic Party is hesitant to embrace its leftist divisions⁴¹, the People's Alliance is somewhat distant to HDP and arguably not only to left wing but also to ethnic minorities, primarily the Kurds (Hekimci and Selçuk, 2020).

The results of the 2019 local elections were the opposition's best performance up until that point in terms of undermining the perceived authoritarian regime. In four out of the five largest cities, the opposition's joint candidates defeated the AKP-MHP candidates.

The Istanbul elections turned into a protracted process of recounts and claims of irregularities and claims of voter fraud, this was accompanied by a physical assault on Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (the leader of the main opposition party).

Istanbul has been especially important for AKP, not only for it is a huge metropolitan city that became the symbol of AKP's neo-Ottoman policies but also İstanbul has been under AKP and Erdogan's rule, starting with Erdogan being elected as a mayor in 1994, and thus AKP successfully objected for a re-count as soon as İmamoğlu went ahead in the counts.

Balta and Demiralp argue that İmamoğlu's campaign was aimed towards being more inclusive than AKP whilst avoiding a confrontation with Erdogan himself, to avoid alienating the conservatives, attempting to be a uniting force that claims to represent 98% of the population, covering the "cleavages" within the society "religious-secularist, rural-urban, nationalist-pro Kurdish" (Balta and Demiralp, 2021). Trying to include the polarised groups such as AKP and CHP is a fine line for not only could it alienate the opposition, but also it could still miss the AKP voters, in this regard, the depolarisation is such a thin line, it could be exemplified as actually walking on a wire, where the loss of balance is deadly. For example, İmamoğlu including Nagehan Alçı (a pro-government journalist) on his touring bus (in 2022) was met with harsh criticism by oppositional channels (Nevşin Mengü, 2022).

⁴¹ After his strong opening by winning the first three democratic primaries, supporters of Bernie Sanders were sceptic, convinced that the Democrat Party actively worked to prevent a possible Sanders nomination.

İmamoğlu's campaign promised a continuation and increase in social services, not only utilising positive populism, but also convincing voters that they were not the main benefactors of the "public funds", moreover it being municipal elections gave İmamoğlu room to keep his arguments local, despite the heavy presence of Erdogan as face of the Cumhuriyet. Even when the tensions rose on election coverage of the Anadolu Agency, İmamoğlu avoided Erdogan personally and focused on the Anadolu Agency and other media institutions thus giving an image of a strong candidate without direct confrontation, the corrupt elite in İmamoğlu's "inverted populism" are AKP's rent seeking cronies, and this is portrayed with the word "waste" that does not directly accuse whilst pointing to a wrong practice (Balta and Demiralp, 2021). Perhaps Erdogan's decrease and Yıldırım's increase of presence during the second campaign is proof that İmamoğlu's strategy worked, for Yıldırım is a calmer politician compared to Erdogan (Yavuzyılmaz, 2021).

İmamoğlu's campaign used a correct strategy to respond to AKP's aggressive populism, however, as the literature also underlines, the 2019 elections were held when the country was going through an economic crisis, during 2019, Turkey experienced increased inflation, depreciated currency and increased cost of living, to which the government only gave short term responses. That arguably alienated AKP voters from their party and opened the door for alternatives to come in (Yavuzyılmaz, 2021). Although overshadowed by the İstanbul elections, Yavuzyılmaz also argues that Mansur Yavaş's campaign also used a similar strategy for elections.

Freedom of speech and freedom of press has been a discussion within the 2019 elections, it was proposed that around 90-95% of the media was accumulated by pro-government conglomerates, whilst opposition and press associations suggest an alarming decrease in press freedom, government officials deny these concerns by stating they are only targeting terrorist sympathizers (Deutsche Welle Türkçe, 2019a). Suppression of press under the fight against terrorism could be observed in pre-AKP and early-AKP eras as well (Yeşil, 2018; Alemdar, 2014; Yılmaz, 2016).

It was observed that candidates were disproportionately covered in TV broadcasts, in favour of *Cumhur İttifakı*. The Council of Europe, defined Turkey as “the largest prison for journalists, it was reported that out of 130 journalists that are imprisoned in the entirety of Europe, 110 of them are imprisoned in Turkey (Deutsche Welle Türkçe, 2019b). it was also stated by the Turkish Union of Press, that eight thousand journalists were fired in 2019. RSF (Reporters sans Frontières), in early march, stated that the Turkish government is actively restricting foreign journalists by either rejecting or delaying their accreditations and visas (Deutsche Welle Türkçe, 2019c). The same methods of suppression were also reported in Tunç’s article; in her article she reveals that foreign journalists who do critical reporting could face such repercussions (Tunç, 2018).

Fake news was also a problem during the 2018-2019 elections, it was reported that circulation of fake news in Turkish social media, increase during the election periods (Deutsche Welle Türkçe, 2019c). In an instance, fake statements were published in *Hürriyet* and *CNN Türk*, as if they were stated by Sezai Temelli (Co-president of HDP), *Hürriyet* has apologized for its misconduct and *CNN International* started an investigation of *CNN Türk* (Cumhuriyet, 2019a; The Independent Türkçe, 2019).

4.6. 2020 Elections

A brief timeline of the 2020 US presidential election is (Blake, 2021; Cai, 2021; United States, 2021):

- Feb 3, 2020: The presidential primaries begin in Iowa (Ballotpedia).
- Aug 11, 2020: The last primary is held in Connecticut (Ballotpedia)
- Aug 11, 2020: Joe Biden announces Kamala Harris as his running mate (Biden, 2020).
- Aug 18, 2020: Joe Biden is officially nominated as the Democratic Party’s candidate for the presidential election (Itkowitz et al, 2020).
- Aug 24, 2020: Donald Trump is officially nominated by the Republican Party (Deutsche Welle, 2020).
- Nov 3, 2020: Election day
- Nov 7, 2020: Media outlets project Joe Biden as the winner of the election.

- Nov 7-9, 2020: President Trump starts tweeting about false voter fraud claims.
- Nov 9, 2020: Department of Justice (Warren, 2021) issues a memo to investigate credible allegations of voter fraud.
- Nov 13, 2020: Sen. Lindsey Graham, asks Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to reject mail ballots.
- Nov 14, 2020: Trump campaign prepares refutations on allegations regarding Dominion voting machines.
- Nov 19, 2020: Donald Trump's lawyers, Rudy Giuliani and Sydney Powell conduct a press conference, further claiming voter fraud.
- Dec 1, 2020: Attorney General William P. Barr states: "...not seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election." (Blake, 2021)
- Dec 1, 2020: Gabriel Sterling, Chief Operating Officer for the Georgia Secretary of State, asks Trump to stop inciting people to commit violence due to his concerns of public safety.
- Dec 4, 2020: The Georgia Secretary of State's Office declares, their investigation found no basis to Rudy Giuliani's claims.
- Dec 4, 2020: The Trump campaign files a lawsuit in Fulton County Superior Court to invalidate the presidential election results of Georgia
- Dec 5, 2020: Fulton County Superior Court rejects the Trump campaign's lawsuit.
- Dec 5, 2020: President Trump pressures Georgia Governor Brian Kemp to overturn the state's election results
- Dec 8, 2020: Supreme Court rejects suit of Mike Kelly, representative of Pennsylvania, to block the certification of Pennsylvania's election results.
- Dec 9, 2020: West Virginia certifies its election results and finalizes the process.
- Dec 11, 2020: Supreme Court rejects the lawsuit of Texas to overturn the elections in several states.
- Dec 12, 2020: Supreme Court of Georgia rejects Donald Trump's lawsuit to overturn Georgia's election results.
- Dec 14, 2020: Electoral College is counted in all states, casting 306 electoral votes to Biden and 232 votes to Trump.

- Dec 14, 2020: William P. Barr offers his resignation, he is allegedly fired by President Trump for not investigating alleged voter fraud claims (Zapotosky, Dawsey, and Barrett, 2020).
- Dec 24, 2020: Jeffrey Rosen becomes acting Attorney General.
- Dec 27, 2020: Donald Trump pressures the Department of Justice into stating that the “election was corrupt”
- Dec 31, 2020: Vice President Mike Pence, demands a rejection of a lawsuit that would expand his powers on overturning the election.
- Jan 2, 2020: President Trump personally calls Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to cast doubt into Biden’s victory in Georgia.
- Jan 3, 2020: Acting Attorney General Rosen was to be fired and replaced by Jeffrey Clark for refusing to send a letter that would benefit Donald Trump’s campaign, however, after a meeting where he learned that firing Rosen would have met with mass resignations from the Department of Justice, Donald Trump declined to fire Rosen.
- Jan 4, 2020: Mike Pence had a meeting with Donald Trump and John Eastman, where they attempted to convince Pence to decline the electoral votes of seven states in the congress’ session on January 6.
- Jan 5, 2020: President Trump tweets “The Vice President has the power to reject fraudulently chosen electors”, publicly pressuring Mike Pence to deny the electoral votes (Cheney and Niedzwiadek, 2021).
- Jan 6, 2020: Mike Pence releases a press statement, saying he cannot overturn the results (CNN, 2021)
- Jan 6, 2020: Donald Trump gave a speech near the White House to his supporters, stating “We will never give up. We will never concede!” (Chang et al, 2022).
- Jan 6, 2020: Supporters of Donald Trump march towards and storm the US Capitol, interrupting the counting of electoral votes, after the rioters were cleared, the session continued to certify Biden as the President of the United States of America (Chang, 2022).
- Jan 11, 2020: US House of Representatives introduces an article of impeachment against Donald Trump for his involvement in the capitol riots.

- Jan 13, 2020: Donald Trump is impeached for the second time by the US House of Representatives.
- Jan 20, 2020: Joe Biden is officially inaugurated as the 46th President of the United States of America (Baker, 2021)
- Feb 13, 2020: The US Senate acquits Donald Trump for impeachment.

US Presidential Elections of 2020, had been a distinctive yet defining experience in US democracy. I suggest, the process fits the Trump presidency, for his term at presidency greatly undermined the role of the US President as the “leader of the free world”, moreover policies of Donald Trump have weakened, if not ended, the soft power of the US. It is only appropriate for Donald Trump to actively undermine the democratic institutions at the end of his presidency. Donald Trump’s personality and policies has been a subject of jokes, for various comedy programs as well as political leaders like Emmanuel Macron, Boris Johnson and Justin Trudeau (Wood, 2019).

However, more than his personality, his political actions, such as decreasing the budget for foreign aid, his failure on assigning ambassadors and leaving international treaties such as the Paris climate agreement. Whereas the USA under Donald Trump followed a foreign policy that alienated its traditional policies, its traditional foes were challenging the US leadership (Knuckey and Kim, 2021; Forreign Assistance; Lamothe, 2017; Elliott, 2017).

Donald Trump, promoted a rally on January 6, when the electoral votes were being counted by the Congress, minute by minute, certifying Joe Biden as president, after the inflammatory speeches given by the Trump Campaign and weeks of “voter fraud” claims, a “mob” of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol Building, hoping to cancel or delay the certification of Joe Biden. The capitol riots were not completely reactionary, there were extremist groups such as the Proud Boys and Oathkeepers who were already prepared for a violent event, moreover, retired General Flynn and Trump were privately discussing the US military stepping in, and several GOP figures were publicly encouraging citizens to take action (Ben Hammou et al, 2022; Lau and Strawbridge, 2022).

Press coverage of the capitol riots across the globe, emphasizes: Donald Trump inciting his followers to start a riot, tension between Republican figures and Donald Trump, words such as “anarchy”, “mob”, “riot”, “shock”, “crisis”, “chaos”, “frenzy”, “karma”, “retribution”, “descend”, “disgrace”, “under siege”, “invasion”, “domestic terrorism”, and “Waterloo” were used to incite a insurrection. There is a somewhat unity in the world press in condemning the supporters of Donald Trump, considering the riots as a result of ‘Trumpism’. An Italian newspaper compared the event to Italy under Mussolini. A Brazilian newspaper suggested that the USA has “fallen” into a Latin American democracy (Ellyatt, 2021; Sly, 2021; BBC News, 2021b).

I wanted to start from the riots because the capitol riot is the true closing of Donald Trump’s presidency, perhaps a reason why it was so shocking, besides the heinous act itself, was the acts committed by white Americans, as Lenora Warren comments, the riots were deemed “unthinkable” for it has been indeed unthinkable to associate such acts to white Americans (Warren, 2021).

The attempts of Republican lawmakers or right-wing pundits to either suggest the “riots” were an antifa plan, or to downplay what actually happened, as Warren mentions, Republican figures were narrating the riots as a harmless event, moreover Sen. Ted Cruz had to abandon his stance defining the events as “terrorism” after he was heavily criticised by Tucker Carlson on his show (Ward, 2022), right-wing figures try to avoid words like “coup” or “insurrection” for not only such words draws a harsh picture, but also claiming an action not to be a coup could effectively downplay the harsh realities.

Moreover, right-wing figures actually stated that the Black Lives Matter protests were more dangerous, the difference of law enforcement’s handling of the two events were a topic of discussion as well, pictures comparing heavily armed police protecting the capitol during Black Lives Matter protests with the understaffed police officers during the capitol riots were often shared (Warren, 2021; Cunningham, 2022; Ben Hammou et al, 2022 ;Borger, 2021 ;Fadel, 2021).

This violent attack and response is telling in a way, the US has witnessed violent protests initiated by white supremacists (such as the infamous “unite the right” rally in Charlottesville, that ended up with marchers shouting slogans like “Jews will not replace us” and “blood and soil” and a deadly incident where Alex James Fields ran his car into a group of counter protesters, killing one. This is concerning because Donald Trump was endorsed by David Duke (former leader of the Ku Klux Klan) twice in his 2016 and 2020 campaigns, even in the presidential debates in the 2020 elections, Donald Trump directly made a statement towards Proud Boys (an extremist group), after being asked to condemn white supremacist groups, telling them to “stand down and stand-by” (Domonoske, 2016; Naughtie, 2020; Culver and Subramanian, 2020). Charlottesville protests and the Capitol Riots have become legitimate concerns for the impact of a Trump presidency on extremist groups, but also on law enforcements agencies (Cunningham, 2022).

The 2020 Elections were already concerning for Donald Trump who had been impeached (Fandos and Shear , 2019) once for abusing his power and obstructing justice when he attempted to force the Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden (his possible rival in the elections) moreover, it was a possibility for an unbalanced election due to pandemic and indeed Trump himself not only attacked on the legitimacy of mail-in voting before the elections, but the mail-in voters were a part of his conspiracy in post-election, Trump’s suspicion of voter security is not something out of the ordinary, for voters in the US, especially minorities or marginalized communities, would often face disenfranchising (disguised as worries of voting integrity) procedures to prevent these groups from voting which would often favour Republicans politically (Samuels, 2021; Hanmer et al, 2022).

Right after the election, but before the count was finalized, Donald Trump announced victory whilst he was behind Joe Biden. After the election, the Trump campaign launched 62 lawsuits regarding voter fraud and irregularities, all of their lawsuits (except one minor suit about social distancing) were rejected by the courts, and Donald Trump’s communication was so vague that Trump supporters would protest to “stop the count” in Michigan whereas in Arizona they would protest to “keep the count” (BBC News, 2020a ;Hanmer et al, 2022).

The United States had the elections under the covid pandemic and its moral and political impacts, such as loss of lives and livelihoods, restricted social life, increased unemployment, accompanying that was the 2020 protests for Black Lives Matter, enflamed by the murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in a clear demonstration of police violence, state and federal authorities responded to protests with harsh police violence aimed at protestors and journalists (Barr, Thomas, and Gabbatt, 2020).

The election campaign for the presidency was dominated by the Trump administration's handling of the pandemic as well as its harsh reactions to the protests, Trump's harsh reactions that enabled federal agencies operating on the state level raised tensions, going against the wishes of mayors and governors (Hanmer et al, 2022; Coe and Scacco, 2021; Konisky and Nolette, 2021).

Issues such as mask wearing, policing, and free speech became cultural phenomena, represented by slogans and catchphrases such as “defund the police,” “stop the steal,” and “cancel culture.” In other words, political and policy differences seem to have saturated American culture (Konisky and Nolette, 2021, p. 329)

Covid-19 increased the popularity of the Affordable Care Act, of which the Trump administration attempted to limit and discourage enrolment into it, despite an ongoing pandemic. The signature policy of the Trump presidency was its anti-immigration stance, Trump administration attempted to implement a travel ban to mostly Muslim countries, attempted to terminate DACA⁴² (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), perhaps the most outrageous was the migrant separation policy that separates migrant children from their parents and detains them in a centre, on which children were detained in cages (BBC News, 2018). Another characteristic policy of the Trump administration was its determination to reverse environmental protections and decrease environmental regulations (Konisky and Nolette, 2021).

⁴² A program that defers deportation of immigrants who arrived to US as children.

Alongside these issues, “culture wars” issues such as LGBTQ rights, abortion policies, women’s rights and religious liberties, the Trump administration already implemented discriminatory policies on Trans health care, moreover even Joe Biden’s presidency saw a continuation of this at states level, such as Florida’s “anti-gay bill” (Encarnacion, 2022) or the Trump appointed supreme court’s reversal of Roe v Wade, ending federal protection of abortion rights (BBC News, 2022), in this manner these policies could be read as Republican anxiety against a Democratic administration (Ben Hammou et al, 2022; Konisky and Nolette, 2021).

The 2020 elections saw a continuation in trends of Democrats tending to control metropolitan areas and cities and Republicans controlling urban areas. In the end, the Biden campaign won the senate (with the tiebreaking vote), house and presidency, also winning in Georgia, a red leaning state (Konisky and Nolette, 2021).

Accompanying that, sexism, economic dissatisfaction, racism, cultural insecurity, fear of minorities, anti-immigration and Christian nationalism (defined as America being an openly “Christian Nation”) has continued, if not increased, as ideological reasons within Trump supporters (Baker, Perry, and Whitehead, 2020), moreover as Eisele and Kluknavská argue, Donald Trump utilizes a populist communication of a “bad elite” and “good people” and through this appeal to emotion (Eisele and Kluknavská, 2021) Trump arguably has deepened polarisation regarding sex, gender, cultural insecurity, racial inequality, and immigration.

Perhaps, the presidency of Donald Trump only proves that any democracy in the world is only a few good men away from authoritarianism.

CHAPTER 5: CASE ANALYSIS OF ZAYTUNG AND THE ONION

The analysis of Zaytung and The Onion's pieces can often be seen within the literature regarding them (Ünsal, 2019 ;Yazıcı, 2019 ;O'Rourke and Rodrigues, 2004; Reilly, 2012). This analysis explains the ties between real world events and the referred news satire pieces and critical function of the pieces.

In this chapter I will analyse the chosen articles based on the discussion

Furthermore, I will present The Onion's famous post 9/11 issue, although the 9/11 attacks and capitol riots are in no way comparable, however, I will argue that it is a benchmark case of how comedy could be utilized in a post-trauma environment for it has been universally praised for its sensitivity.

5.1. Zaytung's Content

To view Zaytung's parody, I will briefly mention how Zaytung mimics the news. Zaytung's content can be divided into three categories, breaking news, photonews and full pieces⁴³:

Breaking News

Son Dakika!

Maltepe'de sayım yapan kurul sayısı güne yükselişle başlamasının ardından dalgalı bir seyir izledi. Şu sıralarda 6'dan işlem görüyor...

(hebelob Brüksel'den bildirdi)

<- önceki haber

sonraki haber ->

facebook'ta Paylaş

twitter'a yolla

Allah'a havale et

Figure 14. A Breaking News Example. (Source: Zaytung, m)

Photonews

⁴³ Zaytung has a variety of content types, ranging from surveys to magazine covers, however, mentioned categories are most popular type of Zaytung's content.

Seçimle gitmeyi yediremeyen diktatör özentisinin destekçilerini amatör teröristlere dönüştürme hız tüm dünyada ilgiyle izleniyor...



Figure 16. Photonews example. (Source: Zaytung, n.d. - p)

Full Pieces

17. Exan

Sayılacak Sandık Sayısının 51'e Kadar Düşmesi Hükümeti Harekete Geçirdi: Yurt Dışından Dolu Oy Sandığı İthal Edilecek...



Yüksek Seçim Kurulu'nun İstanbul'un tamamında oyların yeniden sayımını reddedip 21 ilçede 51 sandığın yeniden sayımına karar vermesiyle birlikte sandık darboğazıyla karşı karşıya kalan AK Parti, sorunu bir kez daha ihlal yoluyla çözmeye hazırlıyor...

"Bu milleti sandıklar bırakmayız"

Konuyla ilgili olarak bu sabah bir açıklama yapan AK Parti Sözcüsü Ömer Çelik, kalın için 51 sandığın sayımının bugün içinde bitmesini beklandığını ifade ederek: "Belli kira bir süre kesinti olabilir ancak doğacak büyük ihlal yukarıda özetlemek için gerekli açıklamaları yapmadık. Konumuz enadige önemli, bu milleti oy saymaktan, aradığı farkı hesaplamaktan, tutanak karşısında kopmaktan mahrum bırakmayacağız. Allah'ın izniyle en geç cuma günü işi burada bitireceğiz. Sandıklarla yolumuza devam edeceğiz" sözleriyle kamuoyunu rahatlattı mesajlar verdi.

Paraguay sandıklar geliyor

İkinci aşamada Türkiye ile aynı dönemde genel seçime giden Paraguay'la temasa geçildiği belirlen Çelik, puntan kaydetti:

"Temsilcilerimiz Danışmanlık arandığıyla teklifimizi ilettilik. O sandıklar hiç anlamadık bize varlıklar, hepsini önce döne sayar sorunu bize size iletiriz dedi. Çokluca arca bakıldık. Sayıların ilk etapta oradan bir 150.000 kadar sandıkta en az 3 farklı oy sayma ekipmanını getirmeye çalışacağız. Sonradan Allah kerem, eğer başka yerlerde de seçimler oluyor. Hepsini tek tek araştırıp bu teklifimizi iletacağız. Özellikle yüksek nüfuslu Hindistan, Pakistan, Çin gibi ülkeler ile hedefimiz. Denk getirebilirsek 1 sene hiç barmadan oy sayabiliriz..."

Yeni gelir modeli

İthal edilecek sandıklar için hazırlanan bir kurur para harcanmayacağına da sözlerine ekleyen AK Parti Sözcüsü, bilakis Türkiye'nin bu iş karşılığında Paraguay'dan oy sayım ücreti olarak döviz girde elde edeceğini de müddet verdi.

"Ayrıca bizim hiç aktarılmada yoktu para istemek ama böyle bir teklifle gelince atıldıkardan 'Olur ama ne kadar sürecektir?' şeklinde bir yonnet geldi. O zaman biz de sandık başına 10 dolar verdiğimiz yeter dedik. Makul buldular. Zevk için sayacaklık, günü geçtine bir de para alacak. Çok büyük bir para oldu bizim için" diye Çelik, bu sorunun başını bir şekilde örtülmesine halinde Türkiye'nin oy sayımında uluslararası bir marka haline geleceğine dikkat çekti.

Figure 18. Full Piece Example. (Source: Zaytung, n.d. - o)

Headlines are especially important for news satire pieces, and they are comparatively more important for Zaytung, hence an important portion of their content is made up of breaking news and photonews (pieces that heavily rely on the headline), full pieces make up a minority of Zaytung's content. On average, Zaytung's headlines have 17 words in a single sentence.

Breaking news pieces are written in bold and large fonts, often formal or a semi-formal language is used, some pieces offer a combination of formal and informal language to create an incongruity. Pieces always ends with three dots; in a way this falls in line

with the theme of the section for it creates an impression of a new event that Zaytung is still trying to get more details of.

At the end of the pieces, the nickname of the member who wrote the piece is shown within a sentence of “Nickname reported from Brussels”. This is a clear reference to the journalistic language, on which the TV anchors, after their discussion with a correspondent ends the discussion with a similar sentence.

Breaking news pieces, are mostly submitted by users, although Zaytung uses a standard language that users abide by, the differences in type of language and type of humour are normal within these pieces.

Stylistically, breaking news is in somewhat accordance with news websites. For news websites also have to convince their readers with a headline (often presented with an image). Interestingly, breaking news, by its nature, has the prime placing on news websites, however, on Zaytung, breaking news is almost insignificant.

I argue that this is partially because, unlike legitimate news websites, breaking news does not offer any following news or any image, therefore, despite being in low quantity, the full pieces on the website get the prime place for it offers the most Zaytung can. The breaking news are more similar to tweets of mainstream news.

Interestingly, the term breaking news does not appear in the headline itself, but appears as the name of the section, given that it lacks the prime spot, this can be argued to work as a reminder to the audience, instead of indicating urgency.

Photonews is similar to breaking news, on which it resembles a tweet from mainstream news, on imitation, photonews arguably imitates news websites for, especially in breaking news, news websites provide a picture and a title to convince the reader to click. Interestingly, just like breaking news, photonews is also given a relatively small space when compared to the full pieces.

Interestingly, Zaytung often uses screenshots of news websites or screenshots of social media posts from mainstream media pages. Although, this choice arguably damages

Zaytung's imitation, it aides Zaytung in two ways, it provides a wider context for the reader, and, as mentioned, the reader could see how Zaytung twists the news making language, secondly, through screenshots (especially on news portraying politicians), Zaytung directly uses the imagery chosen by news channels.

Most interesting is the choice of sources for the news. Sources in almost half of the screenshots (11 out of 25) have no indicator of the news outlets name, and the majority (11 out of 25) are taken from alternative news websites such as Sputnik Turkey, Sol Haber, BBC News Turkish, Gazete Duvar and Birgün. Only a minority (3 out of 25) are taken from mainstream channels such as Sabah, CNN Türk and A Haber.

This variation of sources indicates an important stance, given that these images main function is to provide a context for the headline, Zaytung indicates that it does not recognize the legitimacy of pro-AKP sources in the three instances in which they use the screenshots having a critical stance towards pro-AKP media. In another instance, Zaytung actually used the front page of Güneş newspaper (known for its pro-AKP stance) to directly accuse pro-AKP media of inciting hatred and violence.

This comment could be supported by the fact that the screenshots which are from social media pages of political figures are mainly of pro-AKP figures, out of five screenshot, three are pro-AKP (AKP's Istanbul MP Mustafa Yeneroğlu, Speaker of the Congress Mustafa Şentop and Süleyman Özişik – a journalist known by his closeness to the government-), the remaining screenshots are from the blocked account of Donald Trump and a video taken by a twitter user.

The "People's Voice" piece, as I mentioned earlier, is the peak moment of Zaytung's imitation for it directly conveys the statements of politicians or a description without any twist or exaggeration, although without following comments made by fictional people it would not be parodic however the knowledge of Zaytung's nature it creates a doubt on the readers' mind about the logic of the presented statement for the statement itself is parody-like.

Moreover, although it is possible to suggest a hierarchy within the fictional respondents, that represents the dissident/opposing voters in more sophisticated

settings. I would argue that the representation of the ‘respondents’ is Zaytung holding a mirror to the people in a critical manner. For even if there is a hierarchy, the presented answers are almost pre-packaged and shallow for all three respondents.

‘Full Pieces’ follow the composition of online news, headline at the top followed by a picture and the main text of the piece. Zaytung’s texts often do a successful job at mimicking mainstream news. It not only uses reported speech in its pieces, but it follows mainstream news outlet’s language by using words or statements that are often used in mainstream news such as: “often encountered” (sık sık rastlanan), “a new instance of..” (bir yenisi daha), “has called the citizens to their screens” (Vatandaşları ekran başına davet etti).

On average Zaytung’s texts have 330 words in 5 paragraphs, the average text length is between 250 to 400 words and 3 to 6 paragraphs, the longest text within the analysed pieces, a blog post, has 636 words in 9 paragraphs and the shortest one has 148 words in 3 paragraphs. The “voice of the people” pieces have less words (around 80 words). A few reasons and benefits over the shortness of Zaytung pieces could be argued. Perhaps the most important reason would be that, shorter texts could be read more easily and even may persuade the reader to read another article.

Another reason could be that, as mentioned earlier, the news satire uses has the reverse order, in which the headline that contains the joke is written initially, only to be followed by a text, considering that the text’s function is to expand, explain or complete the headline, a shorter text would be more useful in the piece’s comedic function. The short frame of the pieces also resembles caricatures and verbal jokes (fikra) that are dominant in Turkish humour.

Moreover, the short structure of the pieces could also provide a type of legal protection by prevention. Shorter pieces would also mean the less likelihood of a statement that could be presented as incriminating against Zaytung in a legal case.

Stylistically, majority of the collaged imagery on Zaytung follows the format, on which one picture is attached to a corner of another picture thus attaching the two images, although it can have a minor function, as the picture above attaches a fictional mayor candidate to a village, it can be more critically employed. Below I present two images, the one on the left is taken from Hürriyet, the one on the right is from a Zaytung piece.

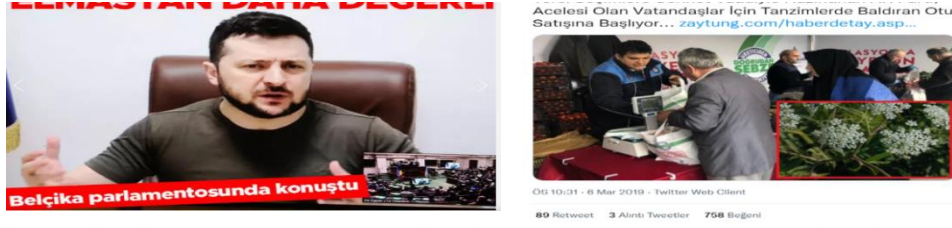


Figure 19. A Comparison of Hürriyet's and Zaytung's visuals. (Sources:(Left to Right) Hürriyet, 2022; Twitter, 2019a)

On the imagery depicting politicians, standalone images of politicians are chosen which show a formal representation, on which the photo represents a politician in formal attire, in focus, in a close shot. Moreover, politicians' pictures often depict them giving a speech or statement to the media which increases the authority of the image. The setting of these pictures often has party logos, a Turkish flag or a campaign logo as a background adding even more authority to the picture.



Figure 22. Examples of Zaytung Visuals. (Sources: (Left to right) Zaytung, n.d. - t; Zaytung, n.d. - c; Zaytung, n.d. - q)

Although not often, amateur shots are used in some pieces, although being relatively amateur, it still maintains a journalistic visual for it creates the impression of on-site reporting.

Some pieces use stock images for the context, which imitate mainstream news for news websites also use stock images often in their articles as well.

5.1.2. Zaytung's Coverage of the US Elections

There are two breaking news pieces regarding the US elections, in this piece Trump accuses Biden by being an Antifa militant, whereas Trump's language and accusations are indeed similar to Erdogan's, in this piece it is exaggerated with a very Erdoganesque language.

As apparent in other examples, Zaytung's coverage of the US elections and capitol riots uses Turkish politics as a stand point, Turkish politics being the low standard in the pieces criticizing Turkish politics itself through the American context. It could be argued that Zaytung has condemned the capitol riots by showing it has 'fallen' to Turkish standards, similar to the Brazilian newspaper stating it has 'fallen' to Latin American standards.

Table 3. Zaytung Pieces Regarding US Elections

<u>Headlines Of Zaytung's Pieces (US Elections)</u>
USA has become the main exporter of Turkish politics within the last 4 years (Z48). (Türkiye'nin son 4 yıl içerisinde en çok siyaset ihraç ettiği ülke ABD oldu...)
White House summons Hilal Kaplan (Z43). (Hilal Kaplan acil kodu ile saraya çağırıldı...)
Harsh statement from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "Are we still talking about the İstanbul elections?" (Z42). (T.C Dışişleri Bakanlığı'ndan sert tepki: "Haydaa, hala mı İBB seçimleri?")
Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is attempting to reach out to the bison helmet wearing demonstrator who took control of the US Congress for a short period of time "We had a case with Halkbank..." (Z45). (Dışişleri Bakanlığı, ABD Kongresi'nde Kısa Bir Süre de Olsa Kontrolü Ele Geçiren Bison Kafalı Göstericiye Ulaşmaya Çalışıyor: "Bizim bi Halkbank olayı vardı...")

Table 3 (Continued). Zaytung Pieces Regarding US Elections

<p>Mustafa Şentop, wishing the situation in the USA to be solved with democracy and law, states “tell us if it works, maybe we’ll try...” (Z46).</p> <p>(ABD’deki problemlerin demokrasi ve hukuk içinde çözülmesini temenni eden Meclis Başkanı Mustafa Şentop: “İşe yarıyorsa söyleyin, sonra biz de deneriz belki...”)</p>
<p>Donald Trump: “Add this new account, the other got stolen...” (Z47).</p> <p>(Donald Trump: “Yeni hesap, diğeri çalındı, eqleyin...”)</p>
<p>The entire world is watching the speed of supporters converting a ton of amateur terrorists by a wannabee dictator (Z44).</p> <p>(Seçimle gitmeyi yediremeyen diktatör özentisinin, destekçilerini amatör teröristlere dönüştürme hızı tüm dünyada ilgiyle izleniyor...)</p>
<p>Breaking News! Trump accused Biden on his way out: “As you all know he is an Antifa militant...” (Z49).</p> <p>(Son Dakika! Trump giderayak Biden’ı suçladı: “Biliyorsunuz kendisi Antifa militanıdır...”)</p>
<p>Breaking News! Turkey is preparing itself to bear Bahçeli’s “BİDON⁴⁴” joke on his party’s meeting (Z41).</p> <p>(Son Dakika! Türkiye, Devlet Bahçeli’nin grup toplantısında yapacağı BİDON esprisine hazırlanıyor...)</p>

References to Turkish politics are often used in pieces, the Halkbank case⁴⁵, raid of Mavi Marmara and Hilal Kaplan (Known as Queen (AK)Troll), Donald Trump’s reaction to riots “those who break the law will pay its price” is compared to Erdogan denying any responsibility in the raid of Mavi Marmara⁴⁶, a flotilla aiding Gaza, of which he was supporting (BBC Türkçe, 2016).

Interestingly, in one of the pieces, on which the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Responds to the George W Bush’s remarks about the capitol riots, which mistaken to be about the İstanbul elections. This confirms, like this thesis, Zaytung also views the capitol riots and the re-election of İstanbul as a populist intervention to democracy.

However, the only piece depicting the rioters, uses the word “demonstrator” to represent the rioters, which underrepresents the graveness of the riots, I would argue

⁴⁴ “Bidon” (Barrel, Jerry Can) sound similar to Biden.

⁴⁵ Halkbank, a Turkish state bank, is currently prosecuted for aiding Iran to bypass US sanctions (Stempel, 2022).

⁴⁶ Mavi Marmara was the name of a ship in an aid convoy from Turkey to Gaza that was raided and stopped by the intervention of Israeli forces (BBC News, 2016b).

two reasons for this choice of words, considering how the harmless protestors are vilified in the Turkish media may have produced a reflex in Zaytung to not vilify protestors, moreover, the writer of the piece may mistake the riots as a break-in which is comparatively harmless

Seçimle gitmeyi yediremeyen diktatör özentisinin destekçilerini amatör teröristlere dönüştürme hız tüm dünyada ilgiyle izleniyor...



Figure 24. The entire world is watching the speed of supporters converting ton amateur terrorists by a wannabee dictator. (Source: Zaytung, n.d. - s)

On this collage, Zaytung places Donald Trump's picture on top of three images from the riots, firmly connecting him to the events that took place. Oddly, this piece does a better job at portraying the gravity of the capitol riots, on this line the rioters are presented as "amateur terrorists", although I will refer to this on Zaytung's coverage of voters but not only are the rioters "amateur terrorists" but they are turned into being terrorists by Trump who is defined as a "wannabe dictator", the words are chosen not only to describe the reality of the situation (terrorists and dictator) but also undermine any authority that rioters or Donald Trump could obtain from the gravity of the event with words like "amateur" and "wannabe".

The only instance it is directly covering US politics is Twitter banning Donald Trump. In the piece covering Trump, Trump appears to be attempting to evade Twitter's ban with a new account, which actually happened (Hill, 2021).

5.1.3. Zaytung's Coverage of Media Institutions

Zaytung's media critique focuses on pro-AKP media (mainstream media and Aktrolls) the main criticism towards pro-AKP media is the blatant favouritism and broadcasting

outright party propaganda. The main emphasis on media institutions is censured freedom of speech.

Table 4. Zaytung Pieces Regarding Media Institutions

<u>Headlines Of Zaytung's Pieces (Media Institutions)</u>
Are You Happy Ekrem? (Z27). (‘Mutlu musun Ekrem?’)
Anadolu Agency, which got suspended on March 31, returns to the fields... (Z28). (31 Mart gecesi kırmızı kartla cezalı duruma düşen Anadolu Ajansı, sahalara fırtına gibi döndü...)
The committee to convince A Haber on the election results has been rejected, tension is rising (Z35). (A Haber’i Seçimin Sonucuna İkna Etmek İçin AK Parti Tarafından Yollanan Heyet, Kanalın Kapısından Geri Çevrildi. Gerginlik Büyüyor...)
Güneş Newspaper: “Night King is walking to Westeros after many seasons. Are you happy Ekrem İmamoğlu?” (Z32). (Güneş Gazetesi: "Night King onca sezon sonra Westeros'a yürüyor. Mutlu musun Ekrem İmamoğlu?")
Total of six undecided voters in entirety of İstanbul thanked İmamoğlu and Yıldırım who are debating for their votes: “We’re overwhelmed” (Z29). (İstanbul Genelindeki Toplam 6 Kararsız Seçmenden Kendileri İçin Özel Olarak Canlı Yayına Çıkan İmamoğlu ve Yıldırım'a Teşekkür Mesajı: "Mahcup ediyorsunuz...")
Anadolu Agency: “ Please accept these, in case if we announce we will be beaten...” (Z26). (Anadolu Ajansı: "Biz açıklarsak büyük dayak yiycez, gözünüzü sevelim şunu kabul edin...")
A Haber: “The forces that wants to prevent kebab makers are operating to change the perception.” (Z30). (A Haber: "Kebabçıların seçim analizi yapmasını sindiremeyen odaklar algı operasyonu peşinde...")
Relieving statement from İmamoğlu to the pro-AKP media: “You had a role in me gathering all these votes, I will do everything to keep you unemployed...” (Z31). (İmamoğlu'ndan Havuz Medyasını Rahatlatan Açıklama: "O kadar oyu biraz da sizin sayenizde aldım, görevinize devam etmeniz için elimden geleni...")
Turkish people who think several times before posting on their social media think “would something happen to me for this post?” are debating if YSK’s judgment disrupts the democracy (Z14). (Sosyal Medyada Paylaşım Yaparken Bile "Başıma bir iş gelir mi?" Diye 40 Kere Düşünen Türkiye, YSK Kararının Demokrasiye Darbe Olup Olmadığını Tartışıyor...)
Binali Yıldırım’s confidence is high. He has not encountered any journalists who can ask why he was fired from the general management position of İDO in 1999 (Z34). (Şu ana dek 1999'da İDO Genel Müdürlüğü'nden neden kovulduğunu sorabilecek herhangi bir gazeteciyle karşılaşmayan Binali Yıldırım'ın kendine güveni tam...)

Table 4 (Continued). Zaytung Pieces Regarding Media Institutions

<p>Pro-AKP media got its first results of the seeds of hatred they sow stating: “This one is a bit ugly, you’ll have to make do... (Z25). (Ektiği Kin ve Nefret Tohumlarından İlk Terörist Mahsülünü Alan Yandaş Medya: "Bu biraz şekilsiz oldu ama idare edin...")</p>
<p>Turkey, remembering that election is an event that two rivals can have a civil discussion in TV, is waiting for the Televole to start after the debate... (Z36). (Seçimin İki Rakip Adayın Çıkıp Televizyonda İki İnsan Gibi Konuşabileceği Normal Bir Olay Olduğunu Hatırlayan Türkiye, Programın Ardından Televole'nin Başlamasını Bekliyor...)</p>
<p>Breaking News! Citizens are waiting in front of their screens: “Tonight is for watching A Haber” (Z38). (Son Dakika! Vatandaşlar ekran başında yerini aldı: “Bu akşam a Haber izlenir”)</p>
<p>Breaking News! Yassı Ada has joined the discussion: “Yo, the journalist who accidentally criticizes the president flips over backwards to take it back. In reality, it’s you who got beat up...” (Z37). (Son Dakika! Tartışmaya Yassı Ada da katıldı: “Lan kazara Cumhurbaşkanı'nı eleştiren gazeteci bile lafi çevirmek için 40 takla atıyor. Esas sizin canınıza okunmuş...”)</p>
<p>AK Party is looking for options for journalists and trolls that will show no function for 4 years after the local elections: Put down until 2023 is considered (Z33). (AK Parti'de Yerel Seçimlerin Ardından 4 Yıl Boyunca İşlevsiz Kalacak Gazeteci ve Troller İçin Çözüm Arayışı Sürüyor: 2023'e Kadar İğneyle Uyumta Seçeneği Masada...)</p>
<p>A statement from CNN Turk: “While talking about savings, it would be wise to finish our program early to save electricity... (Z40). (CNN Türk'ten Açıklama: "Hazır konu da israfı gelmişken, elektrik israfı olmaması açısından program erken bitirilmek suretiyle...")</p>

On pro-AKP media, aktrolls, there is an insincerity attributed to AKP figures, their speeches or actions are underlined as performative, a Zaytung piece covers AKP threatening people by giving more speeches, and another piece states words like “we had fun in the production”, “we hope the audience will enjoy it as well” the political statements are presented as productions for people to enjoy.

Both pro-AKP media and aktrolls seem to be described similarly, they are presented as “ugly”, “provocative”, “untrustworthy”, “unchallenging”, “hateful”, “polarizing”, “spews conspiracy theories”, “out of touch”, “wasteful” and “useless”.

A piece suggests that aktrolls and pro-AKP media workers are so useless that AKP is considering compressing them into a single channel and either putting the remaining

trolls under a medically induced coma or hiring them as janitors, they are presented almost as an exact copy of one another.

Osman Sarıgün assaulting Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu was mentioned as a direct effect of the hateful and polarizing attitude of pro-AKP media, he is referred to as the first product of pro-AKP media's seeds of hate, in the article he is mocked as "shapeless".

An interesting performance of this piece on the main page of Güneş newspaper and a picture of Osman Sarıgün is juxtaposed, on the presented page, Güneş condemns İmamoğlu for his praising remarks towards Demirtaş by connecting it to the news regarding soldiers killed in an assault.

On Güneş' piece, photo chosen to represent İmamoğlu shows a "happy" image of İmamoğlu that is given in context of an armed assault towards the nation's armed forces, thus portraying İmamoğlu as a politician who at best is an unpatriotic politician who is unaware of the country's realities and at worst is a treacherous politician that actively works against the nation.

However, on the same page with Osman Sarıgün, disturbs this meaning, for the opposition is now assaulted, not only the possibility of them being treacherous or unpatriotic becomes unlikely for in this juxtaposition, Güneş becomes the merciless agitator. Another piece shows a picture from Game of Thrones and guises itself as a Güneş headline: accuses İmamoğlu for fictional events in the series.

Pro-AKP media is chauvinistic, its favouritism is blatant and unfounded, in Zaytung's representation, a piece holds İmamoğlu responsible for a groom being forced to marry his father-in-law, another piece refers to A Haber presenting a kebab chef as an election analyst, in Zaytung's piece, A Haber defends itself by claiming that some forces are aiming to prevent kebab chefs from making political analyses. Another piece depicts A Haber as a zealot that cannot be swayed to accept the election results - even by Binali Yıldırım himself.

Pieces covering the Anatolian Agency, present AA as a state controlled agency, in two pieces covering AA, AA is aware that it has to produce an output that favours AKP

and joins the pro-AKP media in unfounded claims (accusing poll workers of being Gulenists).

The financial relationship between the media and the state is only presented within a piece, mentioning, Demirören buying Doğan Media Group with a loan taken from Ziraat Bank, it is jokingly emphasized that CNN Türk should be fiscally responsible for it was bought with taxpayer's money.



Figure 26. Zaytung pieces concerning İmamoğlu-Yıldırım Debate (Source: (Left to right) Zaytung, n.d. - r; Twitter, 2019b)

After the re-election was confirmed, İmamoğlu and Yıldırım had a televised public debate. Interestingly, the photos chosen for the debate do not initially focus on any individual, the chosen pictures focus on the experience of a political debate, possibly pointing out to the lack of political debates in the Turkish political environment for the last two decades.

Related to this, we can see that in the breaking news piece, A Haber being only watchable when it broadcasts the İmamoğlu – Yıldırım debate.

The pieces covering the debate somewhat contradict each other, for one piece claims that Turkish TV has returned to the pre-2000 era, supporting it references to Televole and Sergen Yalçın⁴⁷. However, the second image contradicts this sentiment, it adds an image of a crowd holding a banner that says “it wasn't necessary”, suggesting that

⁴⁷ Televole was a popular TV show for tabloid news that, besides reporting the latest gossips of the entertainment world, had interviews with then celebrity figures like Sergen Yalçın.

the debate is futile for the vast majority of the population who are too partisan for the debate to have any impact.

In a piece covering the public discussion over the YSK judgment, Zaytung states that any journalist who “doesn’t share the government’s opinions”, will find possible repercussions of incarceration, being labelled unemployed and any individual who dares to talk after taking these risks has the freedom of speech. Another piece accompanies this by stating that journalists cannot question Yildirim on challenging topics.

Ekrem İmamoğlu or any other oppositional figure is not mentioned often, in a piece, an actual event is referenced, in which a news program was cut in half after his statements, in another instance, the actual event of his certificate of election were taken from him for a re-election. Although in these instances, İmamoğlu is the victim, in another piece, it is shown that media’s and troll’s attacks on İmamoğlu ended up in his advantage for the “ugly” attitude of pro-AKP media. In the piece he even proposes to pay the salaries of the aktrolls and pro-AKP journalists.

5.1.4. Zaytung’s Coverage of 2019 Elections

Breaking News regarding the election is mainly focused on YSK and its lack of independence from the government. YSK’s subordination to AKP is stated word by word. As a result of this subordination, the credibility of YSK as an institution is damaged.

Another topic within these headlines is the process of re-counts, arguably, the official election board loses its credibility when it accepts frivolous thus seen as a biased institution. Re-counts are presented as a stormy process that almost never ends. Another piece refers to Alexander Smith, who claims to have travelled to present day from 2118 (Binay, 2018), in the piece, Smith claims that the re-counts are coming to an end only in 2118, this never ending re-count process emphasizes an ill intent on AKP’s behalf for it demands a re-count until the desired result is achieved.

The governments legal claims for re-count and re-election is shown as made up, and juridical institutions presented as subordinate to the government in order to not cause

any trouble for themselves and they act as “the institution that re-tries the election to prevent an AKP loss”.

A Zaytung piece portrays re-counts as such a necessity that authorities were importing polls from other countries in order to prevent a “poll shortage”, further implying an ill intent, in this piece re-counts are so naturalized that it becomes a profitable business.

Table 5. Zaytung Pieces Regarding the Election Process

<u>Headlines Of Zaytung’s Pieces (Election Process)</u>
A glorious resignation from the Head of YSK Sadi Güven (Z2). (YSK Başkanı Sadi Güven'den görkemli jübile...)
AK Party has initiated their process of objections to the election results at the Election Board of Üsküdar (Z8). (AK Parti, sonuçlara itiraz sürecini Üsküdar İlçe Seçim Kurulu'ndan başlattı...)
Government is on the move after the remaining ballot number has decreased to 51: Ballots will be imported (Z3). (Sayılacak Sandık Sayısının 51'e Kadar Düşmesi Hükümeti Harekete Geçirdi: Yurt Dışından Dolu Oy Sandığı İthal Edilecek...)
AK Party is considering to take all the invalid votes in İstanbul and Ankara to save the election in one of them (Z4). (AK Parti'de, Ankara'daki geçersiz oylarla İstanbul'dakileri birleştirip en azından bir tanesini kurtarma fikri öne çıkıyor...)
After failing to gather the desired results after counting the invalid votes, YSK has decided to re-run the election by personally going to the voter’s houses to question their votes (Z1). (Geçersiz oyların sayımında da bir türlü istenilen sonuca ulaşamayan YSK, seçimin bizzat evlere gidilip seçmenlere kime oy verdiklerinin sorulması sureti ile tekrarlanmasına karar verdi...)
Artificial Intelligence Era in the Judiciary: the system will analyse the survey results and automatically create an investigation into the candidates that could threaten AK Party (Z5). (Yargıda Yapay Zekâ Dönemi: Sistem Anket Sonuçlarını Analiz Ederek AK Parti'ye Tehdit Oluşturan Adaylar İçin Otomatik Soruşturma Dosyası Hazırlayabiliyor...)
Court of Accounts: “There isn’t any unauthorized spending or misconduct in İstanbul in no way. Also, may Allah damn us...” (Z21). (Sayıştay: "İstanbul'da en ufak bir usulsüzlük, yersiz harcama falan kesinlikle zinhar yoktur. Ayrıca Allah da bizim belamızı versin...")

Table 5 (Continued). Zaytung Pieces Regarding the Election Process

<p>YSK: “As we convince ourselves that a re-election is necessary in İstanbul, Ali İhsan Yavuz organizes a press meeting and it de-motivates us” (Z23).</p> <p>(YSK: "Tam İstanbul'da seçiminin yenilenmesi gerektiğine kendimizi inandırır gibi oluyoruz, Ali İhsan Yavuz basın toplantısı düzenliyor. Motivasyonumuz dağılıyor...")</p>
<p>Turkey, struggling with economic stagnancy, increased cost of living and unemployment, watches in wonder the politicians, whose main aim is to retry an election (Z16).</p> <p>(Ekonomik Durgunluk, Hayat Pahalılığı ve İşsizlikle Boğuşan Türkiye, Tek Kaygısı İstanbul'da Seçim Yenilemek Olan Bir Grup Mutlu İnsanı Gıptayla İzliyor...)</p>
<p>Shocking claims from a time traveller claiming to travel from the year 2033. “Only 220 ballots remaining in Maltepe” (Z10).</p> <p>(2033 Yılından Geldiğini Söyleyen Zaman Yolcusundan Şok İddialar: "Maltepe'de 220 sandık kaldı...")</p>
<p>A helping hand from ally Indonesia to the AK Party: “You can continue to count from here [Indonesia]...” (Z11).</p> <p>(Dost ve kardeş Endonezya'dan AK Parti'ye yardım eli: "Abi buradan devam edebilirsiniz saymaya...")</p>
<p>YSK is waiting for the translation of “The order came from above” to the legal writing to announce their reasoning for cancelling the İstanbul elections (Z17).</p> <p>(YSK, İstanbul'da Seçim İptalinin Gerekçeli Kararını Açıklamak İçin "Yukarıdan öyle emir geldi" Cümlesinin Hukuk Diline Çevrilmesini Bekliyor...)</p>
<p>Erdogan: "Vatandaşına terörist diyecek kadar enayi miyim?" (Z53).</p> <p>(Erdogan “Am I fool enough to call my own citizen a terrorist?”)</p>
<p>Turkey, struggling with economic stagnancy, increased cost of living and unemployment, watches in wonder the politicians, whose main aim is to retry an election (Z13).</p> <p>(İBB seçimlerinin yenilenmesi kararının ardından olağanüstü toplanan TFF, Başakşehir'in Nisan ayındaki maçlarının da yenilenmesini tartışıyor...)</p>
<p>Shocking claims from a time traveller claiming to travel from the year 2033. “Only 220 ballots remaining in Maltepe” (Z12).</p> <p>(Halkın Sesi - MHP Genel Başkan Yardımcısı Yaşar Yıldırım'dan CHP'ye ağır suçlama: "Tek adam rejimini yıkıp demokrasi getirmek istiyorlar...". Siz ne düşünüyorsunuz?)</p>
<p>Breaking News! Sadi Güven: “People, AK Party is not my client, it is my boss” (Z18).</p> <p>(Son Dakika! Sadi Güven: “Arkadaşlar AK Parti Benim Müşterim Değil. Patronum...”)</p>
<p>Election victims ,who are waiting for a snap election to return to their homes, are waiting for a helping hand reaching from Devlet Bahçeli (Z22).</p> <p>(Evlerine geri dönebilmek için en büyük umutları erken seçim olan seçimezedeler, Devlet Bahçeli'den uzanacak yardım elini bekliyor...)</p>

Table 5 (Continued). Zaytung Pieces Regarding the Election Process

<p>Breaking News! The number of boards operating on Maltepe followed a fluctuation after opening the day with a surge. Currently, it is traded at 6...” (Z9).</p> <p>(Son Dakika! Maltepe’de sayım yapan kurul sayısı güne yükselişle başlamasının ardından dalgalı bir seyir izledi. Şu sıralarda 6’dan işlem görüyor...)</p>
<p>Breaking News! YSK, which cancelled the election in İstanbul, is expected to announce the results of the next election (Z24).</p> <p>(Son Dakika! İstanbul’da seçimi iptal eden YSK’nın, yarın da bir sonraki seçimin sonuçlarını açıklaması bekleniyor)</p>

Corruption and lawlessness are attributed to Turkish politics, that in several pieces, politicians and citizens get reminded of the fact that they live in Turkey, “as if we live in a normal country”, “as if there is a functioning democracy” “Silivri is cold⁴⁸” “pretending to have free and secure elections” “otherwise we have to accept that we live in a dictatorship”, “election worries”, “a single man regime” “orders of the Palace” and “secret”.

Terms like “freedom of speech and thought”, “independence of the judiciary” and “separation of powers” are given as past constructs that are no longer present in modern day Turkey. And even constitutional institutions like the Supreme Court and Court of Cassation have no independence, a piece relating to “Supreme Court” states that one of its functions as “pressuring the opposition”, it is stated in pieces that these institutions are no longer “accountable” to investigate an unaccountable government. A certain piece depicts AKP speaker claiming that even if all the legal documents are available or for any prosecution, even if they were printed on billboards, there is not any media institution that would cover it and no judge or prosecutor would take the corrupt and illegal activities that may be committed. In selected pieces, terms like: “Incredibly legal”, “Extremely Legal” “Almost completely legal” were used to describe the crookedness of the legal system.

The sentiment that “democracy is alive with its rules and institutions” or that “Turkey can be example of free speech” is only given ironically. Whereas, it is stated that “the

⁴⁸ Silivri is a prison that is infamous for its political inmates, in Turkish culture reminding that Silivri is a cold place, is a common joke amongst people on political topics.

fact that nation has referendums and elections” should not deceive people to think of a functioning democracy and even it is stated that “elections is the only remaining tie Turkey has with democracy and law”

A Zaytung piece depicts a new juridical branch that could create a legal case against any candidate that can challenge AKP, this piece suggests any latency or reluctance on legal cases as suppression as an “human error”, the piece also mentions that judges and prosecutors appear as the triggerman of the government. The piece refers to a lawsuit against Mansur Yavaş during the election period⁴⁹. Particularly this piece portrays a shrinking independence of the judiciary that has transformed the judiciary into a tool of AKP.

On articles the word “crisis” is often used both in economic and political contexts. On economic context, the economic crisis is also described and accompanied with words like “pennilessness”, “slow markets”, “high inflation”, “high currency rates”, “high unemployment”, “foreclosures”, “bankruptcies”, “bank notices”, “days without sale”, “no money”.

A certain piece states that 100 Lira founded in the street could cause a public disorder, same piece depicts a fight amongst people over 100 Lira and people overall described as “chewing trees due to pennilessness” whilst another piece shows AK Party attempting to sleep or freeze its aktrolls and reorganize the pro-state media because of financial issues.

The economic crisis experienced by the people is contrasted with congresspersons, the wasteful and unnecessary expenditures of the AKP municipalities and their funding of certain, pro-AKP foundations, the expenses of pro-state media institutions and aktrolls. AKP congresspersons are not affected by the crisis, they are a bunch of mysterious and happy minority. This is contrasted with small businesses or low/middle class citizens who are arguably most affected by the economic crisis, proposing that AKP’s

⁴⁹ Yavaş has been cleared of all charges in June 2021, the plaintiff suing Yavaş for “abuse of power” has been sentenced for: Invasion of privacy, blackmail and falsification of official documents (Cumhuriyet, 2022d).

actions does not seem to prioritize elections over the middle class, moreover this representation shows AKP as out of touch from the everyday experiences of the ordinary people.

On political context, crisis is either given in a dispute with western countries such as Germany or Netherlands or political dissidents that are claimed to be terrorist, political crises are often accompanied or tied with economic crisis. Disputes with western countries seen almost integral to the AKP's election policies, terms like "fest", "tradition" are used to describe the continuity and predictability of this approach. Almost contrasting this, Western countries such as: Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Norway are represented as democratic utopias, one piece uses the term "as if we are living in the Norway", the only exception to this is the USA on Zaytung's capital riots coverage.

Pieces depicts AKP's communication as aiming to polarize the people of the nation, creating a domestic enemy for the purposes of having an advantage on election, a piece states that non-voters are not seen as citizens by AKP. This falls in line with AKP's populism on which it aims to create its base united on a hate against the other.

Opposition is rarely mentioned, and cases in which opposition is the main object or character of the story is rare, the opposition is mostly mentioned in the statements (real or fictional) or depicted actions of the government figures or institutions. The opposition is depicted weak in comparison to government, however this "weakness" comes from the statements and actions of the AKP figures instead of statements and actions related to opposition parties.

For example, in a fictional statement, Ömer Çelik, criticizes CHP for gaining too much confidence after only winning the local elections in İstanbul and Ankara, thus downplaying the success, in another case, AKP threatens the opposition and dissidents by having Ali İhsan Yavuz giving a speech everyday on national television.

Arguably, the "weakness" is not the inherent weakness of the opposition's policies, however it is the dominancy of AKP government, opposition is depicted as committed to uphold democracy whereas AKP and the government block is portrayed as in favour

of “one man regime”, this is most apparent on a real statement of Yaşar Yıldırım, acting chairman of MHP, that accuses CHP to intend to bring democracy instead of one man regime (T24, 2019), Zaytung’s coverage of this statement shows members of public responding as democracy being a serious offence.

Although lack of coverage on opposition could arguably favour opposition, however arguably Zaytung misses the approach of the opposition that aims unifying populism. Even in the entirety of the scanned pieces, the positive aspects or even critics of the opposition’s populism is less likely to be mentioned.

5.1.5. Zaytung’s Coverage of Political Figures

Clearly the main object of Zaytung’s coverage of the election is AKP. AK Party is referred 21 times whereas CHP is only referred 7 times, IP and MHP were referred only once within the texts. Moreover, “Saray” and “Beştepe” were mentioned once as a metonymy for the Erdogan administration, in line with this, “Cumhur Alliance” were referred once whereas “Millet Alliance” were not mentioned in any texts.

Politicians of AKP are dominant in the pieces, apart from AKP (figures related to AKP were referred 38 times, President Erdogan, Binali Yıldırım, AKP Speaker Ömer Çelik, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, then Minister of Justice Abdülhamit Gül, Bekir Bozdağ, Ali İhsan Yavuz and fictional figures attributed to AKP) only the Speaker of CHP Faik Öztrak (referred once), leader of MHP Devlet Bahçeli (referred once) and Acting Chairman of MHP Yaşar Yıldırım (referred once) were mentioned, the most referred institution of AKP by Zaytung is the central executive committee of AKP and members from this committee as well. Interestingly most referred politician is Ömer Çelik (speaker of AKP, referred 15 times), which is sensible for he either provides a context of the story or acts as a responding party for Zaytung’s criticism of AKP. Following Çelik, most referred politician is Ekrem İmamoğlu (referred 8 times) who is followed by Binali Yıldırım (referred 7 times). Party leaders are arguably absent, President Erdoğan were referred three times and Devlet Bahçeli, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and Meral Akşener were referred once.

On state institutions, expectedly most referred institution is the Supreme Election Council (referred 12 times), then head of YSK, Sadi Güven were referred 6 times. Other state institutions such as Court of Cassations (Yargıtay), Court of Accounts (Sayıştay), Council of State (Danıştay) and government bodies such as Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Foreign affairs were mentioned once or twice.

The language referring to politicians range from formal to semi-formal, surprising the expectations, the most mentioned person with their full title is Ömer Çelik as the speaker of the AK Party, in comparison, Binali Yıldırım is only mentioned once with a title, as “Binali Yıldırım, Candidate for Mayor of İstanbul”, moreover, title of Binali Yıldırım as the former prime minister or as the last prime minister of Turkey is not used, arguably this is aimed at detaching Yıldırım’s former political career. He is referred either with his full name or his last name.

However, it is not possible to say this treatment is biased towards to undermine the credibility of Yıldırım, for neither the previous careers of Ekrem İmamoğlu and Mansur Yavaş is not mentioned in the analysed pieces, in this manner Yıldırım is presented equally with the opposition, for their title of candidate is the focus of attention. İmamoğlu and Yavaş is also presented without any title as well.

Erdogan is only mentioned twice, as “Erdoğan”, “President Erdogan” and “Our President”, Bahçeli is only mentioned once as “Mr. Devlet Bahçeli”. Adding this to the representation of the candidates, arguably Zaytung’s coverage of the election is mainly focused on the candidates and the election process.

Figures outside of politics are a minority, no celebrity were mentioned in the analysed articles, only journalists like Ahmet Hakan (referred twice) and Turgay Güler (referred once) were mentioned, apart from them, Osman Sarıgün (referred twice) is also mentioned in the articles.

Table 6. Zaytung Pieces Regarding the Political Figures

Headlines Of Zaytung's Pieces (Political Figures)
<p>AK Party, preparing to promise heaven in local elections, has begun selling hemlock in government subsidized shops to the citizens in a hurry (Z70). (Yerel Seçimlere Cennet Vaadiyle Hazırlanan AK Parti, Acelesi Olan Vatandaşlar İçin Tanzimlerde Baldıran Otu Satışına Başlıyor)</p>
<p>Mayoral AK Party candidate, who was overstressed in case he loses the election, Turkey would be ruined has lost his life to a heart attack (Z68). (Seçilemediği Takdirde Türkiye'nin Parçalanıp Yıkılacağı Stresine Daha Fazla Dayanamayan AK Partili Belediye Başkan Adayı, Kalbine Yenik Düştü...)</p>
<p>Rapidly exhausting its source of domestic enemies to fight before elections, AK Party came back to the beginning "What's up onion sellers!" (Z59). (Seçim Öncesi Kavga Edebileceği İç Düşman Kaynaklarını Fazla Hızlı Tüketen AK Parti, Başa Dönüyor: "Napıyorsunuz lan soğancılar!")</p>
<p>Bahçeli: "I have spoken with our Mayor of Nazilli who has beaten a female staff member the very same day. And yes, that woman whistled the call to prayer as well, yeah the call to prayer...." (Z61). (Bahçeli: "Aynı gün kadın personelini döven Nazilli Belediye Başkanımızla konuştum. Aynen o kadın da ezana ıslık çalarak, ezana evet...")</p>
<p>AK Party, after printing more brochures on behalf of HDP than HDP itself: "When did charity become so shameless..." (Z62). (HDP adına HDP'nin kendisinden daha fazla seçim broşürü bastıran AK Parti: "Yardımseverliğin adı şerefsizlik olmuş...")</p>
<p>Erdogan: "I haven't discriminated against our Kurdish brothers, I have stated that for any person who does not vote for us..." (Z54). (Erdoğan: "Kürt kardeşlerime bir ayrımcılık yapmadım, bizim seçmenimiz olmayan herkese dedim ben onu...")</p>
<p>Erdogan criticized the apology for the lie of "they whistled the call to prayer" for the apology came before they exploited it enough: "You can apologize after the election, what's the rush?!" (Z58). (“Ezani ıslıkladılar” yalanının ekmeğini yeterince yemeden gelen özüre Erdoğan’dan sert tepki: “Yaa, sen seçimden sonra dile yine özürünü, acele ne?!”)</p>
<p>Before March 31, AK Party is smiling after the fake money thrown into the streets for propaganda: "Ahahaha, look at how happy these idiots are :)))" (Z63). (Propaganda Amacıyla Ankara'da Sokaklara Sahte 100 TL Atan AK Parti'de 31 Mart Öncesi Yüzler Gülüyor: "Ahahaha nasıl sevindi salaklar :)))")</p>
<p>Ömer Çelik: "Reading Öcalan's letters is a normal occurrence on TRT, maybe you haven't encountered it" (Z39). (Ömer Çelik: "Normalde de Öcalan'ın mektupları sürekli okunur yani TRT'de... Denk gelmediyseniz demek...")</p>

Table 6 (Continued). Zaytung Pieces Regarding the Political Figures

<p>Binali Yıldırım is forced to undergo a health check after running an AK Party election campaign without accusing anyone of terrorism (Z55).</p> <p>(AK Parti'de Kimseye Terörist Falan Demeden Normal İnsan Gibi Seçim Kampanyası Yürüten Binali Yıldırım, Sağlık Kontrolünden Geçirilecek)</p>
<p>Binali Yıldırım, who is forced to request votes from the people of whom they accused of terrorism two months prior, emphasizing that he is the biggest victim of the election... (Z64).</p> <p>(2 ay önce hain, terörist ilan ettikleri adamlardan oy istemek için ayaklarına kadar gitmek zorunda kalan Binali Yıldırım, sürecin en büyük mağduru olduğunu bir kez daha vurguladı...)</p>
<p>Süleyman Soylu demonstrated again how much AK Party values Trabzon, by making up a new terrorist organization just for them (Z50).</p> <p>(Trabzonlular için özel olarak yeni bir terör örgütü uyduran Süleyman Soylu, AK Parti'nin bu şehre verdiği değeri bir kez daha gösterdi...)</p>
<p>The fact that his own party had run an election campaign based on the discourse of "Half of Turkey is terrorists and traitors" is going to be told to AKP's Istanbul Congressman Yeneroğlu, in slow terms (Z57).</p> <p>(AKP İstanbul MV Yeneroğlu'na, partisinin aylardır "Türkiye'nin yarısı terörist, hain, alçak" söylemiyle seçim çalışması yürüttüğü alıştırma alıştırma söylenecek...)</p>
<p>An announcement states, a week of rest will be given to Soylu because he was tasked with "dealing with the most idiotic part of the voters..." (Z67).</p> <p>(Kendisine verilen "seçmenin en geri zekâlı kesimine oynama görevi" nedeniyle sınırları harap olan Soylu'ya, seçimden sonra 1 hafta kafa izni verileceği açıklandı...)</p>
<p>Response from AK Party to the critics: "You wouldn't know how many idiots will believe this and vote for us, that's how far you are from these people..." (Z66).</p> <p>(AK Parti'den eleştirilere yanıt: "Daha kaç geri zekâlının buna inanıp oy vereceğinden bile haberiniz yok. İşte bu millete o kadar uzaksınız...")</p>
<p>Binali Yıldırım is having a relaxed campaign, knowing that even if he is elected Mayor, he will be forced to resign his seat to Bilal Erdogan (Z69).</p> <p>(İBB Başkanı seçilse bile koltuğunu Bilal Erdoğan'a bırakmak zorunda kalacağını farkında olan Binali Yıldırım, rahat bir kampanya süreci geçiriyor...)</p>
<p>A harsh response from the AK Party to the claims of "gaining time to cover the misconduct in the municipalities": "Y'all, is there a court in this country that can judge us?" (Z7).</p> <p>(Belediyelerdeki usulsüzlükleri örtmek için zaman kazanıyorlar" İddialarına AK Parti'den Sert Yanıt: "Lan ülkede bizi yargılayabilecek mahkeme mi var?)</p>
<p>Uysal: "We argued fake voters, we haven't argued it was CHP who did it." (Z20).</p> <p>(Uysal: "Seçmen kaydırma var dedik, CHP yaptı demedik...")</p>

Table 6 (Continued). Zaytung Pieces Regarding the Political Figures

<p>AK Party's move to intimidate voters: "Until we have won, you will have to see Ali İhsan Yavuz's face every day." (Z6).</p> <p>(AK Parti'den Seçmeni Yıldırma Hamlesi: "Bizim kazandığımız ilan edilene kadar her gün Ali İhsan Yavuz'un yüzünü görmek zorunda kalacaksınız...")</p>
<p>Minister of Foreign Affairs Çavuşoğlu, after not being able to create a dispute with Europe due to the economic crisis: "I have to argue with CHP because we are poor, where have we sunk to..." (Z51).</p> <p>(Ekonomik Kriz Nedeniyle Bu Seçim Öncesi Avrupa'yla Kavga Çıkaramayan Dışişleri Bakanı Çavuşoğlu: "Parasızlıktan CHP'ye çatıyorum, düştüğümüz hale bak...")</p>
<p>From Liechtenstein to the Turks and Caicos Islands ...foreign interests that provide maximum crisis with minimum economic costs (Z52).</p> <p>(Liechtenstein'dan Turks and Caicos Adaları'na... Minimum Ekonomik Maliyetle Maksimum Kriz Çıkarılabilecek Dış Mhtraklar)</p>
<p>Minister of Finance Albayrak: "It wouldn't be like this if you hadn't forced us to overthrow you with a coup, are you happy Ekrem?" (Z15).</p> <p>(Maliye Bakanı Albayrak: "Seni darbeyle görevden almak zorunda bırakmasan böyle olmayacaktı. Mutlu musun Ekrem?")</p>
<p>People's Voice – MHP's acting chairperson Yaşar Yıldırım accuses CHP: "They are trying to demolish the 'single man regime' and bring back democracy". Your thoughts? (Z12).</p> <p>(Halkın Sesi - MHP Genel Başkan Yardımcısı Yaşar Yıldırım'dan CHP'ye ağır suçlama: "Tek adam rejimini yıkıp demokrasi getirmek istiyorlar...". Siz ne düşünüyorsunuz?)</p>
<p>Erdogan: "Thank god the economy has collapsed, so that we can't giveaway expensive stuff. God forbid..." (Z65).</p> <p>(Erdoğan: "İyi ki ekonomi göçtü de daha pahalı bir şey dağıtamıyoruz ha. Allah muhafaza...")</p>
<p>Breaking News! Ömer Çelik, Speaker of AK Party, has rejected the claims that they are a group of fat, angry guys with moustache who wouldn't hesitate to declare half of the country as a terrorist to avoid losing the profit of two municipalities: "We have members without moustache as well..." (Z56).</p> <p>(Son Dakika! AK Parti Sözcüsü Ömer Çelik, 2 tane belediyenin rantını kaybetmemek için ülkenin yarısını terörist ilan etmekten çekinmeyen bir grup sinirli, bıyıklı ve göbekli adam oldukları yönündeki iddiaları reddetti: "Bıyiksız arkadaşlarımız da var...")</p>
<p>Breaking News! Erdogan: "Allah has three rights, I think YSK will take this into consideration..." (Z19).</p> <p>(Son Dakika! Erdoğan: "Allah'ın hakkı üçtür. Sanıyorum YSK bunu dikkate alacaktır...")</p>

Table 6 (Continued). Zaytung Pieces Regarding the Political Figures

Breaking News! AK Party Speaker: “Compulsorily, we will continue to fight with our own shit until the economy gets better” (Z60).
(Son Dakika! AK Parti Sözcüsü: “Ekonomi toparlanana kadar mecburen kendi bokumuzla bile kavga etmeye devam edeceğiz...”)

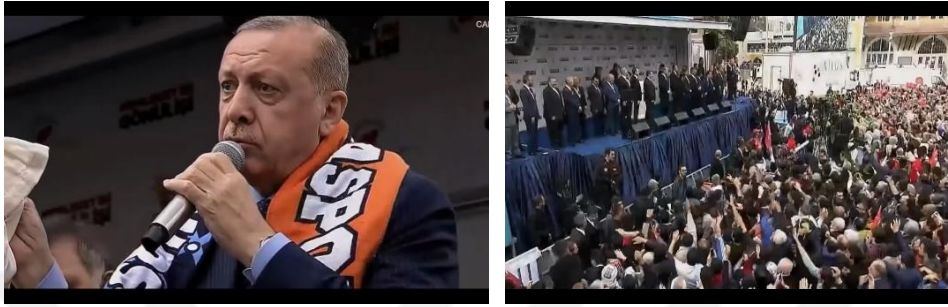


Figure 28. Zaytung's Videonews of Erdogan's Political Rally (Source: Zaytung, n.d. - f)

Although Erdogan is not mentioned as much as one expects. The video of Erdogan throwing gifts to the attendees of his rally in Adana, which drew a stampede of the attendees arguably describes the paternal relationship he has with his voter base.

Erdogan tries to respond to the stampede almost in a paternal manner, stating that the reaction of the people made him upset in hopes of ending the stampede. This event that resembles a father or a paternal figure scolding a child is already comedic, however, Zaytung's caption “Erdogan: It's good that the economy has collapsed and we can't gift expensive stuff, god forbid!” (Appendix A, Z 65) arguably further strips the role of a politician and presents the paternal figure for worrying about the expenses of a gift is more relatable to daily life figures rather than a politician. The portrait of Erdogan that tries to be emotional yet authoritative becomes funnier for the calculating figure creates an incongruity with the paternal leader figure.

This contradiction also falls in line to the portrayal of AKP and its voters as “manipulator” and the “manipulated”. Whilst Erdogan is shown in close-ups attempting to control the crowd with a speech, the crowd is already lost in the moment, denying even the speech of Erdogan. Moreover, the stampede further points to the economic crises experienced by the nation.

AKP's approach towards the local elections is manipulatively over-dramatic in the pieces, the terms like "longevity of the nation", "fate of the people", "horrible pain", "country's collapse", "hard campaign", "as if it is a normal election", and this attitude is defined as "duty" of AKP politicians. This dramatization is not far off from reality, in a political rally Erdogan criticized Akşener for not being a nationalist, and presented the local elections as "standing up for the nation and its democracy and future" (Sputnik Tukey, 2019). The attitude of Erdogan towards dissidents and protesters is shown as divisive, terms like "claiming half of the country terrorists", "dividing the country into two", "Civil War", "For the taste of it" (Heves Almak) "a new domestic enemy", "crisis for attention", "terrorist", "fetöcü", and "hoarder". This further enhances the AKP's populist strategy, for not only in Zaytung's coverage, AKP defines the opposition as a divisive force or 'corrupt elite' it again not only presents itself as representing the best interest of the people but also presents its demise as the demise of the nation.

Overall, these pieces represent AKP figures as aggressive, insincere and shameless figures who blatantly aim to disenfranchise any kind of opposition and even covertly threaten YSK. A Zaytung piece covers AKP threatening people by having Ali İhsan Yavuz giving more public speeches, another piece has AKP figures making statements such as: "we had fun in the production" and "we hope the audience will enjoy these as well", those statements resemble an acting cast of a production, suggesting an insincere and performative performance of the AKP figures.

An Erdoganesque language is imitated in the pieces, terms like: "Harm ", "National Income ", "National Cause ", "Citizenship Duty ", "A Group of Forces". "To create an illusion", "will of the people", "we won't allow this", "dear brothers", "God Forbid", "I'll let god deal with this" and "exterior forces", can be observed. The language of Erdogan and AKP figures often contain these words. The Erdoganesque language imitated by Zaytung uses words focusing on nation, religion, security and strength, Zaytung's imitation suggests AKP representing the best interest of a conservative nation who are under threat from external forces. The "existential threat" not only follows historical precedents, but arguably is more politicized in this imitation

that equates the existential threat to the Turkish state to an existential threat to the AKP government.

Binali Yıldırım, as mentioned in the previous parts, is recognized as someone likeable due to his “calm and reasonable” character, a Zaytung piece shows a worried group of AKP figures that view his calmness as a medical disorder or a curse, in a headline it is claimed that he would have a better chance without the polarizing attitude of AKP, and in this piece him not calling his opponents terrorists, traitors or fetöcü and not showing a contempt towards his opponents represent him as an outlier. The warm face of Yıldırım may suggest a scenario in which he takes a more passive role in a political campaign dominated by Erdogan, thus offering him a small space of sympathy.



Figure 30. Images depicting Binali Yıldırım and Mehmet Özhaseki used in Zaytung's coverage (Sources : (Left to right) Zaytung, n.d. - b; Zaytung, n.d. - a)

Despite the fact that Erdogan is less visible in these pieces, the force he exerts does not exclude its own party members, and Zaytung’s pieces surprisingly respond to the relatively calm campaign of Yıldırım, moreover it is acknowledged that no member of AKP has to act in the shadow of Erdogan.

Remarkably, this notion of an overshadowed politician can also be seen in the image chosen by Sputnik Turkey. It may not be intentional, however, in the image above, we see Mehmet Özhaseki (AKP’s candidate for mayoral elections in Ankara), however we do observe a campaign banner of Özhaseki literally overshadowing Özhaseki himself.

**Ekonomik Durgunluk, Hayat Pahalılığı ve İşsizlikle
Boğuşan Türkiye, Tek Kaygısı İstanbul'da Seçim
Yeniletmek Olan Bir Grup Mutlu İnsanı Gıptayla
İzliyor...**



Figure 32. Picture showing AKP MPs voting on congress, used in Zaytung's coverage.
(Source: Zaytung, n.d. - d)

In the image on the left, we see a group of MP's from AKP voting on a bill for re-election, this may be the only instance in which pro-government figures are presented being happy. However, that happiness is given in a context of economic instability and rising unemployment levels, thus giving a portrait of detached politicians.

Uysal: "Seçmen kaydırma var dedik, CHP yaptı demedik..."



Erdoğan: "Kürt kardeşlerime bir ayrımcılık yapmadım, bizim seçmenimiz olmayan herkese dedim ben onu..."



Figure 34. Screenshots of news covering İmamoğlu's and Erdoğan's statements used in Zaytung's coverage. (Sources : (Left to right) Zaytung, n.d. - u; Zaytung, n.d. - h)

Zaytung's texts, especially its headlines could work as a reverse dialogue for they respond to a politicians' statement through its own headline either disguised as the presented politician or disguised as a relative party.

Zaytung's response is not necessarily critical of the politician that it cites through the screenshot, in a piece that presents İmamoğlu's statement of "3 out of 11 people who are registered to the same apartment in Büyükçekmece are the president of the foundation that Mevlüt Uysal is president of, one of them is his personal assistant" of which the headline responds by disguising itself as Uysal, stating : "We claimed voter fraud, we did not claim it was CHP". Although it is İmamoğlu's statement that Zaytung replies to, the main focus of the piece is Uysal.

Another piece shows Erdogan's statement: "Nowhere have I called HDP voters 'terrorists'" and Zaytung's headline (disguised as Erdogan's statement) states: "I haven't discriminated against our Kurdish brothers, I have stated that for any person who is not our voter...". This headline directly replies to Erdogan's statement by reminding the reader that any person could become 'the other'.

A noticeable absence is the relative absence of the political leaders especially, Selhattin Demirtaş or any leader from HDP or any other political party. Through the entire timeline HDP is only mentioned once through AKP's fake brochures disguising itself as a HDP brochures supporting AKP. It falls in line with the Nation's Alliance relationship with HDP. Zaytung, does not accuse HDP of any involvement in any terrorist group nor does it portray HDP or Kurds negatively in the scanned period. However, arguably, Zaytung avoids a sensitive topic and maybe aims to distance itself from HDP for it could be charged with terrorist propaganda, moreover, Zaytung may also aim to distance itself from HDP as it represents a more mainstream opposition, or in other words, the reasons that distance Nation's Alliance from HDP could be argued to distance Zaytung from HDP.



Figure 36. Picture of Ekrem İmamoğlu used in Zaytung's coverage. (Source :Zaytung, n.d. - j)

Visually, opposition is overwhelmingly represented by Ekrem İmamoğlu, out of seven images, six of them are a photograph of İmamoğlu (the other one being Mansur Yavaş). Visually, the opposition figures are represented almost identical to the government figures for imagery involving opposition comes from news sources.

In the case of Yavaş, photography chosen for Yavaş is a small outlier on the depiction of oppositional figures, on the imagery Yavaş can be seen waving a document with the huge headline of “Mansur Yavaş is being investigated”. The image is an outlier for perhaps this is the only image within the depiction of opposition that features a spectacle.

The shocking headline is given with big capital letters with the name of Mansur Yavaş featured in a hexagon-like shape, implying shock. However, within the context of the piece, artificial intelligence on judiciary analysing the polls to automatically investigate potential threats, this image creates an image of Yavaş as a victim that tries to overcome oppression.

Arguably, the lack of visual presence of opposition may be beneficial towards it for all represented figures are shown as individually on a formal setting, moreover this would fall in line with Zaytung's main criticism being towards the government.

5.1.6. Zaytung's Coverage of Voters

Table 7. Zaytung's Coverage of Voters

<u>Headlines Of Zaytung's Pieces (Voters)</u>
Mayoral AK Party candidate, who was overstressed in case he loses the election, Turkey would be ruined has lost his life to the heart attack (Z68). (Seçilemediği Takdirde Türkiye'nin Parçalanıp Yıkılacağı Stresine Daha Fazla Dayanamayan AK Partili Belediye Başkan Adayı, Kalbine Yenik Düştü...)
Before the March 31, AK Party is smiling after the fake money thrown to the streets for propaganda: "Ahahaha, look at how happy were these idiots :))) (Z63). (Propaganda Amacıyla Ankara'da Sokaklara Sahte 100 TL Atan AK Parti'de 31 Mart Öncesi Yüzler Gülüyor: "Ahahaha nasıl sevindi salaklar :)))")
An announcement states, a week of rest will be given to Soylu for he was tasked with "dealing with the most idiotic part of the voters..." (Z67). (Kendisine verilen "seçmenin en geri zekâlı kesimine oynama görevi" nedeniyle sınırları harap olan Soylu'ya, seçimden sonra 1 hafta kafa izni verileceği açıklandı...)
Response from AK Party to the critics: "You wouldn't know how many idiots will believe this and vote for us, that's how far you are from these people..." (Z66). (AK Parti'den eleştirilere yanıt: "Daha kaç geri zekalının buna inanıp oy vereceğinden bile haberiniz yok. İşte bu millete o kadar uzaksınız...)
Breaking News! The number of boards operating on Maltepe followed a fluctuation after opening the day with a surge. Currently, it is traded at 6... (Z9). (Son Dakika! Maltepe'de sayım yapan kurul sayısı güne yükselişle başlamasının ardından dalgalı bir seyir izledi. Şu sıralarda 6'dan işlem görüyor...)
Election victims ,who are waiting for a snap election to return to their homes, are waiting for a hand of aid reaching from Devlet Bahçeli (Z22). (Evlerine geri dönebilmek için en büyük umutları erken seçim olan seçimzedeler, Devlet Bahçeli'den uzanacak yardım elini bekliyor...)
Turkey ,struggling with economic stagnancy, increased cost of living and unemployment, watches the politicians ,whose main aim is to retry an election, in wonder (Z16). (Ekonomik Durgunluk, Hayat Pahalılığı ve İşsizlikle Boğuşan Türkiye, Tek Kaygısı İstanbul'da Seçim Yeniletmek Olan Bir Grup Mutlu İnsanı Gıptayla İzliyor...)
Total of six undecided voters in entirety of İstanbul thanked İmamoğlu and Yıldırım who is debating for their votes: "We're overwhelmed" (Z29). (İstanbul Genelindeki Toplam 6 Kararsız Seçimenden Kendileri İçin Özel Olarak Canlı Yayına Çıkan İmamoğlu ve Yıldırım'a Teşekkür Mesajı: "Mahcup ediyorsunuz...")

Table 7 (Continued). Zaytung's Coverage of Voters

Pro-AKP media that got its first results of the seeds of hatred they sow states: "This one is a bit ugly, you'll have to make do..." (Z25).

(Ektiği Kin ve Nefret Tohumlarından İlk Terörist Mahsülünü Alan Yandaş Medya: "Bu biraz şekilsiz oldu ama idare edin...")

Similar to the political figures, represented voters are overwhelmingly AKP voters. AKP's approach to its voters arguably is pacifying, AKP voters are referred to as idiots or victims who could be manipulated by the AKP into voting for them through "performative" stunts (chauvinistic speeches, accusations of terrorism and treachery, etc.). Even the low level members of AKP's own organizations are susceptible to this rhetoric in Zaytung's representation.

Remembering Zaytung's coverage of the capitol riots, it also portrays Trump supporters turned into 'amateur terrorists' by the 'wannabe dictator' Trump himself. Arguably, this representation projects Zaytung's view of voters or supporters as passive participants within the political system.

A video shared by Zaytung shows a group of people, supporting AKP, storming the election site of Üsküdar, physically assaulting the election workers and police officers that were in the building. According to Okan Başal of Evrensel, the morning after this event, a group of people supporting AKP, came to the building to block the entry of a figure representing CHP, with threats of violence. Upon the arrival of the mentioned figure, the group started a fight and assaulted the person that they threatened (Başal, 2019).



Figure 38. A video depicting a fight in a poll center. (Source: Twitter, 2019d)

This video is a rare visual depiction of AKP voters represented as violent and active, instead of ignorant and passive. This does not necessarily contradict the passive representation; it is a different angle of the same representation. Interestingly, this video was shared with the title ‘AK Party has initiated their process of objections to the election results at Election Board of Üsküdar’, claiming AKP’s responsibility.

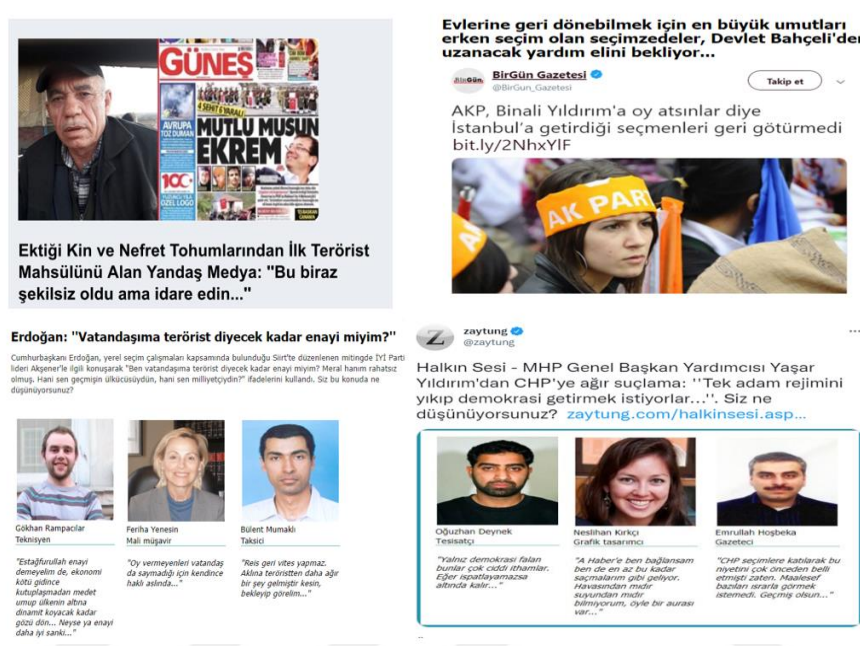


Figure 40 . Zaytung's coverage of voters. (Sources: (Clockwise from upper right) Zaytung, n.d. - i; Twitter, 2019c; Zaytung, n.d. - h; Zaytung, n.d. - e)

Another piece depicts AKP voters stranded after AKP did not provide a return shuttle after it brought attendees to its political rally. Another Zaytung piece depicts AKP congressional members laughing over a group of voters they tricked and calling them stupid. Another piece shows a candidate who watches pro-state media, and dies from a heart attack because his defeat on election could “tear up the country”. As can be seen in the piece depicting the candidate who had a heart attack, the AKP voters were represented as people with good intentions who are being manipulated. However, another piece states that AKP voters do not care about democratic ideals as a necessity.

The only section where, arguably, non-AKP voters exists, is in a section called The People’s Voice, in which fictional characters are commenting on the latest

developments with a close up picture attached to them. The very same concept exists in The Onion as well.

And in these pieces a hierarchy can be seen based on professions, and looks, on average, it can be assumed that a graphic designer could earn more than a plumber. Or an accountant could earn more than a cab driver. Moreover, more than earnings, it could be argued that an accountant is more sophisticated than a technician, just like a graphic designer being more sophisticated than a plumber or the presented journalist. On these two cases, the high end of the hierarchy is represented by a woman, in which the office setting of the pictures also falls in line with them representing the high end.

On the other hand, the pictures of other people in the low end or middle of the hierarchy are taken on streets or in a photographer's studio, which falls in line with this hierarchy. In these pieces, at least in the attached ones, the higher end of the hierarchy is the closest representation of an oppositional voter. An educated, sophisticated, well earning and/or respected person. As I briefly mentioned about headlines and will mention again, this plays to the representation of AKP voters as passive participants who are manipulated and cannot decide for themselves. Moreover, this hierarchy would suggest differences of oppositional voters from AKP voters that portrays the opposition in a more positive light.

It is worth noticing that the "oppositional" voters are not oppositional for criticizing the government, but for being less supportive of it compared to other people in these pieces⁵⁰. People in these pieces do not contrast each other on extreme levels. Zaytung's stereotypical representation of AKP voters as ignorant or low income people also enforces the representation of opposition as educated or high income people.

On visual representation, a piece covers an image of a young woman wearing a head band with "AK Party" written on it who gazes to a center out of camera's focus suggesting a voter base who are motivated yet easily manipulated, they are passivized by Zaytung's headline. A more suggesting image is the juxtaposition of a close up

⁵⁰ The people in these pieces can be more aggressive towards the government in other pieces.

picture of Osman Sarıgün and the main page of Güneş newspaper. This juxtaposition

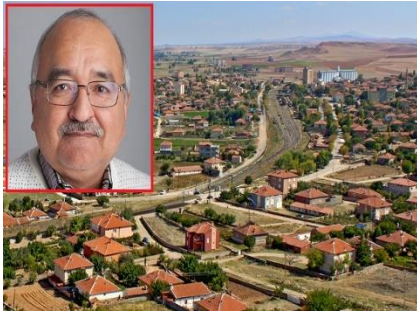


Figure 42. Zaytung's representation of village mayor. (Source: Zaytung, n.d. - p)

Considering the photo of Sarıgün and a fictional rural Mayor who died from a heart attack due to election pressure, Zaytung refers to a representation of a rural AKP voter, both in the scanned articles and Güneş's observations, Zaytung (as well as Turkish social media) show central Anatolian cities (such as Yozgat, Konya or Sivas) and rural towns as ignorant, and assumes the vote for AKP and assumed ignorance. The picture of Sarıgün could be assumed from a rural town (given the lack of buildings it is suggestible that this is either a rural area or an area that is on the outskirts of the city), the picture of an old man is attached to a rural town as well.

5.1.7. Blog Post

Lastly, an interesting piece is a blog post of Zaytung recommending small countries to start a dispute with. It is much longer and more visually rich than average Zaytung pieces, the blog post shows images presenting seven countries:



Figure 44. Zaytung's Blog Post Representing Slovenia, San Marino and Panama
(Source: Zaytung, n.d. - k)



Figure 46. Zaytung's Blog Post Representing: Liechtenstein, Turks and Caicos, Cuba and Malta (Source: Zaytung, n.d. - k)

I argue this post is significant for, not only does it criticize the aggression on foreign political policies during election time but it also mocks Erdogan's regime and its attempts of turning Turkey into a more conservative country.

To create a dispute, there should be a difference between Turkey, more importantly Erdogan's vision of Turkey, and the country that will play the villain, in this respect the picture presented to visualise the country also visualises something that is not acceptable to Erdogan's Turkey

The picture representing Panama is especially interesting, as it is from an old TV show called "Acun Firarda" on which the host of the show travels to different "exotic" countries, a memorable part of the show was its beach sections that are aimed to show a woman in a bikini, adding that the woman in the bikini in the image represents Turks and Caicos, it is arguable that it shows almost the opposite of the conservative aim of "women dressing modestly".

Although it is a bit of a stretch, using a picture from Acun Firarda, could also imply a popular sentiment amongst the younger generation, that is nostalgia towards the pre-Erdogan era Turkey⁵¹.

The picture of Erdogan in front of a metal statue of Che Guevara is a tad more obvious for Che Guevara, face of a communist revolutionary, contradicts Erdogan, face of a conservative that maintained state capitalism. Although it is not very open but Erdogan's picture in Cuba, can also be viewed as a performative attempt to present himself as a "tough guy", the caption also undermines the "tough guy" image by saying "I won't come here again... the humidity is too high" (Appendix A, Z52)

Historical guards of Malta could be argued to mock AKP's performative nationalism. The Malta picture directly refers to the picture of Erdogan with Mahmud Abbas, that was mocked because the staff wore ancient military uniforms, especially ones resembling a bathrobe.

The caption of the Malta picture directly refers to this by saying "The bathrobe guards of Aksaray can easily take them down, Malta should be careful" (Appendix A, Z52), the picture of Erdogan with Abbas was especially mocked for being too absurd (Diken, 2022), and the image that represents Malta, being a re-enactment of medieval guards presents the performative nature of Erdogan's picture with Abbas.

The picture representing Liechtenstein is delicate, it can be argued to represent a laic state in a western manner, in which it would fall in line with the pre-Erdogan nostalgia. However, the picture shows the hereditary Prince and Princess of Liechtenstein (Alois and Sophie) which makes its meaning complicated, not only because Erdogan and AKP officials of Kemalists or pre-AKP era were being elitists but also because Erdogan is often referred to as "Sultan", not only for his over increasing power over the government and state, but also because of him making a neo-Ottomanist era and placing emphasis on the Ottoman past.

⁵¹ A lot of topics, posts or discussions can be found in Turkish internet, that glorifies the 90's as a pre-Erdogan era, the phrase "Good old Laik (laic/secular) days" can be often seen within these discussions, directly berating the conservative goals of Erdogan.

The picture that represents Slovenia and Slovakia are more context related for the piece since this post is emphasizing the small countries that Turkey can artificially increase political tension on and funnily enough these pictures context is the emphasis on the countries insignificance.

5.2. The Onion's Content

To discuss The Onion's parody, we first may define its imitation of mainstream news: On average, The Onion headlines have 14-15 words in a single sentence. The Onion's texts consist of one large block, on average it has 195 words, the shortest piece has 120 words and the longest piece has 386 words, pieces have 150 to 250 words on average. American Voices consists of even less words (90 words), for it states public statements. Noticeably, The Onion's website uses the colour green as the brand colour of The Onion, which gives The Onion more legitimacy in its design.

The Onion also produces short videos in the format of a slideshow that imitates social media posts and stories of news outlets explaining a situation, person, object or an institution. It is clear that The Onion has grown a set of aesthetics from this imitation that is followed by the publication and can be recognized by the audience.

Referring back to Table 2, one can observe that The Onion almost symmetrically imitates the mainstream news media. Looking at its content, The Onion has a variety of content type, ranging from infographics to slideshows. Most popular content types would be "news in brief" and "news in photos"

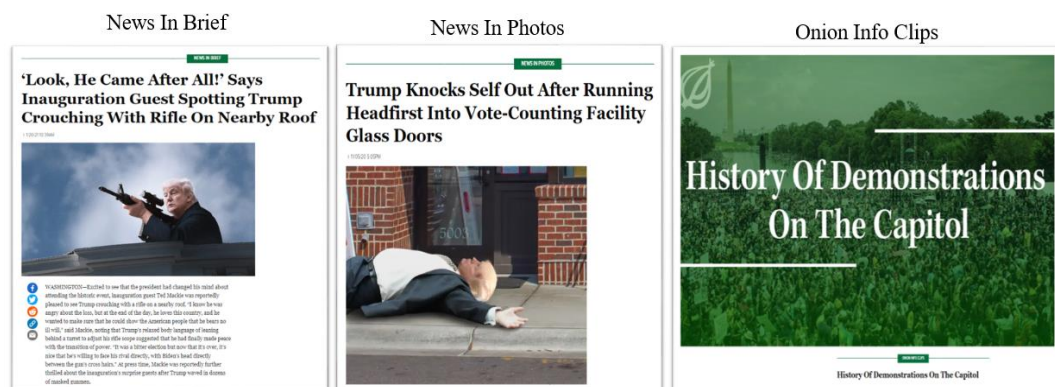


Figure 48. Examples of The Onion Content (Sources: (left to right), The Onion, 2021b; 2020d; 2021d)

The Onion also uses stock/straight pictures that offers more context than comedy. However, amateur pictures are not often encountered in The Onion, drawing its mimicry to the mainstream news.

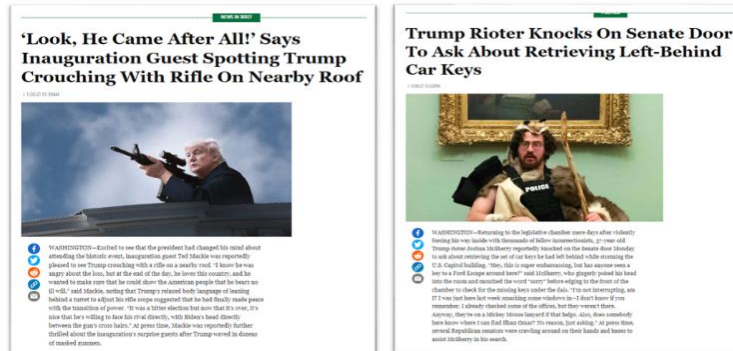


Figure 50. The Onion Examples 2 (Sources: (Left to right) The Onion, 2021b; 2021j)

The Onion do offer high quality edits that aims to bring a comedic intent (such as Donald Trump holding a rifle) or some of the ‘straight’ images produces a comedic effect because of it’s subject.

5.2.2. The Onion’s Coverage of Media Institutions

Table 8. The Onion’s Coverage of Media Institutions

Headlines Of The Onion’s Pieces (Media Institutions)
Eerily Silent Charmin Twitter Account Apparently Condone Attack On Capitol (O36).
Fox News Slams CNN For Providing Biden Each Question Seconds Before He Answered It (O20).
Grizzled Trump Throws Off Poncho To Reveal Bandolier Of Microphones (O21).
Trump Threatens To Leak Debate Video Online If Moderator Keeps Asking Unfair Questions (O22).
InfoWars Offers Readers Guide To Staying Psychotic, Violent During Stressful Election Day (O24).
Barr Announces No Widespread Election Fraud After Clicking Warning Label On Flagged Trump Tweets (O5).
I...I am the mainstream media', realizes horrified Tucker Carlson spiralling live on air (O17).
Panicked Trump Agrees To Zoom Debate (O18).
CNN Seamstresses Frantically Updating Results On Electoral Map Quilt (O19).
Trump Storms Back Into Interview While Leslie Stahl Eating Lunch At Home (O23).
Media Condemns Biden For Baseless Claim That Nation Will Come Together Once Election Over (O25).
Report: 70% Of Republicans Believe Election Hasn’t Happened Yet (O16).

Interestingly, one piece follows a piece in The Onion's 9/11's issue titled "Dinty Moore Breaks Long Silence on Terrorism with Full-Page Ad" (The Onion,2001b), showing a beef brand feeling a necessity to express their grief, showing a level of marketing communication.

And in a piece covering the capitol riots, titled, "Eerily Silent Charmin Twitter Account Apparently Condone Attack on Capitol" (Appendix A, O12), however in this piece, the brand is assumed to be pro-riots because of its silence during the riots, the consumer expecting a toilet paper brand to choose a side does not only show the consumers increasing expectations, but perhaps an increased partisanship that even categories toilet paper. Interestingly, a tiki torch company that was used by white supremacists in the Charlottesville protests actually issued a public apology and denounced the extremist group (Smith, 2017).

Another piece depicts Attorney Justice William Barr being convinced on "No Widespread Election Fraud" after reading labels written on Trump's tweets, as mentioned, social media companies have been heavily criticized for their incompetence in combatting fake news. And this piece arguably suggests how fragile Trump's claims of voter fraud are, for a two to three minute read disproves the allegations.



Figure 52. The Onion's Coverage of Mainstream Media and Elections. (Sources: (Left to right) The Onion, 2020e; The Onion 2020g; The Onion 2020f)

Media institutions and personalities play a part in The Onion's pieces as well. Differently from Zaytung, the mentioned news institutions are mainstream media,

InfoWars (the joke of the piece is the “psychotic” nature of InfoWars for it is famous for publishing outlandish conspiracy theories), however similar to Zaytung’s coverage, the stories do present a pro-Trump government with only conservative (Fox News) media as the administration’s loyal defender.

Interestingly, in one of the representations of Trump supporters (see: 5.2.7 The Onion’s representation of voters), the depicted Trump supporter, is wearing a polo shirt with the brand of “Guo Media” (Swan and Pandey, 2019), wearing the shirt is fitting with the “family” environment provided by these channels.

A piece depicts Tucker Carlson (a famous conservative host), realizing –midst rampage- that he is mainstream media, and by his logic (mainstream media is full of lies) cannot represent the best interests of ordinary citizens. Another piece depicts republicans not believing the results of ‘mainstream media’ and even calling Fox News to retract their elections results that also projected Biden as the winner.

Interestingly, another piece, depicts inforwars’s guide on staying psychotic during the election day, the conspiracy website that aims to keep the audience detached from reality as much as possible.

Conspiracy theories were a part of Trump campaign’s legal cases, one of the campaign lawyers actually suggested that Hugo Chavez, the deceased former president of Venezuela, played a part in rigging the elections (Associated Press, 2020). The conspiracy theories alleged by the Trump campaign were seldom covered by The Onion

“Fox News Slams CNN for Providing Biden Each Question Seconds Before He Answered It” (See Appendix A, O20) and “Media Condemns Biden for Baseless Claim That Nation Will Come Together Once Election Over” (See Appendix A, O25). The former depicts Fox News ‘slamming’ its polar opposite on frivolous claims, this depiction fits into Taibbi’s narrative on the media’s structure of polar opposites that exploits the polarisation. The latter piece comments on the torn fabric of the

community and the realities of a possible healing, for even ‘petty’ differences became larger issues for people to ignore.

One of The Onion’s depictions, interestingly shows an image of corporate news media, we see a seamstress working within a control room of CNN trying to sew a quilt of elections results. One interesting detail would be, in this scenario, CNN being an extensive corporation, it can even hire a master seamstress who can sew and even “update” a quilt. An interesting addition is that even the sewing machine itself is labelled CNN, which also signifies a corporate culture. Arguably, mainstream media is so professional, that it could even hire a professional seamstress who can not only sew a quilt quickly but can update it as well. This process of sewing a quilt is also a nice metaphor for people’s anxiety watching the election results, which was also covered in Zaytung.

In another image, Donald Trump, storms the house of Leslie Stahl (one of the hosts of 60 Minutes) to continue an interview that he left earlier in the day, despite condemning liberal media, an interview on 60 Minutes, is important enough for Trump to storm into a house. Another detail, that would be absent in Zaytung is that, Leslie Stahl, is presented almost as a regular person having dinner after work, which adds layers to the piece beyond turning a famous person into a regular person, for in this story, Donald Trump seemingly storms into a regular person’s home, and the perspective that the reader gets, showing a standing Trump against a seated Stahl adds to this layer by depicting a clear power disparity. And this matches reality in a way, whilst the President is more powerful than a journalist, Trump, in a way, is out powered in the real world which works in his efforts to have a “re-match” by storming into a journalist’s home.

In a similar manner, another image edited by The Onion portrays Trump in a cowboy-like manner. In the imagery, Trump is presented with a greased face, wearing a bandolier of microphones during a debate. Although, a cowboy like image of Trump could also narrate Trump’s self-image of his term, the cowboy image also fits with his approach to media institutions, considering that Trump saw media as the enemy of the

people, the cowboy figure fits his self-image of the events well. This also works well for the cowboy image works with Trump’s tough and patriotic language.

5.2.3. *The Onion’s Coverage of the Election Process*

Table 9. The Onion’s Coverage of Election Process

<u>Headlines Of The Onion’s Pieces (Election Process)</u>
Teary-Eyed Trump Finally Accepts Election Defeat After Watching Slideshow Of Presidency Set To Vitamin C’s ‘Graduation (Friends Forever) (O9).
Trump Claims Over 70 Million Biden Votes Came From People Who Should Be Dead (O15).
Report: 70% Of Republicans Believe Election Hasn’t Happened Yet (O16).
Ted Cruz Makes Last Effort To Block Election Result By Unleashing Wave Of Locusts From Mouth To Black Out Sun (O8).
Giuliani Wheels Straitjacket-Wearing Trump Into Courtroom In Bid To Win Election With Insanity Defense (O1).
Trump Files Lawsuit In Pennsylvania Alleging Election Officials Totally Disregarding His Feelings (O7).
How Trump Is Challenging The Election Results (O2).
Trump Knocks Self Out After Running Headfirst Into Vote-Counting Facility Glass Doors (O6).
U.S. Praises Bolivian Leaders For Eliminating Voter Fraud By Refusing To Hold Elections (O12).
Barr Announces No Widespread Election Fraud After Clicking Warning Label On Flagged Trump Tweets (O5).
Trump Reduced To Filing Lawsuit To Overturn Single Ballot In Placerville, Idaho (O3).
Your Honor, I’m Ready To Present,’ Says Giuliani Pulling Rotted Melon, Stray Cat Out Of Old Burlap Sack (O4).
5 Things To Know About Trump’s Georgia Election Call (O10).
Brian Kemp Unveils Specially Trained Hogs That Can Root Out Voter Fraud (O14).

Election is referred to as, “presidential election”, “U.S election”, “2020 presidential race”, “2020 election” and “bitter election”. Donald Trump’s claims of election fraud are described as “Long shot path to victory”, and “crumbling”, could be debunked in two minutes and it is underlined in a piece that his case is disqualifying the resident’s ballot. It is furthermore mentioned that voter fraud is rare and is not widespread, “reliable sources” implied for this outcome, implying the unreliability of Trump’s sources. Trump’s allegations are also presented within the pieces, “illegally cast”, “voter fraud”, “evidence fraud”, “mail ballot irregularities”, “rigged election” The alleged evidence is also depicted in vague and secretive terms such as “top secret

pieces”, "trove of evidence", and “definitive proof” whereas the vague claims are presented with strong cynicism, “the whole system is corrupt”.

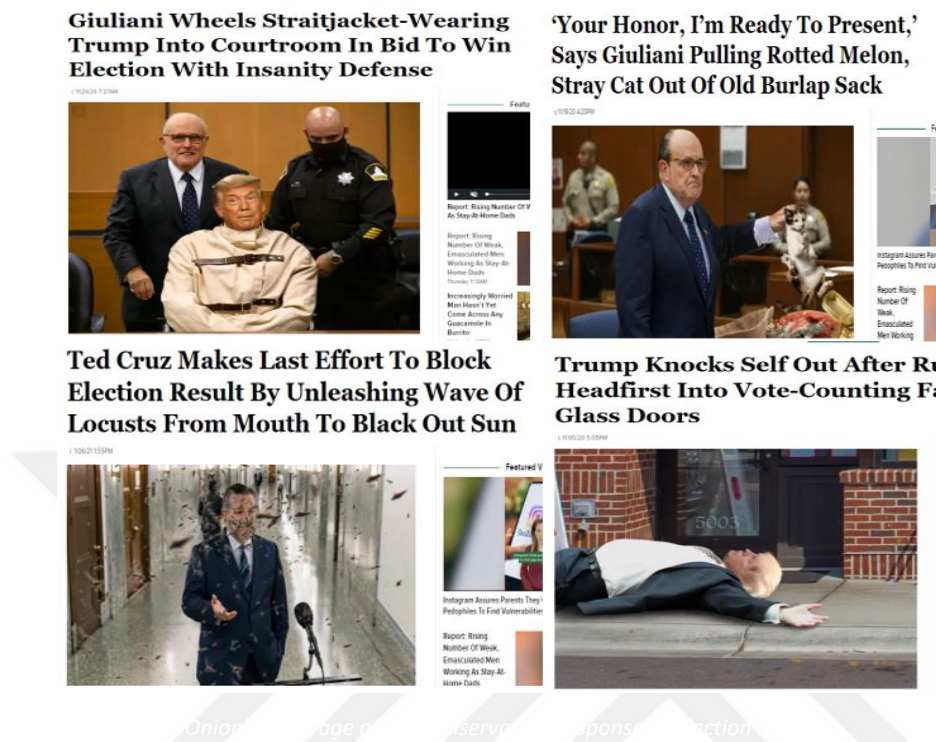


Figure 54. The Onion's Coverage of the Conservative Response to Election Results (Source: (Clockwise from upper right) The Onion 2020b; 2020d; 2021o ;2020a)

Trump campaigns objections are based on frivolous things such as typos in birth years or unproved claims of fraudulent ballots, illegal votes, faulty signatures and duplicate ballots. An Onion’s piece suggests the Georgia governor is proposing ‘hogs’ that can smell voter fraud, arguably because in reality the Trump campaign did not produce convincing evidence. The efforts are more concerned with preventing Democrats from winning the election rather than any credible case of voter fraud which is ironically depicted as “the end of American republic as we know it”, Bolivia ‘refusing to hold elections’ is shown as a perfect way to combat voter fraud, which is ironic because the claims of voter fraud arguably are motivated to prevent voter participation. On the other hand, using an “unstable South American democracy” as a benchmark could also be argued another way of enforcing U.S centrism in reporting, a similar criticism was made by Levy and Holland in their paper as well.

Some pieces depicting Trump campaign’s objections to the election results, uses courtroom language, most heavily on a piece depicting a deranged Giuliani in court, terms like “culprit”, “subsequent arrest and execution”, “sirs of the jury”, “legally admissible”, “objection”, “witness tampering”, “appellate dismissal”, “probable cause”, “legal questioning”, “hard evidence”, “client attorney permission” and “I rest my case”, Giuliani is depicted as an unhinged individual, he is the subject of a single piece, in which he is presented as a deranged, mumbling, dirty looking man that tries to present a document’s copy made with ketchup as evidence whilst trying to have the court believe in his intelligence mostly through random legal jargon.

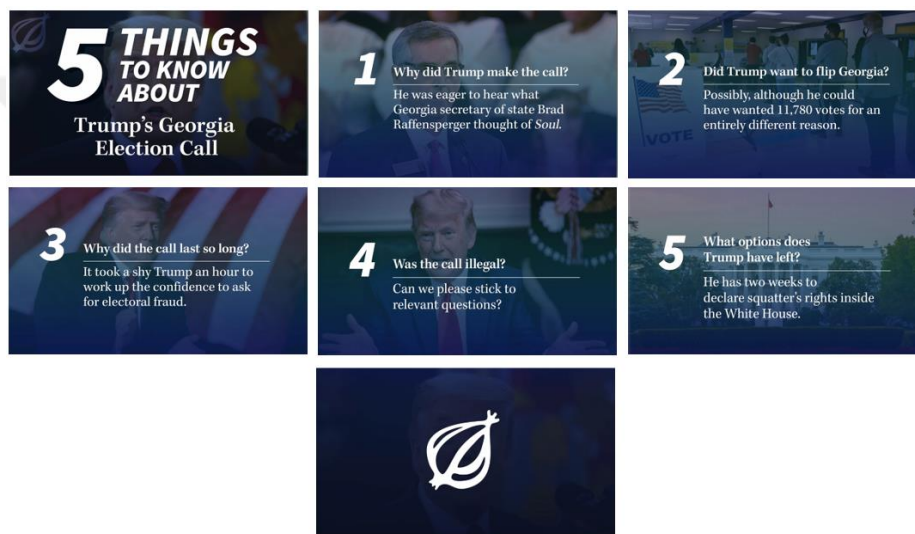


Figure 56. "5 Things to Know about Trump's Georgia Election Call. (Source: The Onion, 2021m)

“5 Things to Know About Trump’s Georgia Call” (Appendix A, O10) shows a picture of Trump giving a speech in front of a flag, then it switches to Georgia’s secretary of state Brad Raffensperger, a working polling station, two pictures of Trump and a picture of the White House. The video maintains a mocking tone towards the reader, indicating very blatant corruption, the piece narrates Trump becoming more desperate in his attempts to stay in the White House

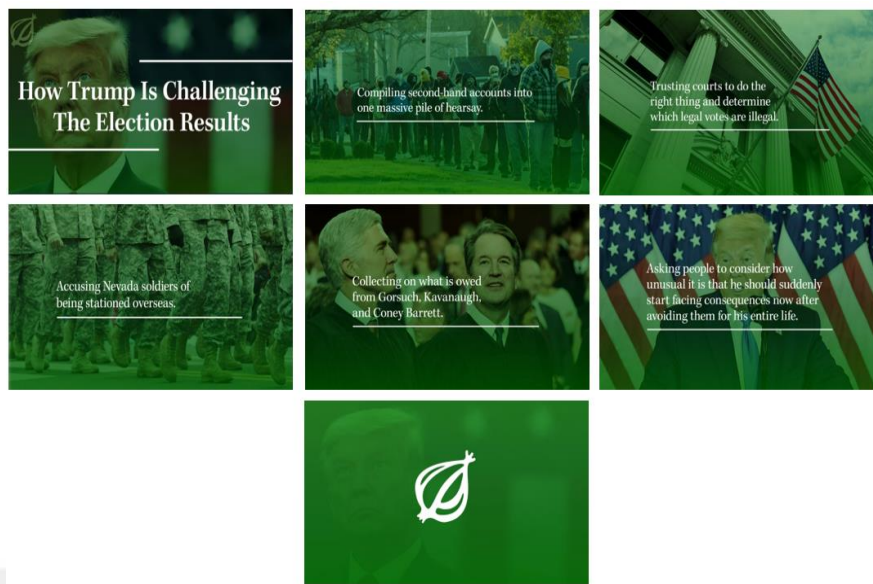


Figure 58. "How Trump is Challenging the Election Results" (Source: The Onion, 2020c)

“How Trump is Challenging the Election Results” (Appendix A, O2) starts with a close picture of Trump on the left side of the frame in front of an American flag, gazing, then it switches to a queue of people outside polling stations, a close picture of a court (assumedly) from a low angle, a group of soldiers shown from waist down, a picture of Brett Kavanaugh and Neil Gorsuch and another picture of Donald Trump giving a speech in front of American flags.

I argue that visually this video puts the emphasis on nationalism and law, three out of six pictures have American flags visible and almost dominant within the frames. Another picture shows a group of unidentifiable soldiers and still another shows an image of a court and two justices from the supreme court

5.2.4. The Onion’s Coverage of Political Figures

Table 10. The Onion’s Coverage of Political Figures

Headlines Of The Onion’s Pieces (Political Figures)
Secret Service Agent Heroically Dives In Front Of Strong Breeze That Could Have Killed Biden (O41).

Table 10 (Continued). The Onion’s Coverage of Political Figures

Josh Hawley Condemns Pro-Trump Rioters For Upstaging His Own Theatrics (O29).
Rueful Trump Wishes He Knew Republicans This Willing To Overthrow Democracy Earlier In Term (O27).
Teary-Eyed Trump Finally Accepts Election Defeat After Watching Slideshow Of Presidency Set To Vitamin C’s ‘Graduation (Friends Forever) (O9).
Pro-Trump Rioter Trying To Figure Out What To Do With Looted Devin Nunes(O26).
Ted Cruz Makes Last Effort To Block Election Result By Unleashing Wave Of Locusts From Mouth To Black Out Sun (O8).
Giuliani Wheels Straitjacket-Wearing Trump Into Courtroom In Bid To Win Election With Insanity Defense (O1).
Trump Files Lawsuit In Pennsylvania Alleging Election Officials Totally Disregarding His Feelings (O7)
Matt Gaetz Forced To Host Hundreds Of White Nationalists After Airbnb Pulls D.C. Listings (O43).
Trump Knocks Self Out After Running Headfirst Into Vote-Counting Facility Glass Doors (O6).
‘This Apology Is Bullshit And I Am Lying To You,’ Says GOP Senator To Widespread Media Praise (O28).
‘Look, He Came After All!’ Says Inauguration Guest Spotting Trump Crouching With Rifle On Nearby Roof (O42).
Brian Kemp Unveils Specially Trained Hogs That Can Root Out Voter Fraud (O14).
Barr Announces No Widespread Election Fraud After Clicking Warning Label On Flagged Trump Tweets (O5).
Trump Reduced To Filing Lawsuit To Overturn Single Ballot In Placerville, Idaho (O3).

On political figures, expectedly, Donald Trump is the most mentioned political figure (referred 31 times), adding Republican figures such as Ted Cruz, Devin Nunes, Josh Hawley, Lindsey Graham, Matt Gaetz, Josh Hawley and Brian Kemp (referred once), it becomes clear that the Republican or right-wing of the political spectrum is on The Onion’s radar.

Noticeably, Mike Pence is almost non-existent amongst the analysed pieces, he is only referred to in the slogan “Hang Mike Pence”, the rioters were infuriated because Mike Pence accepted the fraudulent votes count , which was rejected by Trump’s Attorney General William Barr himself (Pengelly, 2021).

Democratic politicians are mentioned not as subjects of the pieces but as reference, most mentioned democratic politician is Joe Biden (mentioned 19 times), Hillary

Clinton is mentioned only once as a reference to the 2016 presidential elections, whereas Ilhan Omar is mentioned once as a target of pro-Trump rioters (Pengelly and Singh, 2020).

Pieces that depict Trump could show an emotional Trump that contradicts his antagonizing persona, pieces depict Trump crying over a slideshow of his presidency, being upset or even scared of election officials who disregard his feelings. Or it could even to show a more deranged depiction of Trump who attempts to assassinate Biden at his inauguration speech or is in a straitjacket for the insanity defence.

As mentioned in the previous part, Trump's personal lawyer is also presented as a deranged lawyer, a piece depicts him as an insane person who just mumbles words, and there is a photo of him showing a black liquid flowing through his sideburns⁵² increases the deranged persona.

A piece depicts Donald Trump's retweet of a conspiracy theorist (by adding Trump's actual claims about a plane full of Antifa soldiers), which makes him sound like a 'complete idiot', since even before his election campaign in 2016, Donald Trump was publicly alleging that Barrack Obama was not a US citizen (Therefore is not qualified to be president). During his first days of presidency he tweeted, alleging his predecessor had ordered a phone tap in Trump tower, earning Donald Trump the name "Conspiracy Theorist in Chief" (Cilliaza, 2017).

In this regard Trump is arguably an antagonistic, irrational, aggressive, selfish and stubborn character, a somewhat deranged president. A piece depicts him knocking himself out running into a glass door in a vote counting facility. This slapstick gag is arguably the most cartoonish representation of Trump.

More than his character, Trump is obviously ready to "overthrow democracy", a piece depicts his disappointment on not knowing the House Republicans' willingness to aid him in overthrowing democracy. This could fall in line with arguments that see Trump

⁵² Most likely a black hair dye

as a lazy populist, for not only does he want the presidency for his ego, but also he is not even interested in House Republicans. House Republicans are represented as useless, bigoted, chauvinist, slimy or outright liars.

A piece covering the rioter who stole Devin Nunes, intends to get rid of him because although it acts as “memorabilia”, it is still an “eyesore”, the story depicts Nunes dropped in the yard with a free sign. Nunes, is depicted as an ugly human mannequin, and arguably he is a mannequin as well as Congress.

On some Republicans’ statements that denounced Donald Trump, The Onion presents a piece in which Senator Lindsey Graham states word by word that his ‘denouncement’ is a farce to save face. He admits that he will talk with ‘a certain decorum’ when it is required, interestingly, in the piece his brutal honesty lands him a cabinet role in the Biden administration.

A piece depicts Matt Gaetz hosting white supremacists that are stuck in D.C., in this piece the picture of Matt Gaetz is edited into a picture of a group that is assumedly white supremacists and the Congressman aesthetics of (short hair, clean face, business suit) serves as a shield is arguably lifted because he is presented with a gang of white supremacists, and the reader could perceive him as white supremacist in a suit.

In another piece, Representative Josh Hawley, condemns the capitol riots, not because of the attempt at overthrowing democracy, but because the rioters have stolen his ‘theatrics’, this is a more obvious reference for Josh Hawley actually saluted the rioters during the riots.

A more extreme depiction shows Ted Cruz ‘unleashing a wave of locusts from his mouth to black out the sun’. Arguably this is a metaphor of the rhetoric of the conservative politicians, in the piece, before he unleashes the locusts, Ted Cruz alleges that the presidency of Joe Biden will end America.

Interestingly, the most neutral representation within the selections belongs to Georgia Governor Brian Kemp, who introduces hogs who can smell voter fraud.

The only Democratic politician who is the subject of a piece is Joe Biden, the piece covering him, covers an exaggerated account of his age and possible health problems.

5.2.5. *The Onion's Coverage of Capitol Riots*

Table 11. The Onion's Coverage of Capitol Riots

<u>Headlines Of The Onion's Pieces (Capitol Riots)</u>
Rueful Trump Wishes He Knew Republicans This Willing To Overthrow Democracy Earlier In Term (O27).
Matt Gaetz Forced To Host Hundreds Of White Nationalists After Airbnb Pulls D.C. Listings (O43).
History Of Demonstrations On The Capitol (O44).
FBI Narrows Down Identity Of Red-Faced Man Carrying Confederate Flag Through Capitol To Millions Of Americans (O37).
Trump Supporter Excited To Finally Disengage With Politics After Government Overthrow Finished (O31).
Eerily Silent Charmin Twitter Account Apparently Condone Attack On Capitol (O36).
D.C. Police Lose Control Of Rioting Trump Supporters After Hundreds Of Officers Called Away To Deal With Black Jaywalker (O30).
'This Apology Is Bullshit And I Am Lying To You,' Says GOP Senator To Widespread Media Praise (O28).
Josh Hawley Condemns Pro-Trump Rioters For Upstaging His Own Theatrics (O29).
Timeline Of The January 6 Siege On The Capitol (O35).
Trump Rioter Knocks On Senate Door To Ask About Retrieving Left-Behind Car Keys (O38).
National Guard Returns To Endless Sleep Under Mount Rushmore Until Nation Calls Upon Them Again (O33).
Pro-Trump Rioter Trying To Figure Out What To Do With Looted Devin Nunes (O26).
Airbnb Blocks All D.C. Bookings Ahead Of Inauguration (O40).

The Capitol Riot itself is mentioned as “deadly riot”, “violent coup”, “assault on democracy”, “attack on Washington” and “insurrection attempt”. The events occurred on January 6 are narrated with words such as “Riot”, “Looting”, “Government Overthrow”, “destructive”, “storm” “siege” “confederate flag” “violent” “smashing” whilst the participants are defined as “Trump Rioters”, “Trump supporters”, “Rioting Trump supporters”, “Pro-Trump rioters” “mob”, “most ardent (Trump) supporters” “insurrectionists”, “qanon” “White nationalists”, the chants such as “this isn't over” and “hang Mike Pence”. A piece describes the aim and expectation of the rioters as shredding the constitution, establishing a white ethnostate, -promptly collapsing the

US government, - announcing martial law and installing a “ferverly authoritarian leader”.

The extremist group “Proud Boys” is listed amongst the pro-Trump rioters, aside from Proud Boys, white supremacy is presented as a value amongst the rioters, terms like “militia members” and “boogaloo extremists” are presented amidst the rioters, weaponry like AR-15, hunting knives or crossbows shown within their inventory.

The Onion defines rioters as a violent mob, moreover the “mob” had an agenda that they were using this violence and destruction for, which was to weaken the democratic institutions of the land in hopes of maintaining Trump’s presidency. Rioters, in The Onion’s account are a fervent mob of white supremacists who aim to undermine American democracy.



Figure 30. "History of Demonstrations on The Capitol" (Source: The Onion, 2021d)

The video presented by The Onion underlines the exceptional case of the Capitol Riots (Appendix A, O44), four other instances presented by The Onion are ridiculously small in size when compared to the riots, contrasting the violent acts of the riots.

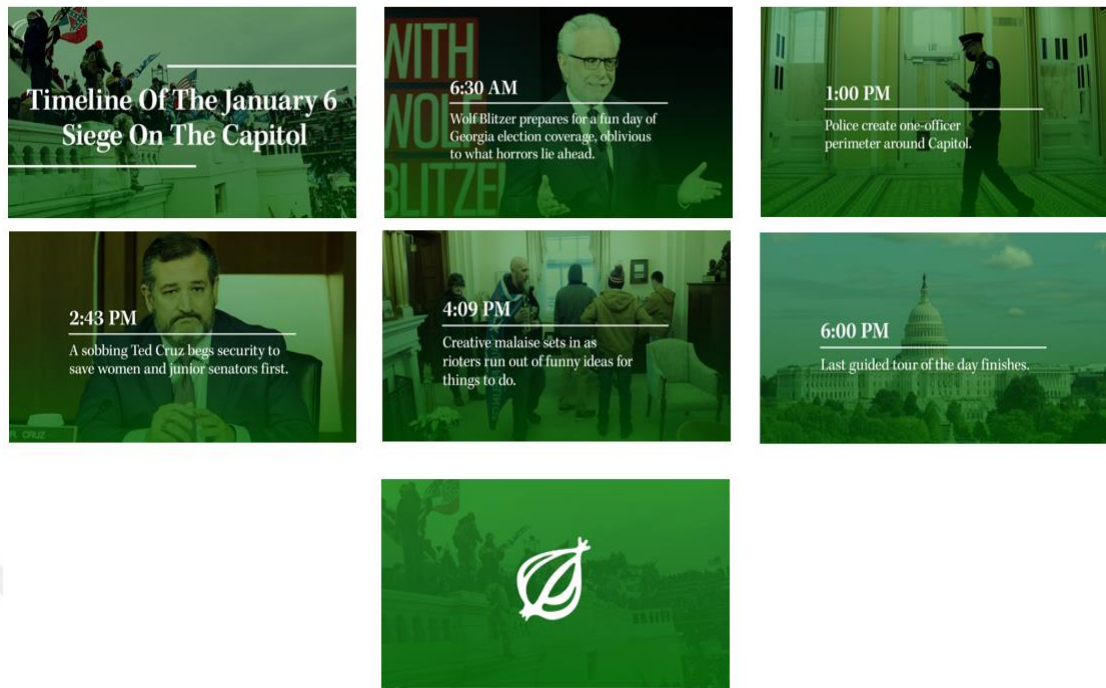


Figure 61. "Timeline of The January 6 Siege on The Capitol" (Source: The Onion, 2021g)

The second video, "Timeline of January 6" (Appendix A, O35), shows that the riot was unexpected, the Capitol Building was not sufficiently secured, the rioters were a legitimate threat to the safety of the Congress, and the rioters had no tangible plan.

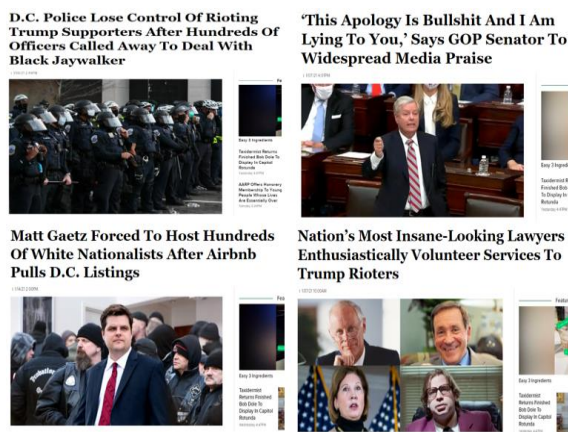


Figure 63. The Onion's Coverage of the Capitol Riots. (Source: (Clockwise from upper right) The Onion, 2021i; 2021f; 2021k; 2021n)

The contrast of police response to white supremacist rioters and Black Lives Matter protesters is also noticed by The Onion. The Onion presents a very well-equipped police force actually ignoring a coup attempt to deal with a minor offence committed by a black person, the pieces covering Biden's inauguration also cover D.C. police not taking enough action, a continuation of their mistakes on January 6. In another case, a rioter coming back to Capitol Hill after the riots asks the location of Ilhan Omar, a Haitian-American Congresswoman.

Another piece further implicates white supremacy deals with the individual who carried a confederate flag in the Capitol Building, a flag described as "the symbol of slavery and white supremacy", moreover the vastness of Americans who share these values are underlined. One piece describes rioters as "thousands of fellow insurrectionists", and another claims that the person carrying the confederate flag matches the profile of several million Americans" that could make up "1% of the total population", who has characteristics like "military background", "inclination towards insurrection", "QAnon conspiracy theorist", and "gun owning"-, Moreover, inefficiency of law enforcement towards these groups is also implied, for in a piece it suggests the FBI will begin the interrogations in mid-2022.

Another piece, directly implicates a Republican representative (Matt Gaetz) of helping and/or favouring white supremacist groups, the piece covers a story, Gaetz having to open his home to white supremacists who can't find any accommodation because of the Capitol riots, in the piece it is revealed that Gaetz offered his home way before the Capitol riots, implying a long standing relationship between the representative and the extremist group, especially on their agreements on anti-immigration. This is somehow not far from reality, Republican representative Josh Hawley, directly saluted the rioters during the riot (Pengelly, 2022), Gaetz himself actually invited a holocaust denier to the US State of the Union (The Guardian, 2018).

Interestingly, The Onion's presentation of lawyers volunteering to work for the rioters, shows stereotypical sketchy lawyers, not only does it draws the pictures of a lawyer equal to the rioters' images, but also the lawyer's "sketchiness" also parallels their proposed defence of the Capitol riots are expression of self and included in the

protections regarding freedom of speech. Interestingly, the founder of a banned app? that rioters were planning to meet on Jan 6 viewed the ban as an attack towards freedom of speech (Nicas and Alba, 2021).

5.2.6. The Onion's Coverage of the Inauguration of Joe Biden

Table 12. The Onion's Coverage of Inauguration of Joe Biden

Headlines Of The Onion's Pieces (Inauguration of Joe Biden)
Secret Service Agent Heroically Dives In Front Of Strong Breeze That Could Have Killed Biden (O41).
'Look, He Came After All!' Says Inauguration Guest Spotting Trump Crouching With Rifle On Nearby Roof (O42).
National Guard Returns To Endless Sleep Under Mount Rushmore Until Nation Calls Upon Them Again (O33).
D.C. Police Preemptively Deploy 3 Officers For Inauguration Day (O39).
Panicked National Guard Troops Shoot Down Military Flyover (O34).
Airbnb Blocks All D.C. Bookings Ahead Of Inauguration (O40).

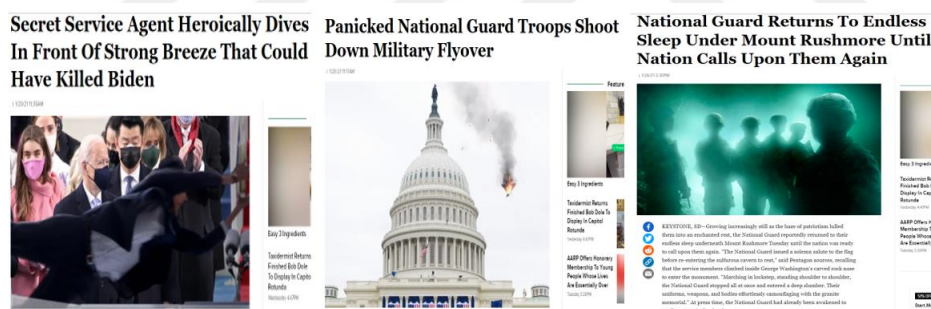


Figure 33. The Onion's Coverage of Inauguration of Joe Biden.(Source: (Left to right) The Onion 2021e ;2021c; 2021a)

Happening after the Capitol riots, the inauguration was tense, twenty one thousand troops of the National Guard were deployed to Washington D.C to maintain security (National Guard, 2021), although the National Guard are responsible for the safety and security of the inauguration, this is indeed unusual. The edited picture of a plane shot down and the image of national guardsmen presented with halos suggests an almost transcendental, almost mystical, entity rather than a branch of the government could

be argued to suggest a representation of the armed forces as an omnipotent protector of the nation.

Another focus of Biden’s inauguration was Biden himself, the piece focuses on the possible health issues Biden may face due to his age, this is underlined by an exaggerated response from the Secret Service. The only piece that shows Trump’s reaction to the inauguration depicts Trump attempting to assassinate Biden, not only Trump attempts to assassinate Biden but a guest interprets the assassination attempt as Trump finally accepting the defeat.

5.2.7. The Onion’s Coverage of Trump Voters

Table 13. The Onion’s Coverage of Trump Voters

<u>Headlines Of The Onion’s Pieces (Trump Voters)</u>
Nation’s Most Insane-Looking Lawyers Enthusiastically Volunteer Services To Trump Rioters (O32).
FBI Narrows Down Identity Of Red-Faced Man Carrying Confederate Flag Through Capitol To Millions Of Americans (O37).
Trump Supporter Excited To Finally Disengage With Politics After Government Overthrow Finished (O31).
D.C. Police Lose Control Of Rioting Trump Supporters After Hundreds Of Officers Called Away To Deal With Black Jaywalker (O30).
Conservatives Outraged After Finding Hundreds Of Votes For Trump Spray-Painted On Jewish Graves (O11).
Trump Files Lawsuit in Pennsylvania Alleging Election Officials Totally Disregarding His Feelings (O7).
Josh Hawley Condemns Pro-Trump Rioters For Upstaging His Own Theatrics (O29).
Report: 70% Of Republicans Believe Election Hasn’t Happened Yet (O16).
Pro-Trump Rioter Trying To Figure Out What To Do With Looted Devin Nunes (O26).
Matt Gaetz Forced To Host Hundreds Of White Nationalists After Airbnb Pulls D.C. Listings (O43).
Trump Rioter Knocks On Senate Door To Ask About Retrieving Left-Behind Car Keys (O38).
Conspiracy Theorist Worried His Credibility Undermined By Trump Retweeting Him (O13).

Although there are some pieces that cover Trump supporters before the Capitol riots, the pieces that do use words such as “angry mob” and “American Patriots”, the latter is told by Ted Cruz in an article and these definitions already draw a nationalistic crowd that is capable of violence. The most neutral term that defines for Trump voters

are “Republicans”, in its context referred ‘Republicans’ do not belie the election has not happened yet, showing a large alignment (70%) between Republican voters and Trump supporters.

The pieces covering the capitol riots, define Trump supporters with words such as: “Trump Rioters”, “Trump supporters”, “Rioting Trump supporters”, “Pro-Trump rioters”, “mob”, “most ardent supporters”, “insurrectionists”. The groups within the riots were described as “White nationalists”, “Conspiracy theorists”, “Proud Boys”, “militia members”, and “boogaloo extremists”.

Arguably this connects Trump’s rhetoric with the riot or insurrection for being a Trump supporter is underlined in these pieces. Within the scanned pieces, only four images represent Trump voters, similar to Zaytung, there is no imagery depicting the voter profile of Joe Biden supporters or any candidate of the Democratic Party. A base that is broader than Trump supporters only appears in the survey piece of The Onion.

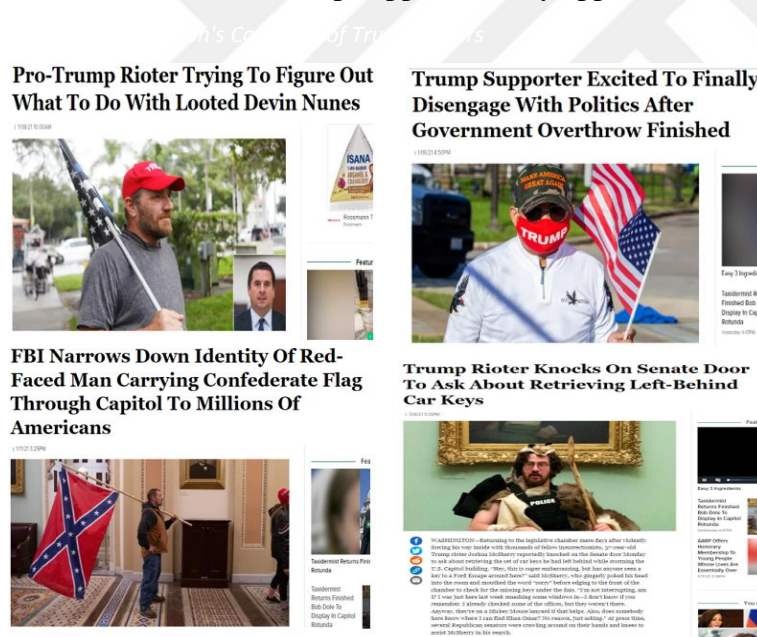


Figure 34. The Onion's Coverage of Trump Voters. (Source: (Clockwise from upper right) The Onion 2021p; 2021j ;2021h ;2021i)

A common trait is that the individuals in these images, attempt to appear strong and proud, they are waving and carrying flags, signifying their support for Trump and the

military by visual means. This portrayal of Trump voters is accurate in a way that by their account of the story, they were attempting to bring justice to an “unjust” election. Pictures depicting Trump supporters/rioters have these in common.

A support of military and police as a show of “patriotism”, I argue that nationalism is a better description, however, the Trump administration used the word “patriot” for nationalist values. In the pictures we see a guy wearing a military styled vest with “police” written on the front of it, in another picture a man seems to hold a “Thin Blue Line⁵³” flag, the flag was one of the responses to the “Black Lives Matter” movement, the flag also signifies white supremacy values, for which it was banned even in a police station (Griffith, 2021). In another picture there seems to be a man wearing a camouflage baseball hat with Trump’s famous “Make America Great Again” slogan written on the front of it.

It is worthy of mentioning that, this support for military and law enforcement is more of a reactionary support, considering that rioters actually attacked and harmed police officers. Law enforcement is only supported as a protector of conservative/Trump values. With this reasoning, addition of a medical mask with Trump’s name on it, a red baseball cap with white writing on it (possibly Donald Trump) and Trump’s famous slogan is further proof that the patriotic signals based on supporting armed forces are not a belief in the armed forces itself but a belief in the armed forces as a protector of the status quo.

The picture of the individual who brought a confederate flag to the riots is sensible in this regard, for Trump himself was vaguely flirtatious with white supremacist groups himself. Combined with the “Thin Blue Line” flag and another piece of The Onion that depicts the real life event of Trump supporters defacing the gravestones of a Michigan Jewish cemetery with words like “MAGA⁵⁴” or “Trump”, it is certain to say

⁵⁴ Acronym for Make America Great Again

that rioters and Trump voters are represented as an aggressive group that can lean toward, support or overlook antisemitism and white supremacy⁵⁵.

Another part of this representation is that all depicted voters are white male, more importantly adding the “military and police” attire that I mentioned earlier, I argue that the depicted people attempt to look masculine, especially the individual who is wearing an animal fur cap on top of his head (who resembles the famous Qanon shaman of the riots (BBC News, 2021a).

The Onion has a section called “American Voices” in which three fictional characters respond to a news piece. Similar to Zaytung, The Onion uses a combination of six images that represent three different characters for different stories.

Different from Zaytung, all the photographs are presented within a narrow frame in a public setting which, compared to Zaytung, offer a more constrictive image for the reader. Whilst the professions of the attendees shows a slight hierarchy, similar to the Zaytung pieces, the similarity of the images to each other disable a hierarchical sorting of the characters. Furthermore, answers given by the characters do not show a strong hierarchy.

An important common point is, although the depicted voters are definitely given in their relation to Donald Trump, however, Trump supporters are represented as active participants, they are not a manipulated, passive crowd, there are instances in which they are acting on their own will, such as “looting Devin Nunes” or completing a planned “government overthrow”, they are depicted as groups, that are aligned and/or incited by Donald Trump.

5.3. Evaluation

Although, Zaytung and The Onion’s works could be viewed as the “militant irony”. The reader can see the ironic intent and intended meaning, however, it is a focused and aggressive irony, although satirical works does call for a focused and ‘aggressive’ practice of irony, Zaytung’s practice is arguably a bit more aggressive. This is

⁵⁵ The term “White Nationalism” has also been used for Trump and his voters however I seemed fit to use “White Supremacy” as a broader term.

somewhat expected for expressing the dissidents anger is a part of Zaytung's practice acknowledged by Zaytung.

In some cases, the aggressive attitude is justified. For example, "Pro-AKP media got its first results of the seeds of the hatred they sow states: "This one is a bit ugly, you'll have to make do..." (Appendix A, Z25), in this case an aggressive approach is justified because the piece describes the individual that physically assaulted Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.

However, the aggressive approach can be somewhat excessive, in "An announcement states, a week of rest will be given to Soylu for he was tasked with "dealing with the most idiotic part of the voters..." (Appendix A, Z67). In the following sections I will argue Zaytung's representation of voters, however, this piece uses the word "idiot" to describe voters, this is problematic for it very well has the potential to undermine the constructive effect of the humour, how can a platform be charming to the other if it very well insults the other, I shared my worries with Zaytung, who in their response stated:

We do not directly use these definitions for the voters. Our issue is often with the trolls who are paid to manipulate ordinary citizens. And yes, in some situations we do reflect our anger to such establishments with harsh statements (Personal Interview with Murat Dural, 06/04/2022).

In this regard, Zaytung's intention of respecting the voters is somewhat sincere for two reasons, firstly, demeaning words are almost non-existent in Zaytung's coverage of the elections, second, as stated Zaytung receives and publishes submissions from their user base and this piece could simply be a slip-up. However, Zaytung's coverage of AKP voters tends to portray them as passive participants, a manipulated mass and although it is acceptable that Zaytung bares no ill will towards AKP voters, it represents the frustration felt by citizens in its coverage.

Although I wouldn't argue that Zaytung does not offer healing and unity, however some of its content lacks unity and healing. I would argue that, the nature of Zaytung

that expresses the dissident anger could prevent an anti-polarisation attitude in an environment that already promotes polarization.

In this regard, Zaytung's irony, is similar to Hutcheon's definition of a "homogeneous discursive community", remembering Hutcheon's classroom example, a classroom of children could understand and utilize irony, however, as they produce a somewhat homogenous community, their sense of irony –or humour- is more likely to be understood and shared by fellow children whilst confusing teachers or adults. Considering that dissidents or progressives make up an important part of Zaytung's audience, it indeed shows a resemblance to Hutcheon's classroom example. Or in other words, the "ambiguity" is not often present or heavy in Zaytung's irony for it uses a very direct approach.

Although I would suggest that Zaytung's parody destabilizes the mainstream political discourse, it is debatable to classify Zaytung as a postmodern parody in Hutcheon's terms. Zaytung definitely provides an alternative to the 'official' narrative of the AKP government however the 'alternative' provided by Zaytung often does not question or challenge dissident thought, however, this question could only be meaningfully answered in a post-AKP era.

Zaytung is indeed satire as parody of a specific target, although I agree that Zaytung does destabilize the discourse of the current government, however, I am hesitant to argue that Zaytung shows a satire that invites the satiree to a discussion however this notion should be revisited in a post-AKP era.

Some of The Onion's irony fits well into Booth's conceptualizations. For example, even when we read the headline "U.S. Praises Bolivian Leaders for Eliminating Voter Fraud by Refusing to Hold Elections" (Appendix A, O12), it is not only the logical impossibility but the moral impossibility of accepting the literal meaning, the reader is compelled to reject the idea that refusing to hold elections is worth praising.

Moreover, The Onion's irony, at least, has moments that breaks a "homogeneous discursive community", for example, the very case of Cüneyt Arkın would be a

reference that is unfamiliar to most readers, for the piece's intention was to challenge the readers US centrism.

“Conservatives Outraged After Finding Hundreds of Votes for Trump Spray-Painted on Jewish Graves” (Appendix A, O11) shows a rare method of incongruity, instead of bringing down a group or authority with vulgarity or violence, this headline shows a benchmark reaction of any group or community to such a despicable action, and in this case the incongruity arises from the lack of decent reaction from the conservative community.

The Onion fulfils a more popular tradition of parody; on which it does reproduce a style in an already imitated framework. For example, The Onion has Ted Cruz as its main character and within that piece, a conservative discourse is parodied by twisting the love for the leader in a statement such as “I call on all American patriots to submit to the will of my insectile servants and ensure Donald Trump retains his rightful place as President of the United States” (Appendix A, O8). This statement shows the love and adoration of Ted Cruz towards Donald Trump, a political figure who insulted his wife and mocked him by comparing him to the Zodiac killer.

However, on discussing The Onion on postmodern parody, in a sense of offering an alternative to the accepted could be challenging, for example, The Onion piece “D.C. Police Lose Control of Rioting Trump Supporters After Hundreds of Officers Called Away to Deal with Black Jaywalker” (Appendix A, O30) portrays the racist attitude of police towards black people. However, although denial of systematic racism is still common, but saying police are racist may not be an alternative. However, it can be argued that The Onion does challenge its readers.

I would suggest that The Onion and Zaytung should be classified as text of discursive integration for three reason. First of all, The Onion mixes the deadpan Associated Press style with a fictional one. Second, as mentioned there is indeed a study, analysing the language of The Onion and it concludes that The Onion indeed uses a journalistic language and a fictional one in a thorough study. And lastly, there have been and will be instances of people and authorities taking The Onion as factual despite its popularity

whereas other people who understand the joke will laugh at it. Considering that Zaytung's pieces were also taken as factual, the aesthetics' role within satirical pieces may be questioned for Zaytung's visual imitation is inferior to many satirical outlets.

Arguably, Zaytung pieces fulfil the ground characteristic for carnivalesque, "free and familiar contact amongst people" in two manners. First, politicians and powerful figures/institutions are stripped of their formality or presented in a way that their formality becomes a deformity, second, the reader could comment and/or share the piece that mocks the politician.

"Breaking News! AK Party Speaker: "Compulsorily, we will continue to fight with our own shit until the economy gets better" (Appendix A, Z60)

In the example above, presentation of the AK Party Speaker strips him from the protection of his title and formality that a common person could communicate with, in addition, the presented piece and others shows examples of profanity (such as the word "shit") as well.

Interestingly, Zaytung could be argued to be performative in a carnivalesque way for it has a participating user base that reacts to the latest happenings in the country and the world. If the people of the past were to have a specific time and place in a year to react to the power more freely then indeed users of Zaytung have a specific time and place in their days to react to politics more freely.

However, I have hesitations to define Zaytung pieces as carnivalesque texts. Some texts do fall short on eccentricity or *mésallances*, moreover, although it does provide a familiar contact amongst people, Zaytung texts are sometimes more ideologically present that breaks the performative nature of carnivalesque. Interestingly, on this regard Zaytung may be defined as 'Cold Carnival' as Eco describes the humorous carnival.

I am somewhat hesitant to suggest The Onion as a carnivalesque text; my main concern is that the communication for there is no interactivity other than comments or retweets.

However, The Onion's texts do provide a familiar contact for the reader and the characters are on the same ground. Not all of The Onion's texts are fulfilling carnivalesque categories, nor should they. An important category is the free and familiar contact and The Onion's texts do provide free and familiar contact.

On a critical perspective, I would argue that Zaytung does not monetize progressive angst, not because it does not intend to, but because, the opposing content is more limited to monetize, despite the fact that Zaytung has a somewhat aggressive marketing approach, it is debatable if it successfully monetizes the opposition for there is no data that argue a notable financial growth and there is no corporate takeover to Zaytung. If the opposition was marketable in Turkey, there would be a corporate takeover of the oppositional media.

It is not possible to suggest that Zaytung or any other satirical outlets undermining the public resistance for public protests and even minor dissent is discouraged if not punished in Turkey, considering that Sedat Peker's videos have not stirred public protest, it would be unrealistic to expect Zaytung's content to garner or encourage protest.

The Onion is a publication that meaningfully criticizes the powerful, informs and challenges the ordinary person's pre-existing opinions. However, it should not be ignored that not only was The Onion able to grow financially but also there have been cases that The Onion provides more US-centric opinions.

The Onion is an outlet that could destabilize the discourse of the powerful. However, this also cements Zaytung as a media institution, a financial asset. Although, The Onion's content is insightful, it is produced in an environment that commodifies dissent. Moreover, The Onion's content is distributed in an environment that is grimly polarised and could lose its insight or subversion through the distribution.

It is important to notice that neither the Capitol riots nor the re-election of the Istanbul elections were events that inspired national unity, quite the opposite, these events were the result of polarizing politics and it was followed by further polarization within

society, in other words ‘hugging’ didn’t go up. And it would be unrealistic to expect a unifying discourse like we observed in The Onion’s HFS issue.

Moreover, although it is unrealistic to expect a unifying discourse, it is important to discuss the reactions of these publications for their reflexes indeed show the effects of populist discourse within their societies.

One aspect must be repeated. Although both are populist leaders, there are noticeable differences between the leadership of Trump and Erdogan, firstly, while Erdogan has been a political figure for decades, Trump did not have a prominent political career. Secondly, whereas, being an anti- establishment politician was Donald Trump’s campaign premise, it is still up to debate if Erdogan was an anti or pro-establishment figure.

Looking at Zaytung, in the overall scan of the elections, the coverage of the opposition figures or parties is observably low. This is peculiar for a unification or an inverted populism was the strategy of the opposition. The Onion shows a similarity on this regard as well.

The opposition’s policies and strategies are hard to observe in Zaytung’s coverage. Moreover, whilst Zaytung indeed draws from the shared experiences of the opposition politics, two things should be noted, especially for future research, first is Zaytung arguably refers to a more mainstream channel of opposition, as mentioned issues regarding Kurds or HDP (a party that gets 8-12% of the total votes) are almost non-existent in Zaytung’s coverage, even if it is not an editorial decision, it proves a gap between mainstream opposition and ethnic minorities. Secondly, although somewhat justified, Zaytung projects a damaged sense of trust towards social and governmental institutions.

There are pieces on other time periods that cover the issues of HDP and Kurds during different time periods, that criticize the Turkish political movement’s reaction to HDP. My argument is not that Zaytung intentionally ignores Kurds or any sort of minority on purpose. However, there are factors that would limit its coverage of minorities,

firstly, the issues experienced by minorities indeed get less attention in mainstream media and even on social media of which Zaytung reflects⁵⁶, moreover at least its readers⁵⁷ or its amateur writer base that submits stories and pieces to be moderated and published may not be interested in issues faced by minorities, for example some pieces in Zaytung point to sexism and violence against woman, however, although uncommon, there are pieces that point to a sexist portrayal of women's issues. And lastly, critical coverage of minority politics, especially Kurdish politics could be met with a charge of 'spreading terrorist propaganda'⁵⁸.

For the second point, it should be noted that Turkey has experienced ground shaking events. In the last 6 years, Turkey has experienced a coup attempt, was targeted by ISIS, started hosting a massive population of immigrants, and experienced and continues to experience economic and political crisis. Even the short cycle of 2019 elections were accompanied by several scandals.

It is expected for anyone living in Turkey to develop a distrust of people and institutions that they normally trust, thus Zaytung's pessimism is understandable. However, arguably this at least could undermine Zaytung's humour, for it could prevent Zaytung from drawing an insightful picture.

Recalling Zaytung's piece, claiming that the USA is importing Turkish Politics, Zaytung exemplifies Erdogan's change of attitude in the raid of Mavi Marmara. This example is useful for it shows a changing Erdogan with an example that also resonates within the conservative community. Or the piece regarding the judiciary employing artificial intelligence in order to 'eliminate human error' that slows down AKP's actions is insightful on demonstrating the eradication of the judiciary's independence during the AKP era.

⁵⁶ In order for Zaytung to mimic news, such topic should be news.

⁵⁷ This could be viewed under a polarized media structure, at least for the US media, it is suggested that media companies have an incentive to support their reader's views for the role of ad revenue has decreased, increasing the role of subscription on their finances.

⁵⁸ As of writing this, journalist Abdurrahman Gök has been sentenced for 'Spreading terrorist propaganda', based on his photograph documenting police violence towards a Kurdish man (Taştekin, 2022)

However, some pieces are not as insightful as expected, for example “Breaking News! Sadi Güven: “People, AK Party is not my client, it is my boss”” (Appendix A, Z18) or “A glorious resignation from the Head of YSK Sadi Güven” (Appendix A, Z2) for these pieces are direct and leave little room for discussion, moreover, expectedly themes of corruption and lack of institutional independence are often underlined, again this underlying has a factual background however at least in some cases it works more on authenticating the pre-existing attitude of the reader rather than provoking an insightful discussion. A reader, who already knows and believes the government institutions are subservient to Erdogan, could read a Zaytung piece, laugh at the joke, only to be more motivated on his or her disdain.

It should be noted that, mockery is still an important part of news satire, be it Zaytung and The Onion, however, there are instances where mockery lacks any substance other than mockery.

Especially in Zaytung’s case, this coverage could be hard to define for a cynical and a realistic coverage are hard to distinguish especially when the political climate is indeed a dire one.

Another question is if this differences of coverage implies an internal pluralism on Zaytung’s part. I would argue that in some cases Zaytung, indeed has internal pluralism for a lot of topics are covered in different perspectives. However, this also creates a need for well thought moderation, for, exceeding the internal pluralism, Zaytung does end up producing a regressive content that enforces the current status quo, which undermines the rights of a certain group, this is indeed noticed by Sümeyra Güneş as well. Moreover, content covering the protected groups (ethnic or religious minorities, people with disabilities, etc) could end up utilizing satire as a shield that covers the satirist and undermines the people’s rights.

For The Onion’s case, I actually asked them to compare their coverage of 9/11 and the Capitol riots, they replied:

The Onion has always had a side that's concerned with processing traumatic national events and crystallizing the confusion and turmoil that many

Americans feel in their wake, often in a way we've been glad to hear readers find comforting or healing. In the case of 9/11, there was a near-universal sense of mourning and shock that arose across the country, and I think that was strongly reflected in many of the headlines that we published in the days and weeks following the attacks. Although the capitol riots called for a similar need to process a shocking event, the deep division in the country's response to it—and the lack of a universally agreed-upon narrative even in the immediate aftermath—required us to tweak our coverage. More of what you'll see in those headlines is focused on satirizing the schizophrenic way the United States has responded to the insurrection, how politicians spinned the event for personal gain, and the way these dueling national narratives often made Congressional responses to the attacks seem ineffectual and aimless. Is that healing? I think in the sense that it's comforting to hear the truth being told. But I don't think it's quite serving the same function (Personal Interview with Mike Gillis, 12/04/2022).

My view of The Onion's pieces aligns with their response; The Onion provides pieces that are insightful. For example, one of their pieces suggests the hardships of depolarisation in "Media Condemns Biden for Baseless Claim that Nation Will Come Together Once Election Over" (Appendix A, O25). The text points that unity "has never happened in 244 years" suggesting an already broken fabric.

The Onion compared to Zaytung, comprises a larger opposition, the selected pieces indeed cover anti-Semitism, police racism and white supremacy. Although these issues are attributed to Trump supporters and the Republican Party, The Onion's coverage accepts and discusses such issues.

In comparison, when Zaytung focuses on Erdogan's statement calling HDP voters terrorists, there is no focus on Kurds and Kurdish political movement being easily classified as terrorism, Zaytung on this case focuses on the divisiveness of Erdogan. To reiterate again, it is more likely that Zaytung tends to focus on AKP and Erdogan's polarizing populism than Zaytung intentionally ignoring Kurds, the coverage. As mentioned, there are indeed pieces which cover HDP in Zaytung, however, it is likely

for Zaytung writers to avoid the Kurdish or minority politics for legal or political reasons.

Moreover, The Onion is arguably critical of the Democratic party and the opposition as well, mentioned piece discusses the reality of Biden's promise, 'Building Back Better', another piece covers Biden's age, although not a political or ideological issue, The Onion presents a problem with President Biden, moreover The Onion presented critical pieces of Biden's administration, on issues such as the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, gun control, mass shootings, overturning of Roe vs Wade and immigration.

However, similar to Zaytung, The Onion has pieces that are more focused on confirming its reader's views and mock dislikeable political figures. Recalling The Onion pieces such as:

"Trump Knocks Self Out After Running Headfirst into Vote-Counting Facility Glass Doors" (Appendix A, O6), "Rueful Trump Wishes He Knew Republicans This Willing To Overthrow Democracy Earlier In Term" (Appendix A, O25) and "Pro-Trump Rioter Trying to Figure Out What To Do With Looted Devin Nunes" (Appendix A, O26)

There is a substance in these pieces as well, however, there is a missed substance substituted with mockery, as I will reiterate later, the mockery is still an important part of news satire's function. However, just as in the case of Zaytung, there are scenarios in which there is a trade-off between substance and mockery.

Perhaps it is useful to recall that, neither Zaytung nor The Onion are above the trends in media by virtue of being satirical. The media structure is increasingly polarized, there are instances of journalists heavily criticized for having a good faith discussion with opposing media institutions (Taibbi, 2019).

Even when there are instances where Zaytung and The Onion produce content that questions the polarized structure, which is not exactly visible in the short frame of

elections, what is visible during the short frame is perhaps the effect of the polarized atmosphere.

As I mentioned, there is a tendency of Zaytung's representation of Erdogan voters that views them as a manipulated mass. And although there is definitely a large propaganda power used tirelessly by the Erdogan administration and as Zaytung stated in the questionnaire, it aims to target these propaganda channels. However, this representation, although somewhat justified, shows the chilling effect of populist policies that are almost combined with an almost traditional interpersonal distrust within Turkish society.

In that regard, The Onion's representation shows voters that are active participants who are incited by the Trump administration. Again, there is also a great power of political propaganda within the United States, and as a result groups like "white nationalists" are presented as a group with their own ideology that aligns with Trump⁵⁹. It is arguable that The Onion's representation focuses on the extremist groups within Trump's voter base, however, this is also because Trump supporters are very visible on The Onion's depiction.

An important missing factor is the oppositional voters, supporters of Biden or voters for İmamoğlu, Yavaş or Kılıçdaroğlu, arguably an almost onesided representation escalates the representation for Erdogan or Trump voters and possibly polarizes the groups. This is not because Zaytung or The Onion provides factually false information. Trump supporters did storm the US Capitol in hopes of 'stopping the steal' and AKP supporters did indeed storm a polling station. However, intentional or unintentional the coverage is focused on the extremists, and this falls in line with the trends in polarized mainstream media that show the most extreme in a political group.

This approach on voters could also be stated for political figures or parties, Zaytung and The Onion draw a factually correct picture, that references actual events, however just like the voters it is also more focused on government figures. Part of this disparity

⁵⁹ For example, upon revealing he received Covid-19 booster, the crowd booed Trump in his political rally (Merica, 2022), like of which cannot happen between Erdogan and AKP voters

is expected for the actions of Erdogan and Trump administration were dominant and shocking in their countries. However, although Zaytung and The Onion discuss the depolarization premise of the opposition, I argue, as The Onion itself also acknowledges, the polarized structure undermines any attempt of these publications attempts of healing.

Another issue to discuss, is to challenge if Zaytung and The Onion functions as an “authorized transgression”.

Defining Zaytung as an “authorized transgression” is difficult for not only Zaytung has not been sued by any government agency, my research has shown no lawsuit or censor towards any news satire websites, moreover, to this day Zaytung continues to receive sponsored content deals from brands such as Disney, A101, Paribu, Banvit, etc., it’s possible that Erdogan or AKP officials do not view Zaytung as a political threat or a force that challenges their legitimacy.

However, not only was a Turkish student sued by the Governor of Adana over her retweet of Zaytung, suggesting it is seen as insulting content. Moreover, in 2016 the Erdogan administration pressured Germany to prosecute a comedian over a poem (Oltermann, 2016) and as of writing this thesis, the websites Deutsche Welle and Voice of America were banned (Le Monde, 2022). Therefore, it is arguable that comedy is very well offensive to the Erdogan administration and banning international news websites is practiced.

My understanding is reactions to the comedic content are mostly performative actions rather than ideological ones. Arguably, reacting to Zaytung, could be perceived as a micro-management, creating a ‘catch-22’ as Güneş argued, in addition to that government-controlled trolls could very well harass such websites as well.

However, regardless of AKP’s or Erdogan’s approach, Zaytung fulfils an important function, for journalist rights and freedom of speech are restricted almost day by day, Zaytung’s content does function as a destabilizing force although a problematic one.

The Onion's case might be a tad more complicated. The Onion has shown enormous growth over the years, visitors, clicks and annual earnings show an increasing trend and moreover The Onion is owned by G/O Media, a company that owns several successful websites.

However, I wouldn't be sure on defining The Onion as an authorized transgression for they are owned by a corporation, although I would agree with Holland's and Levy's comment that The Onion showing US-centrism in its coverage, I would also suggest that The Onion's coverage, especially coverage of 2020 Elections, questions and delegitimizes the actions of Trump and Trump supporters after they lost the election. I would suggest that it is possible for The Onion to present articles that are US-centric and may employ self-censorship on certain coverages. However, as Holland and Levy also notice, it would be too unrealistic to define The Onion as a money seeking machine that sells opposition., The Onion produces articles that are insightful, inform or challenge their readers.

Returning back to mockery, although it could risk the substance of a piece, I would argue that mockery is an important tool for Zaytung and The Onion, especially under populist authoritarian regimes. Sümeýra Güneş's suggestion of jokes mocking the powerful creating a 'catch-22' is valid in authoritarian regimes.

In my last remarks, I should point out some important context, especially on situating Zaytung as a dissident publication. I argue that a defining test for Zaytung would be the post-Erdogan or post-AKP era, for opposition to AKP is much influential on Zaytung's coverage, however Zaytung's position of opposition is most likely to be tested.

The Onion has covered the politics of six US presidents⁶⁰ since its inception in 1989 and arguably The Onion's stance is less likely to be changed by a new administration in the White House.

⁶⁰ It could argued to be 5 presidents as well, for its website was a milestone on its popularity.

I would argue that Zaytung's stance would not differ on some topics, such as women's rights, political Islam, and laicism. However, Zaytung's reaction to new government's policies especially regarding mass immigration and the state of polarization within society is to be observed.



CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In 1965, Duke Ellington released his album entitled “Will Big Bands Ever Come Back?”. The album expresses Ellington’s yearning for the era of orchestral jazz music. In Ellington’s case, not only the change from the orchestral bands to small trios or quartets is tangible and one easily can argue the superiority or inferiority of an orchestral band era.

In the case of media institutions, there is no time period to go back to, no time period could be argued to be good enough to be a benchmark for today’s media. Whilst it is easy to fall prey to the nostalgia of yesteryears when we are sick of today, in media there can only be tomorrow.

The reason I criticize a nostalgic view of the past is that, today’s media could evoke the feelings of distrust, helplessness and even contempt. For citizens can observe an event online, and compare and criticize the media coverage⁶¹.

Moreover, this distrust and longing for a ‘safer’ period is dangerous, or to be more specific, an unspecified anger towards media is dangerous for it may help authoritarian leaders to further de-legitimize democratic institutions and legitimize undemocratic practices.

In this light the role of political humour, in this case news satire, should be inspected. For they could de-legitimize a despot administration/leader just like in the children’s tale of “The Emperor’s New Clothes” which has shown the premise of such practices. Moreover, they could inform their readers on important matters regarding society and politics. This begs the question, what is the role of political humour in media?

Although such examples as The Onion’s 9/11 issue has been applauded as a healing piece of humour, one should remember that not only humourists themselves have political opinions, but also the work of the humourist is published in an extremely polarized environment.

⁶¹ Ranging from Capitol Riots to the Depp v Heard trial, citizens could clearly see a sensationalist and biased coverage of political and social events.

Especially Zaytung could be argued to show the trends and opinions in the mainstream opposition for its members mostly consist of common people from mainstream opposition. Thus, Zaytung could show the strengths and weaknesses of the mainstream opposition.

Although I still believe that comparing Zaytung's coverage of the 2019 elections and The Onion's coverage of the 2020 elections is a sufficient metric to evaluate how these publications could challenge the power for both of these elections were held with populist discourses and resulted in populist leaders trying to overturn a legitimate election. I also discovered that analyses on these publications would benefit from the analysis of a specific theme for such approach could include more diverse pieces that would produce challenging results.

Despite this, I found noteworthy results.

I believe that an important characteristic of Zaytung and The Onion's utilization of irony (or humour in general) would be that in their content tools like irony, parody or satire do not work as a shield that protects them from critics but a shield protecting them from the attacks that puts their existence or function in danger (for example: *Hustler Magazine v. Falwell* or Murray Energy's lawsuit against John Oliver).

Moreover, humour of these publications often target the powerful, but again their practice produce, at best, unintended results. Humour of these publications could unintentionally reinforce negative stereotypes and even polarizing beliefs.

Considering the "unintended results" it is challenging to view Zaytung or The Onion's content as examples of unifying irony. On the one hand, Zaytung and The Onion show the elitist approach for not only these publications focus on their political opponents but on the other hand, their lack of coverage of political opposition misses the chance to explain the oppositional views to people.

But again, to view these publications as "partisan hacks" would be an overkill for the authoritarian politicians are almost instinctive prey of humourists. Moreover,

humorous publications need to combat polarizing discourses as well as promoting the unifying discourse as well.

However, this disparity of coverage between oppositional politics and authoritarian politics may be different in different settings, for it is also understandable for publications to focus on criticizing the authoritarian politics in an election period.

Another issue would be the distribution, for the content of Zaytung and The Onion are shared in a politically polarized environment that may alter the worries about authoritarian or oppositional politics. A writer from The Onion has stated her concern about the possibility of The Onion articles being mistaken for factual (Meade 2017). Especially in Zaytung's case that could be more complicated for the pieces that are written by people experiencing political polarization.

A defining factor that changes the reception and meaning of Zaytung pieces from The Onion's would be free speech. The Onion's articles are distributed in an environment that not only protects free speech but also encourages the mockery of politicians. However, in Zaytung's case, the lack of free speech and discouragement of mockery makes Zaytung's content more challenging, even when it lacks substance.

And arguably, the rich environment of political humour creates a challenging environment for The Onion, which has to compete and produce insightful content.

A good criterion for testing the content of The Onion and Zaytung would be this question "Does The Onion and Zaytung challenge the framework of what is presented by mainstream media?"

My answer is "so-so". On the one hand Zaytung and The Onion suggest things that are mainstream and not even new, claims like: "white supremacist groups supports Trump", "Turkish judiciary is not independent", "Media is biased" could be observed in The Onion and Zaytung's coverage while these messages are nothing new to the audience. Especially Zaytung providing screenshots of other media channels would further suggest their role as commentators.

However, although they do repeat some popular talking points, it is also important to remember that some valid criticisms are also somewhat popular. For example, the chilling difference of Washington D.C. law enforcement's responses to Black Lives Matters protestors and Jan 6 rioters were somewhat a popular topic and was covered in The Onion as well and it does challenge the faith in the US law enforcement.

The same can be argued for Zaytung, it is common for dissidents to suggest that the Erdogan administration tends to create political disputes with foreign nations to strengthen their position in domestic matters. However, Zaytung's blog post not only shows the insincerity of the government but it also suggests what Erdogan is fighting against, and what values are worthy for him to fight against.

It is also worth mentioning that Zaytung and The Onion have content that actually challenges the mainstream narrative that is observable in different timeframes. Basic research could provide content that questions the opposition's practices and problems in society⁶².

If the question is changed from "What is the role of political humour in media?", to "what should the role of political humour be?" the response may be vague for a difference between a constructive (or objective) coverage and a pessimistic coverage of an alarming state of affairs.

How can any medium expect to be uniting, when a party of the discussion is deadset on eroding democratic values? Moreover, how realistic is it for a medium or a genre to rise above a polarised media environment?

It seems unrealistic to expect a lofty goal from an outlet or a genre, however, a helpful approach could be, similar to İmamoğlu's campaign, could be to focus on shared values of communities that is above the politics. Although it is easier said than done, shared values and experiences could heal and unite without giving space to the anti-democratic discourse.

⁶² For example, a quick search could retrieve Zaytung articles about the inefficiencies of the opposition parties or blatant aggression towards the HDP.

The Onion's 9/11 issue was able to do that for not only the United States experienced a nation-wide grief, that the value of hugging went up, or The Onion was able to suggest a story of healing without sounding like a PSA or not giving space to anti-democratic discourses. Although, such events that unite a nation are rare, values and shared experiences are there.

To reiterate, news satire (or political humour) in general, could develop strategies on being uniting without ignoring problematic issues, however, the success of such strategies would be in correlation with the overall inclinations in the media environment.

For future research, I believe the most essential analysis would be of Zaytung in the post-AKP era for that would compare Zaytung's current position to its position in a different environment, making suggestions about Zaytung's acceptance or refusal of the changes in the progressive movement, the government and its opposition.

Also, the post-AKP era would be interesting for Zaytung because of the possible implications of the new era on Zaytung's financial growth and proliferation of online political humour.

Moreover, I believe, comparisons or issue specific analysis of Zaytung and The Onion will definitely improve the literature regarding news satire. As observed, time specific research could develop misleading results, however, increased focus on critical issues could provide further insight on these publications political positions.

Returning back to Duke's album, the era of big bands has not made a significant come back but jazz music has progressed, and I can only hope that media institutions will continue to develop themselves as well.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Selected Articles From The Onion And Zaytung

Zaytung Articles

Z1

[Geçersiz oyların sayımında da bir türlü istenilen sonuca ulaşamayan YSK, seçimin bizzat evlere gidilip seçmenlere kime oy verdiklerinin sorulması sureti ile tekrarlanmasına karar verdi...](#)

<https://www.zaytung.com/fotohaberdetay.asp?newsid=357077>)

Z2

[YSK Başkanı Sadi Güven'den görkemli jübile...](#)

<http://www.zaytung.com/fotohaberdetay.asp?newsid=356678>)

Z3

[Sayılacak Sandık Sayısının 51'e Kadar Düşmesi Hükümeti Harekete Geçirdi: Yurt Dışından Dolu Oy Sandığı İthal Edilecek...](#)

<http://www.zaytung.com/haberdetay.asp?newsid=357391andmobile=2>)

Z4

[AK Parti'de, Ankara'daki geçersiz oylarla İstanbul'dakileri birleştirip en azından bir tanesini kurtarma fikri öne çıkıyor...](#)

<https://www.zaytung.com/fotohaberdetay.asp?newsid=357005>)

Z5

[Yargıda Yapay Zeka Dönemi: Sistem Anket Sonuçlarını Analiz Ederek AK Parti'ye Tehdit Oluşturan Adaylar İçin Otomatik Soruşturma Dosyası Hazırlayabiliyor...](#)

<https://www.zaytung.com/haberdetay.asp?newsid=355945>)

Z6

[AK Parti'den Seçmeni Yıldırma Hamlesi: "Bizim kazandığımız ilan edilene kadar her gün Ali İhsan Yavuz'un yüzünü görmek zorunda kalacaksınız..."](#)

<http://www.zaytung.com/haberdetay.asp?newsid=357257andmobile=2>)

Z7

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(<https://twitter.com/zaytung/status/1118915784586289152>)

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O10

5 Things To Know About Trump's Georgia Election Call

<https://www.theonion.com/5-things-to-know-about-trump-s-georgia-election-call-1846000032>

O11

Conservatives Outraged After Finding Hundreds Of Votes For Trump Spray-Painted On Jewish Graves

<https://www.theonion.com/conservatives-outraged-after-finding-hundreds-of-votes-1845587069>

O12

U.S. Praises Bolivian Leaders For Eliminating Voter Fraud By Refusing To Hold Elections

<https://www.theonion.com/u-s-praises-bolivian-leaders-for-eliminating-voter-fra-1844575086>

O13

Conspiracy Theorist Worried His Credibility Undermined By Trump Retweeting Him

<https://www.theonion.com/conspiracy-theorist-worried-his-credibility-undermined-1844919689>

O14

Brian Kemp Unveils Specially Trained Hogs That Can Root Out Voter Fraud

<https://www.theonion.com/brian-kemp-unveils-specially-trained-hogs-that-can-root-1845636113>

O15

Trump Claims Over 70 Million Biden Votes Came From People Who Should Be Dead

<https://www.theonion.com/trump-claims-over-70-million-biden-votes-came-from-peop-1845624160>

O16

Report: 70% Of Republicans Believe Election Hasn't Happened Yet

<https://www.theonion.com/report-70-of-republicans-believe-election-hasn-t-happ-1845634259>

O17

[I...I am the mainstream media', realizes horrified Tucker Carlson spiraling live on air](https://www.theonion.com/i-i-am-the-mainstream-media-realizes-horrified-tuc-1845646901)
(<https://www.theonion.com/i-i-am-the-mainstream-media-realizes-horrified-tuc-1845646901>)

O18

[Panicked Trump Agrees To Zoom Debate](https://www.theonion.com/panicked-trump-agrees-to-zoom-debate-1845587345)
(<https://www.theonion.com/panicked-trump-agrees-to-zoom-debate-1845587345>)

O19

[CNN Seamstresses Frantically Updating Results On Electoral Map Quilt](https://www.theonion.com/cnn-seamstresses-frantically-updating-results-on-electo-1845531150)
(<https://www.theonion.com/cnn-seamstresses-frantically-updating-results-on-electo-1845531150>)

O20

[Fox News Slams CNN For Providing Biden Each Question Seconds Before He Answered It](https://www.theonion.com/fox-news-slams-cnn-for-providing-biden-each-question-seconds-before-he-answered-it-1845108668)
(<https://www.theonion.com/fox-news-slams-cnn-for-providing-biden-each-question-seconds-before-he-answered-it-1845108668>)

O21

[Grizzled Trump Throws Off Poncho To Reveal Bandolier Of Microphones](https://www.theonion.com/grizzled-trump-throws-off-poncho-to-reveal-bandolier-of-microphones-1845456526)
(<https://www.theonion.com/grizzled-trump-throws-off-poncho-to-reveal-bandolier-of-1845456526>)

O22

[Trump Threatens To Leak Debate Video Online If Moderator Keeps Asking Unfair Questions](https://www.theonion.com/trump-threatens-to-leak-debate-video-online-if-moderator-keeps-asking-unfair-questions-1845455374)
(<https://www.theonion.com/trump-threatens-to-leak-debate-video-online-if-moderator-keeps-asking-unfair-questions-1845455374>)

O23

[Trump Storms Back Into Interview While Leslie Stahl Eating Lunch At Home](https://www.theonion.com/trump-storms-back-into-interview-while-leslie-stahl-eating-lunch-at-home-1845456212)
(<https://www.theonion.com/trump-storms-back-into-interview-while-leslie-stahl-eat-1845456212>)

O24

[InfoWars Offers Readers Guide To Staying Psychotic, Violent During Stressful Election Day](https://www.theonion.com/infowars-offers-readers-guide-to-staying-psychotic-violent-during-stressful-election-day-1845564617)
(<https://www.theonion.com/infowars-offers-readers-guide-to-staying-psychotic-vio-1845564617>)

O25

[Media Condemns Biden For Baseless Claim That Nation Will Come Together Once Election Over](https://www.theonion.com/media-condemns-biden-for-baseless-claim-that-nation-wil-1845596433)

<https://www.theonion.com/media-condemns-biden-for-baseless-claim-that-nation-wil-1845596433>

O26

[Pro-Trump Rioter Trying To Figure Out What To Do With Looted Devin Nunes](https://www.theonion.com/pro-trump-rioter-trying-to-figure-out-what-to-do-with-looted-devin-nunes-1846013837)

<https://www.theonion.com/pro-trump-rioter-trying-to-figure-out-what-to-do-with-looted-devin-nunes-1846013837>

O27

[Rueful Trump Wishes He Knew Republicans This Willing To Overthrow Democracy Earlier In Term](https://www.theonion.com/rueful-trump-wishes-he-knew-republicans-this-willing-to-overthrow-democracy-earlier-in-term-1845984905)

<https://www.theonion.com/rueful-trump-wishes-he-knew-republicans-this-willing-to-overthrow-democracy-earlier-in-term-1845984905>

O28

['This Apology Is Bullshit And I Am Lying To You,' Says GOP Senator To Widespread Media Praise](https://www.theonion.com/this-apology-is-bullshit-and-i-am-lying-to-you-says-gop-senator-to-widespread-media-praise-1846012923)

<https://www.theonion.com/this-apology-is-bullshit-and-i-am-lying-to-you-says-gop-senator-to-widespread-media-praise-1846012923>

O29

[Josh Hawley Condemns Pro-Trump Rioters For Upstaging His Own Theatrics](https://www.theonion.com/josh-hawley-condemns-pro-trump-rioters-for-upstaging-his-own-theatrics-1846010370)

<https://www.theonion.com/josh-hawley-condemns-pro-trump-rioters-for-upstaging-his-own-theatrics-1846010370>

O30

[D.C. Police Lose Control Of Rioting Trump Supporters After Hundreds Of Officers Called Away To Deal With Black Jaywalker](https://www.theonion.com/d-c-police-lose-control-of-rioting-trump-supporters-after-hundreds-of-officers-called-away-to-deal-with-black-jaywalker-1846002738)

<https://www.theonion.com/d-c-police-lose-control-of-rioting-trump-supporters-after-hundreds-of-officers-called-away-to-deal-with-black-jaywalker-1846002738>

O31

[Trump Supporter Excited To Finally Disengage With Politics After Government Overthrow Finished](https://www.theonion.com/trump-supporter-excited-to-finally-disengage-with-politics-after-government-overthrow-finished-1846003157)

<https://www.theonion.com/trump-supporter-excited-to-finally-disengage-with-politics-after-government-overthrow-finished-1846003157>

O32

[Nation's Most Insane-Looking Lawyers Enthusiastically Volunteer Services To Trump Rioters](https://www.theonion.com/nation-s-most-insane-looking-lawyers-enthusiastically-v-1846005115)

[https://www.theonion.com/nation-s-most-insane-looking-lawyers-enthusiastically-v-1846005115\)](https://www.theonion.com/nation-s-most-insane-looking-lawyers-enthusiastically-v-1846005115)

O33

[National Guard Returns To Endless Sleep Under Mount Rushmore Until Nation Calls Upon Them Again](https://www.theonion.com/national-guard-returns-to-endless-sleep-under-mount-rus-1846136599)

[https://www.theonion.com/national-guard-returns-to-endless-sleep-under-mount-rus-1846136599\)](https://www.theonion.com/national-guard-returns-to-endless-sleep-under-mount-rus-1846136599)

O34

[Panicked National Guard Troops Shoot Down Military Flyover](https://www.theonion.com/panicked-national-guard-troops-shoot-down-military-flyo-1846093633)

[https://www.theonion.com/panicked-national-guard-troops-shoot-down-military-flyo-1846093633\)](https://www.theonion.com/panicked-national-guard-troops-shoot-down-military-flyo-1846093633)

O35

[Timeline Of The January 6 Siege On The Capitol](https://www.theonion.com/timeline-of-the-january-6-siege-on-the-capitol-1846049061)

[https://www.theonion.com/timeline-of-the-january-6-siege-on-the-capitol-1846049061\)](https://www.theonion.com/timeline-of-the-january-6-siege-on-the-capitol-1846049061)

O36

[Eerily Silent Charmin Twitter Account Apparently Condone Attack On Capitol](https://www.theonion.com/erily-silent-charmin-twitter-account-apparently-condon-1846013997)

[https://www.theonion.com/erily-silent-charmin-twitter-account-apparently-condon-1846013997\)](https://www.theonion.com/erily-silent-charmin-twitter-account-apparently-condon-1846013997)

O37

[FBI Narrows Down Identity Of Red-Faced Man Carrying Confederate Flag Through Capitol To Millions Of Americans](https://www.theonion.com/fbi-narrows-down-identity-of-red-faced-man-carrying-con-1846036755)

[https://www.theonion.com/fbi-narrows-down-identity-of-red-faced-man-carrying-con-1846036755\)](https://www.theonion.com/fbi-narrows-down-identity-of-red-faced-man-carrying-con-1846036755)

O38

[Trump Rioter Knocks On Senate Door To Ask About Retrieving Left-Behind Car Keys](https://www.theonion.com/trump-rioter-knocks-on-senate-door-to-ask-about-retriev-1846022923)

[https://www.theonion.com/trump-rioter-knocks-on-senate-door-to-ask-about-retriev-1846022923\)](https://www.theonion.com/trump-rioter-knocks-on-senate-door-to-ask-about-retriev-1846022923)

O39

[D.C. Police Preemptively Deploy 3 Officers For Inauguration Day](https://www.theonion.com/d-c-police-preemptively-deploy-3-officers-for-inauguration-1846034736)

[\(https://www.theonion.com/d-c-police-preemptively-deploy-3-officers-for-inauguration-1846034736\)](https://www.theonion.com/d-c-police-preemptively-deploy-3-officers-for-inauguration-1846034736)

O40

[Airbnb Blocks All D.C. Bookings Ahead Of Inauguration](https://www.theonion.com/airbnb-blocks-all-d-c-bookings-ahead-of-inauguration-1846059961)

[\(https://www.theonion.com/airbnb-blocks-all-d-c-bookings-ahead-of-inauguration-1846059961\)](https://www.theonion.com/airbnb-blocks-all-d-c-bookings-ahead-of-inauguration-1846059961)

O41

[Secret Service Agent Heroically Dives In Front Of Strong Breeze That Could Have Killed Biden](https://www.theonion.com/secret-service-agent-heroically-dives-in-front-of-strong-breeze-that-could-have-killed-biden-1846088643)

[\(https://www.theonion.com/secret-service-agent-heroically-dives-in-front-of-strong-breeze-that-could-have-killed-biden-1846088643\)](https://www.theonion.com/secret-service-agent-heroically-dives-in-front-of-strong-breeze-that-could-have-killed-biden-1846088643)

O42

['Look, He Came After All!' Says Inauguration Guest Spotting Trump Crouching With Rifle On Nearby Roof](https://www.theonion.com/look-he-came-after-all-says-inauguration-guest-spotting-trump-crouching-with-rifle-on-nearby-roof-1846093082)

[\(https://www.theonion.com/look-he-came-after-all-says-inauguration-guest-spotting-trump-crouching-with-rifle-on-nearby-roof-1846093082\)](https://www.theonion.com/look-he-came-after-all-says-inauguration-guest-spotting-trump-crouching-with-rifle-on-nearby-roof-1846093082)

O43

[Matt Gaetz Forced To Host Hundreds Of White Nationalists After Airbnb Pulls D.C. Listings](https://www.theonion.com/matt-gaetz-forced-to-host-hundreds-of-white-nationalists-after-airbnb-pulls-d-c-listings-1846059413)

[\(https://www.theonion.com/matt-gaetz-forced-to-host-hundreds-of-white-nationalists-after-airbnb-pulls-d-c-listings-1846059413\)](https://www.theonion.com/matt-gaetz-forced-to-host-hundreds-of-white-nationalists-after-airbnb-pulls-d-c-listings-1846059413)

O44

History Of Demonstrations On The Capitol

<https://www.theonion.com/history-of-demonstrations-on-the-capitol-1846104632>

Appendix B – Interview Questions

The Onion

Question 1 – There seems to be different stories about the origins of The Onion's name (I found only 3 stories), is there a final clarification on this debate? And regardless of its origins, do you think that the name like The Onion is a disadvantage on its stories functions 1

There's no definitive story on our name's origin, unfortunately.

Question 2 – What qualifications do you need to be a writer in The Onion’s writer room? What do you think about the transition from mainstream media to The Onion and vice versa?

We rarely, if ever, accept candidates from mainstream media. The qualifications needed to write a good piece of satire—and particularly write one in The Onion’s distinct style—are a deep knowledge of our archives, a love for our voice, and a unique/creative perspective.

Question 3 – Does The Onion seek expert opinion on controversial or complex issues?

Not particularly. Our editorial staff fact-check and have lengthy discussions on complex issues in the writers’ room, and we’ll occasionally email experts when an answer isn’t clearly available.

Question 4 – If you were to compare the Daily Show or Last Week Tonight w/John Oliver and The Onion in terms of content and coverage, what would you say about the differences between them?

Every Onion story creates its own unique little universe. Whereas an episode of John Oliver or The Daily Show pitch a number of jokes on a particular topic—and operate as if they’re using jokes, similar to a stand-up routine—our headlines are contingent of the idea of “if this, then what?” They tweak some small part of the real world in a funny way and then pursue that ridiculous change as if it were the most serious thing in the world, using dry AP-News style and the overall newspaper format to help hammer home the seriousness of that idea.

Question 5 - Do you think that “realism” or “criticism” better describes the content and approach of The Onion?

I’m not sure I completely understand this question, but satire tends toward criticism, in the sense that it points out the world’s flaws or foibles. It’s also hopefully realistic in that it’s grounded in fact or contingent on popping a bubble of illusion created by ideology or ignorance.

Question 7 – Several attempts have been made to screen The Onion, the most successful being ONN, does the magazine consider a future attempt to be on TV or on Cinema?

Yes, we’d always love to take another crack at television. If you know anyone in Turkey looking to create an Onion Turkish Television series and willing to pay us an enormous amount of money to do so, we’d be happy to skewer Turkish politics.

Question 8 – During my research, I’ve found an Onion piece referring to Cüneyt Arkın (a famous Turkish actor), how would you explain The Onion’s reference to an actor that the American audience wouldn’t recognize? Is this a result of some experimentation, or did The Onion ever had plans to enter different markets in its past ?

No, this wasn’t part of our plan to dominate the Turkish market. The idea of that joke is that we’re using a common English phrase (“acting like he’s [insert famous person’s first name] fucking [insert famous person’s last name]”, e.g. “acting like he’s Tom fucking Hanks”) used to mock someone who’s getting a little too big for their britches, but using a famous Turkish actor who would be unrecognizable to

almost our entire audience. The fun of this idea is decentralizing the dominant narrative about, say, the United States being the epicenter of the cultural universe. In terms of Onions in other markets, most countries have very particular references and unique sense of humor that make porting over a comedy institution difficult—but never say never!

Question 10 – The Onion definitely does not accept fan submissions, however has there been any attempt to have section to include fan submitted stories moderated by The Onion?

Quoting from our official policy: “No, The Onion does not accept outside submissions of any kind. We will not respond to any unsolicited submissions.”

Question 11 – The Onion's first issue after 9/11 (Holy Fucking Shit: Attack on America) is still universally praised, and I personally love it, although as events they are not exactly comparable, how would you compare The Onion's coverage of the capitol riots compared to its 9/11 issue? Would you argue that The Onion does utilize a healing function of humour?

The Onion has always had a side that's concerned with processing traumatic national events and crystallizing the confusion and turmoil that many Americans feel in their wake, often in a way we've been glad to hear readers find comforting or healing. In the case of 9/11, there was a near-universal sense of mourning and shock that arose across the country, and I think that was strongly reflected in many of the headlines that we published in the days and weeks following the attacks. Although the capitol riots called for a similar need to process a shocking event, the deep division in the country's response to it—and the lack of a universally agreed-upon narrative even in the immediate aftermath—required us to tweak our coverage. More of what you'll see in those headlines is focused on satirizing the schizophrenic way the United States has responded to the insurrection, how politicians spinned the event for personal gain, and the way these dueling national narratives often made Congressional responses to the attacks seem ineffectual and aimless. Is that healing? I think in the sense that it's comforting to hear the truth being told. But I don't think it's quite serving the same function.

Zaytung

Question 1 – As acknowledged by Hakan Bilginer himself, Zaytung has a simple design, and whereas most news satire sites tries to create a realistic design by following the real news websites. Zaytung is an outlier, what is the reason of this?

Zaytung is a content oriented website. For example, the jokes or memes we see on Twitter, they have bad punctuation and low quality design. A good joke, does not need a makeover, and sometimes bad aesthetics and good humour can be in reverse correlation, our magazine covers also has bad design as an example. And our founding editor is procrastinating as well.

Question 2 – Can we say that Zaytung puts more weight onto its social media than its own website?

The content consists of a long content and several user-submitted short contents per day, this used to be 3 long contents and even more user-submitted short contents, I can say we were tired because of this. In addition, people began to not click to the contents that they do not see on social media. We consider our audiences' habits and thus our audience knows about our content on social media prior visiting our website.

Question 3 – A lot of news satire sites that began before and after Zaytung is inactive now. What makes Zaytung successful in comparison to its competitors?

Every humorous content is destined to be outdated, it is in its DNA, and people may be bored of the news as well. We have a lot of topics to cover in this country. Moreover, we feel like cheating to do our jobs in a place full of topics. Especially in its inception, Zaytung had rich, creative content that was out of the latest news, for this reason we had a longer run. Currently people who are angry to politics and can't express themselves can feel a relief with our content. But this doesn't mean people won't be bored of us as well.

Question 4 – The Onion has multiplied its value in the last two decades, has Zaytung shown a similar success? Had there been attempts made to purchase Zaytung?

At its foundation, Zaytung had been an impactful publication in advertising. Our editors worked for the bits in Beyaz Show, and produced humorous content for many companies and brands. Zaytung could have been a larger brand with a large editorial staff, and various publications. However, after the initial crew of editors left, Zaytung's financial growth had been limited.

Question 5 – Zaytung Store is currently inactive, and Zaytung Zone is limited to a single restaurant, can we argue that Zaytung is currently focuses on content marketing?

Related to question 4, yes

Question 6 – Has there been transfers from Zaytung’s crew to professional worlds? Does your staff add Zaytung to their CVs?

Yes, for example, Özer Uzun has published two books after its editorship, I, because of my experience in Zaytung, was able to move to advertising and was able to work in different brands like YouTube.

Question 7 – Has Zaytung considered options like Patreon or other alternative financings to content marketing?

Zaytung has no alternative financings, however, other than advertisements on its own website and its social media, Zaytung also produces content to different companies as an advertising agency.

Question 8 – Does the users gets paid for their content?

We have hundreds of people who voluntarily submits content and editors who select and edits these pieces, we have a special branch that can be considered as freelance editors. Unfortunately, our amateur writers do not get paid, but ones who want to work as a freelance editor often has a clear future.

Question 9 – Zaytung has published Almanacs in collaboration with April publishing. However, there has not been a single publication in the recent years, is there a reason for this?

We want to continue this project however we had to stop due to the publication costs. We hope to start again.

Question 10 - Video format is rare within the Zaytung pieces, and there is almost no video content produced by Zaytung? Is there a reason for this?

Zaytung has always been a text based publication. Videos remained as fun attempts. Currently, Zaytung provides video content to other publications however it chooses to remain as a text-based publication

Question 11 – Film section of Zaytung contains more serious criticism and less humorous content, is there a reason for this? Is there a project to open a separate website for this section? (Similar to the A.V Club of The Onion)

The film section was mostly my personal initiative, for 7 years my aim was to popularise the film critics by making it more entertaining. As a result, we had popular, entertaining articles. Same can be said about our book section as well. We needed to write articles more frequently to open an additional website, although we wanted to open a separate website, then it was decided to be a burden.

Question 12 – A group of founding editors left Zaytung to open their own news satire website (resmigaste) however this separation was a shaking one, the editors publicly accused the Zaytung administration for hostile work environment and copyright issues, and there is no answer made public by Zaytung to those claims, has there been a reason for this and does Zaytung wants to answer these accusations? And taking the accusations, has there been an improvement?

Copyright issues are hard to state for amateur authors are not paid and bloggers or long time writers can get a special agreement. And it is difficult to argue hostile work environment for they work voluntarily, however I'm not talking about the editor crew that left. After a meeting with Bilginer, they decided to not produce content for the publication, although the written content kept coming from other users, there has been a decrease of quality and quantity of content within the website.

Question 13 – Especially in the pieces of “people’s voices”, discourse of politicians is presented as the headline, especially considering that the reader knows about Zaytung, could we argue that presenting the statement, unaltered, is an attempt to show its own comedy?

The aim of the voice of people, is to show possible absurd responses of people to the absurd news. Most of the time, politicians discourse could be more absurd than our jokes – and these discourses are already shared within the social media that compares

it to Zaytung's news. If we manipulate the discourse, it will disrupt the humour, for our irony is fed by the nations reality.

Question 14 – Some pieces directly defines the AKP voters with words like “idiot” and “stupid”, what could be the positive and negative impacts of these definitions on Humour's role?

We do not directly use these definitions for the voters. Our issue is often with the trolls who are paid to manipulate the ordinary citizens. And yes, in some situations we do reflect our anger to such establishment with harsh statements.

