

Research Article

*2011-2013 Constitution-making Process and Media Field in Turkey**

Altuğ Akin, Burcu Yaman Akyar**

Abstract

This paper examines so-called “Constitutional Process” which took place between 2011 and 2013 in Turkey to eventually fail after more than two years of intense work and rise of expectations both in Turkish society and international community from the perspective of media and communications. How Turkish media influenced the constitution making process including workings of Constitutional Conciliation Commission is discussed, surveying relevant media content or performance with a particular focus on the political economy of Turkish media during that period. Traditional media outlets such as newspapers and television channels, and nowadays largely digital platforms, function as present-day agoras where political agenda is determined and contested. These online and offline channels have different levels of influence on discussions of the political elite, as presented extensively in media and communication studies. Together with the global media environment, national media foster the emergence of its own elites, while maintaining multi-layered relationships with high-level political decision-making processes. Media channels therefore bear symbolic powers that impact political policy-making by employing methods such as agenda setting and framing. In this line of thought, this article approaches Turkish media space as a specific field while its content and its political economy are examined in relation with the constitution making process to reveal the role played by media during highly politicized processes, such as constitution making, as well as eliciting the dynamics that herald such media performance.

Keywords: Media, politics, constitution, Turkey, field

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Araştırma Makalesi

*2011-2013 Anayasa Yapım Süreci ve Türkiye’de Medya Alanı**

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Öz

Bu makalede 2011-2013 yılları arasında yaşanan ve hem ülke hem de uluslararası kamuoyunda yüksek beklentiler doğuran ve “Anayasa Yapım Süreci” olarak adlandırılan dönem, medya ve iletişim açısından ele alınmıştır. Türkiye’deki anaakım medyanın başta Anayasa Uzlaşma Komisyonu olmak üzere anayasa yapım sürecinin başat aktörleri üzerindeki etkisi, medya içeriği ya da performansı ile söz konusu dönem Türkiye medyasının ekonomi politiği üzerinden tartışılmıştır. Gazete, televizyon kanalları gibi geleneksel medya kuruluşları ve büyük ölçüde dijital platformlar, günümüzde siyasi gündemin belirlendiği ve tartışıldığı bir arena işlevine sahiptir. Medya ve iletişim çalışmaları alanında yapılan araştırmalar, bu çevrimiçi ve çevrimdışı kanalların siyasi elitlerin kararları üzerinde farklı düzeylerde etki gücüne sahip olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Küresel medyayla birlikte, ulusal medya sistemleri, kendi elitlerinin ortaya çıkmasını teşvik ederken, üst düzey siyasi karar alma süreçleriyle mevcut çok katmanlı ilişkilerini sürdürmeye devam ederler. Bu nedenle, medya kanalları, gündem belirleme ve çerçeveleme gibi araçlar kullanarak politika oluşturma sürecini etkileyebilecek sembolik güçlere sahiptir. Buradan hareketle, bu makale Türkiye medyasını bir alan olarak ele alıp, söz konusu dönemde ortaya çıkan ana akım medya içeriğini ve ana akım medyanın ekonomi politiğini, 2013 sonlarında başarısızlıkla sonuçlanan Anayasa Yapım süreciyle ilişkilendirerek tartışmaktadır. Makalenin amacı bir yandan Anayasa Yapım süreçleri gibi üst düzey politize dönemlerde medyanın oynadığı role dair mevcut bilgi birikimine katkıda bulunmak bir yandan da söz konusu medya performansını doğuran faktörleri tartışmaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Medya, siyaset, anayasa, Türkiye, alan

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2011-2013 Constitution-making Process and Media Field in Turkey

Numerous studies in the field of media and communication have shown that newspapers, television channels, and increasingly digital communication platforms, i.e. broadly defined media space in each country, serve as contemporary versions of agoras, where socio-political issues are defined and debated, with varying degrees of influence on the political elite's handling of such issues. Besides, the media environments in each national setting in relation with the global media sphere develops its own elites as well as multi-layered relationships with high-level political decision-making processes. Through different methods, including agenda setting and framing, media outlets retain a certain form of symbolic power that can be deployed in influencing the policy-making processes.

Following this line of thought, this article is composed of a study of Turkish news media, conceptualized as a *field* in Bourdiesian sense. Bourdieu's concepts of "field" and "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), which have been previously applied to journalistic practice in

recent years (i.e. Benson and Neveu, 2005), serve as the theoretical lenses through which a certain socio-political phenomenon is investigated. The study focuses on a particular case, namely the content and political economy of Turkish newspapers in relation to the Constitution-making Process, which after more than two years of intensive work, failed in 2013, disappointing expectations of Turkish society and the international community.

The period in question was a particular era when considerable changes in ownership structures of Turkish media sector took place. Brand new terms, referring to the political positioning, as well as economical foundations of media organs, such as pool media (*havuz medyası*) and slanted media (*yandaş medya*)¹ became common. At the

1 The term "pool media" originated in the aftermath of leaked phone conversations in 2013 allegedly between prominent pro-Justice and Development Party (pro-AKP) businessman who were directed by a government minister to contribute significant amounts of money to a "pool" to buy one of the Turkey's largest and most important media companies, namely Sabah-ATV, with the perspective of providing positive coverage of the government. Term "slanted me-

same time, certain oppositional media channels' popularity peaked, creating a high degree of polarization in the media environment. In this context, the crucial constitution making process was variously reported, debated, attacked and praised by different actors occupying spaces in Turkish journalism field.

In this paper, first, constitution-making related coverage of Turkish mainstream newspapers is presented, drawn from existing reliable second-hand sources, including TESEV reports and academic studies. Then, broader dynamics that brought along such coverage are discussed in order to make sense of the role played by Turkish newspapers during the constitution-making process. The article concludes with some suggestions regarding future studies about the media's role in constitution making processes. Thus the main goal of the article is better understanding the role played by media during highly politicized processes, such as constitution making, as well as eliciting the dynamics that herald such media performance.

Before further elaboration however, normative expectations form the media during constitution-making processes, as it exists in the literature are presented briefly. The answer to the question of "How media should act during a constitution-making process?" is much re-

lated with the normative roles attached to the media in a democratic society. According to conception of media as the fourth estate in liberal theory, it is initially expected media to become a watchdog, which checks the government's functioning with an independent manner (Curran, 2002: 217). The media is also seen responsible for information flow between the government and citizen or in other words an impartial "vehicle for communication between governors and the governed" (Gunther and Mughan, 2000: 421). It is important to highlight that according to this framework, the media must be as inclusive as possible, to give place for different voices and inform the public on various aspects. As well as informing the citizens, media functions as active participants or facilitators of public discussion. In this respect, Clifford Christians et al. (2009: 125) conceptualizes the four normative roles of media as monitorial, facilitative, radical and collaborative. In this conceptualization, respectively media is expected to collect and disseminate information; facilitating deliberative democracy through active citizenship and civil society with a collectivist, pluralist and inclusive manner; have a critical standpoint or become the voice of radical views; and collaborate voluntarily with government or political institutions on significant social issues. In a similar vein, Brain McNair (2009: 239) summarizes normative expect-

dia" had a longer use in Turkey yet it became more popular in this era referring to the media organs strictly aligned with government's agenda.

tations of media in a democracy as a source of information in a deliberative democracy, as a watchdog/fourth estate, as a mediator/representative, and as a participant/advocate.

All these attributed functions help us to figure out the reason why media also has a significant role in constitution making process. Lech Garlicki and Zofia A. Garlicka (2010), for instance, state that in a drafting process there should be public participation with a transparent and informative manner. According to them, it is not only the responsibility of governing body, but also an independent media, which is “one of the crucial prerequisites for genuine participation in the constitutional deliberation.” (2010: 405). In the remaining parts of this work the deviation of Turkish media from these functions and underlying dynamics which brought along such deviation are discussed subsequently.

Turkish Newspapers' Coverage of the Constitution-Making Process

This part encompasses an analytical review and summary of existing research on Turkish newspapers' coverage of constitution-making process between 2011 and 2013, particularly the studies that focused on content analysis conducted by Ceren Sözeri (2013a; 2013b) and Sezen Ünlüönen (2014) on the behalf of Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) Democratization Program.

The primary aim of TESEV studies is to monitor how Turkish media fulfilled its functions of informing the public and creating a platform for democratic debate during the new constitution-making period. To this aim, the study was carried out in three six-month phases, between June 2012 and February 2014. The sample of the research was taken from national newspapers of different ideological and political orientations, including *Hürriyet*, *Taraf*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Radikal*, *Star*, *Zaman*, *Özgür Gündem*, *Yeni Şafak*, *Aydınlık*, *Agos*, *Milliyet*² and *Sabah*. In the first two reports, the analysis included 12 newspapers, but in the final phase, the scope of analysis was reduced to seven newspapers. Methodologically, the news articles, columns and comments retrieved from selected newspapers were investigated through content analysis and critical discourse analysis of macrostructures. The analysis consists of 907 content in the first, 1355 in

2 These 12 newspapers can be categorized in numerous ways but based on their most prominent features it can be argued that for the period when the research was conducted *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet* had positioned themselves on the center of the political spectrum with slight bias towards its right while *Cumhuriyet*, *Radikal*, *Taraf* and *Agos* were positioned on center's left, and none of these newspapers had strict alignment with any political party or movement. *Star*, *Yeni Şafak*, *Sabah* and *Zaman* were pro-government with varying degrees of support, *Özgür Gündem* was pretty close to Kurdish political movement and *Aydınlık* to a nationalist-leftist political movement. These positioning and alignments have changed since TESEV researched were conducted.

the second, and 184 in the last phase, in order to ensure the representativeness and comprehensiveness of these reports regarding the media coverage of constitution making process between 2011-2013. However, the sharp decrease in the final period also displays the declining interest of Turkish media towards the subject; constitution-making process (Ünlüönen, 2014: 1).

Before scrutinizing how the subject was covered, the number of articles published in each newspaper was identified, as this indicated newspapers with the strongest intentions to bring this issue to the forefront of public discussion. In this regard, *Milliyet* and *Zaman* in the first period, *Milliyet* and *Taraf* in the second, and *Taraf* in the third period are determined as publishing the most frequently on the subject. In contrast, the limited number of news stories during the whole process in *Hürriyet* as one of the most circulated newspapers in Turkey is another remarkable result. The retrieved news items are also categorized based on their types, and the results showed that the percentage of news articles are higher than columns and comments in most of the newspapers, except *Sabah* with equal or higher number of columns compared to articles (Sözeri, 2013a: 1).

In the first report covering the period between June 2012 and January 2013, the attitudes of news coverage are coded as positive, neutral and negative. It is revealed

that the amount of neutral content was greater than negative and positive, respectively. The neutral contents are generally from articles dealing with the works and debates of Constitutional Conciliation Commission on the new constitution making process. On the other hand, it is observed that the columnists are considerably negative in terms of their expectations of a new constitution, compared to experts who tend to express their normative ideas and expectations about the process (Sözeri, 2013a: 2).

In the aforementioned research, sources of news are one of the most significant aspects of the content analysis. In this respect, the main news sources are identified, based on ideological differences of newspapers and their use of news sources. One of the most crucial results is that, although the subject is significantly a widespread concern in Turkey, the news stories mostly relied on sources holding political power, or on those close to newspaper's ideology (Sözeri, 2013a: 6 and 2013b: 6). Particularly, it is critically argued that the news sources of neutral articles are mostly members of the Commission, the prime minister, the president and members of opposition parties (Sözeri, 2013a: 9). In addition, academicians' opinions are cited very often in the comment sections of newspapers. However, the reports highlight the limited number of news items using non-governmental organization as sources. For instance, that study found

that only 39 news pieces out of 907 give coverage to the demands or opinions of NGOs (Sözeri, 2013a: 5), and argued that this limited diversity of news sources was a barrier for this sensitive and significant topic to be extensively discussed at all levels of society. It is stated that newspapers did not decide on news sources by considering those who are able to express a variety of ideas, but rather prefer those with similar political affiliations. In particular, even for the issues, related with fundamental rights and freedoms frequently covered in the media, the news pieces tend to ignore the opinions of related NGOs or the readers (Sözeri, 2013a: 9).

Another focus of the research is on the subjects of news stories in order to understand how the agenda is framed by newspapers. In this regard, it is revealed that although newspapers followed the workings of the Constitutional Conciliation Commission in close detail, the subjects they reported was not always in line with the agenda of the Commission. Sözeri (2013a: 3) argues that occasionally, political actors who were not the members of the commission intervened in the media agenda by bringing up controversial issues, such as the presidential system. After the presidential system issue, the second priority for most newspapers was the debate regarding the clauses on fundamental rights and freedoms involving discussion on definition of citizenship, in par-

allel to commission agenda. Moreover, some content was devoted to the debates, which took place within the closed sessions of the commission. Similar to the lack of diversity in news sources, it was concluded by the researchers that, the newspapers almost disregard the expectations and interests of any group who differed from the majority in terms of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and identity (Sözeri, 2013a; Sözeri, 2013b; Ünlüönen, 2014).

The second report (Sözeri, 2013b) prepared as a part of TESEV research project, includes a general analysis or evaluation of each individual selected newspaper, which presents an explicit differentiation of media groups in terms of coverage and attitude toward the subject, use of news sources, actors and discursive strategies. In parallel the previous discussions, the newspapers were found to take a stance on new constitution debate, according to their ideological and political directions. For instance, *Cumhuriyet* reports constitution-related news as an attempt of Justice and Development Party (AKP) to change the political system, by the selection of terms such as “strategy”, “plan” or “tactics” to define AKP’s propositions. In line with their political stance, news sources are mostly selected from the members of Republican People’s Party (CHP), despite highlighting the fact that the real decision maker is AKP. *Cumhuriyet*’s oppositional position is especially

observed in the discussions about presidential system, by channeling the agenda towards the debates on integrity of Turkish state (Sözeri, 2013b: 4). *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet* are other newspapers analyzed in that project. *Hürriyet* is seen as overwhelmingly neutral in reporting constitutional debates by avoiding comments in the content, apart from some highly critical columnists on discussing the presidential system and citizenship definition (Sözeri, 2013b: 4). *Milliyet* is considered as one of the most objective newspapers, which presents the issue elaborately and involved both supporting and opposing columnists, and also reports issues related to the demands of groups such as Alevis and Armenians. The newspaper supports the necessity of a new constitution as an inevitable need for the sake of ongoing Peace Process, as well (Sözeri, 2013b: 5).

Of the papers analyzed by Sözeri (2013b), the evaluations on *Sabah* was particularly significant, known for its close affiliation to AKP. One of the most noteworthy reflections of this connection is that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's article, entitled "New Constitution for New Turkey" (11.02.2013) was published only in this paper. As expected, while the newspaper always approaches the subject with a positive manner, with a comprehensive coverage of process and constitutional workings, it never presents opinions of different social groups (Sözeri, 2013b: 6). In a similar way, *Star* and *Yeni Şafak*,

also defined as pro-government, are criticized for their unquestioning support for the government and failing to fulfill ethical responsibilities of journalism. Only *Zaman* is differentiated from these conservative media groups in terms of not having a full support of AKP, particularly on the subjects related to the presidential system (Sözeri, 2013b: 9).

Undoubtedly, one of the most significant conclusion of this research project is the highlighting of the way that the political polarization in Turkey not only reflected, but also to some extent consolidated by the Turkish media through one-sided coverage. In the first report, this argument is supported by the result that 70% of positive content was produced by the pro-government newspapers (*Sabah*, *Star*, *Yeni Şafak*, and *Zaman*), while opponent newspapers, *Cumhuriyet* and *Aydınlık*, published almost no positive news on the subject, and produced 35% of negative content (Sözeri, 2013a: 5). Additionally, the political polarization is reinforced by the newspapers through an unbalanced coverage of political and social actors. The research concludes that newspapers not only devoted space to specific actors in line with their political orientations, but they also disregarded, reported negatively or even marginalized the opinions of opponent groups (Ünlüönen, 2014: 6). In addition to using ideologically-close news sources, the newspapers also made some political

and ideological decisions on selecting the visual materials in news articles in order to make their political views more visible to the public. The lexical choices in the presentation of constitutional debates is further evidence of biased reporting styles of news media. For instance, in the headlines related to presidential system, one of the most controversial issue of this process, pro-government leaning newspapers prefer to use words such as “stability” (*Sabah*) or “transparency” (*Star*); however opponent newspapers tend to choose terms such as “sultanate” (*Cumhuriyet* and *Aydınlık*), ‘disintegration’ (*Cumhuriyet*) to express their disapproval. (Sözeri, 2013a: 6).

Overall, the analysis of media content during two-year constitution making process enables the researchers to question whether Turkish newspapers are adequately performing the universal and ethical functions and responsibilities of journalism. Initially, it is pointed out that the consolidation of polarization in the media results in failure to adopt a critical and analytical point of view in reporting constitutional debates (Ünlüönen, 2014: 5) Due to this partisanship, it can be claimed that newspapers are failing to fulfill their responsibilities of informing citizens with a comprehensive and objective reporting style and establishing a distance between news sources and news maker (Ünlüönen, 2014: 6). It is also argued that such practice is a threat for universal principles

of journalism such as equity, balance, impartiality or right of reply. In terms of reporting, the imbalance physical space devoted to this subject and the sensational tone are noted as controversial strategies used to increase newspapers’ circulation. Lastly and briefly, the newspapers are unable or unwilling to create a democratic and pluralistic discussion environment, with the potential to contribute to political and social reconciliation; rather the hegemonic discourse is reproduced by the Turkish media outlets.

The constitution making process and its coverage on media has also been the focus of other academic studies, by investigating the subject from different aspects. A brief literature review reveals that the analysis of the Turkish media provides similar results with the TESEV research project in terms of presenting non-objective, biased and one-sided attitude of media. In this respect, the research conducted by Gülsüm Depeli (2013) focuses on how mainstream media in Turkey, in particular press, covered the position of LGBT groups regarding the new constitution during the 2011-2013 constitution making process. The study analyzes 150 news pieces in total, retrieved from 15 different newspapers, namely *Zaman*, *Posta*, *Hürriyet*, *Sabah*, *Sözcü*, *Habertürk*, *Star*, *Milliyet*, *Türkiye*, *Takvim*, *Vatan*, *Akşam*, and *Yeni Şafak* as the most circulated newspapers; as well as two daily English language newspapers, namely *Today’s Zaman* and

Hürriyet Daily News. Through the critical analysis of mainstream newspapers, the study attempts to assess the representation of LGBT involvement into the constitution making process. The rationale for including the two English-language newspapers within this research is to discuss how the issue is represented to the international public.

Despite approaching the issue from different standpoints, the study conducted by Depeli (2013) and research project run by TESEV (Sözeri 2013a and 2013b) obtain similar results, particularly on the discriminatory and non-objective stance of Turkish press in constitution-making process. Significantly, both studies point out that the media takes political, strategic and biased positions on the involvement of political actors in the constitution making process, thus feeding the prevailing political climate of partisanship and polarization. In parallel to the findings of the aforementioned content analysis research, Depeli (2013) finds that in the coverage of LGBT demands, the media took generally a pro-government stance which reinforced the hegemonic discriminatory discourse of the government, and normalized morality and religion oriented political and cultural references in dealing with gender issues.

In addition to general concluding remarks, Depeli (2013) presents the results of analysis by categorizing the newspapers based on their attitudes, and interest toward the subject of LGBT involve-

ment. Accordingly, the first group of newspapers, including *Zaman*, *Yeni Şafak*, *Türkiye*, *Takvim*, *Sözcü* and *Vatan*, tend to disregard any demand for LGBT recognition in the new constitution and publish no news on the subject. On contrary, it is revealed that these newspapers developed strategies not only for ignoring the presence of LGBT groups as legitimate actors in the constitution making process, but also for manipulating the public perception of these groups through conservative, religion and moral based discourses, deployed particularly by their columnists. The study exemplifies this manipulative discourse, with the columns connoting homosexuality with moral corruption, erosion, or negative Western influences. One of the most disturbing examples was retrieved from a column published in *Yeni Şafak*, a pro-government conservative newspaper. In this example, the columnist not only uses a manipulative and biased discourse, but also underlies his/her aggressive stance with the title “Homosexuality is an attack to humankind and nature” (as cited in Depeli, 2013: 50). According to Depeli’s results (2013), a group of newspapers including *Sabah*, *Posta*, *Star* and *Habertürk* at least made some mention of political activities of LGBT groups regarding the new constitution. However, it is also highlighted that although giving some consideration to these groups as a political actor in this process may be of significance in itself, the manipulative and discriminatory

discourse and attitude toward homosexuality are still dominantly observed. Similar to the previous study, the current research also gives examples of polarizing discourse which frames LGBT subject through the antagonism of morality and immorality. Moreover, these newspapers can be criticized for their sensational tone adopted in any coverage of LGBT issues.

Dynamics Underlying Newspapers' Coverage of the Constitution-Making Process

The above-presented studies on Turkish newspapers' coverage of the constitution-making process between 2011-2013 reveal three major problems that are to some extent inter-related. The first is the evident partisanship of the newspapers in regards with approaches to the constitution-making process, and consequently, their partisan coverage, which furthered the prevailing polarization of Turkish society along pro and anti-government lines. Secondly, majority of the newspapers devoted the vast majority of coverage to the workings of the Commission, and debates among high-profile politicians on controversial issues, at the expense of informing readers about the new constitution draft itself or broadening discussions on the constitution. Finally, particular discourses and actors were excluded by the mainstream newspapers from the discussions about the new constitution.

An attempt to understand why these three essential problems arose would necessitate an approach which, on one hand, considers the journalistic practice and output in Turkey embedded in broader relations and institutions of power, and on the other hand, takes into account the internal dynamics of Turkish journalism. Robert Hackett and William Carroll (2006), comparing different conceptual frameworks for analyzing the relationship between journalism and other relations/institutions of power, concludes that The Journalistic Field model, developed on the works of Pierre Bourdieu, has certain advantages over other approaches, namely The Propaganda Model of Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, and Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese's Hierarchy of Influences Model (Hackett and Carroll, 2006). According to Hackett and Carroll while the Propaganda Model highlights several repressive "filters" that allegedly subordinate the news media to elite interests, and the Hierarchy Model identifies a broader range of influences in a more open-ended way, the Journalistic Field model as different in that "moves away from linear causality to emphasize the relative autonomy and coherence of journalism as an institutionalized sphere, functioning in relationship with other homologically structured fields" (Hackett and Carroll, 2006: 10). Authors' reading of Bourdieu's field theory in the context of journalism brings

them to the conclusion that the journalism field is “Considerably influenced by commercial or economic constraints, but in turn, journalism imposes structural constraints upon other fields, notably on politics, and on other spheres of cultural production” (Hackett and Carroll, 2006: 32).

The rest of this article is devoted to a discussion on the coverage of the failed constitution-making process in Turkey, using the Journalistic Field model, three problems identified in the previous section. Before this, there is a brief presentation of essentials of field theory as it is applied to journalism practice. According to Randal Johnson’s useful definition, from his introductory text to Bourdieu’s Field of Cultural Production, field is,

... a structured space with its own laws of functioning and its own relations of force independent of those of politics and the economy. ... Each field is relatively autonomous but structurally homologous with the others. Its structure, at any given moment, is determined by the relations between the positions agents occupy in the field (Johnson, 1993).

Hackett states that each field is characterized by its own ethos, its own formal and informal rules and logics, its own set of status and power positions for individual agents, such as journalists, to occupy, and its own forms of inter-

ests or resources – ‘capital’ - for which agents compete (2006: 7). Thus, in the economic sphere, agents typically compete for economic capital through various strategies; in the political sphere, they compete for governmental power, and in the field of journalism, two forms of capital are particularly relevant: “symbolic capital”, the accumulation of prestige or celebrity; and “cultural capital”, forms of cultural knowledge or dispositions (Johnson 1993: 7, as cited in Hackett, 2006: 7). Hackett and Carroll highlight that journalism and related forms of large-scale cultural production (the media), are distinctive in that they combine economic power (the production of profit) with symbolic power, which is ultimately the capacity to define social reality (2006: 33). For Rodney Benson, journalistic field must be seen as part of the field of power, caught between cultural and economic power. Within this field of power, it lies within the field of cultural production, and its dominant tendency, mainstream journalism, belongs to the field of large-scale cultural production: it is produced for general audiences, and therefore naturally, is closest to the economic pole. Thus, compared to other specialized fields within the broader field of cultural production, the journalistic field is “characterized ... by a high degree of heteronomy,” which is to say that “it is a very weakly autonomous field” (Benson, 2006: 195).

Applying this framework to the

field of Turkish journalism enables us to argue that there has been a dramatic change in the origin of economic power of news-making institutions throughout the last three decades, which has had far-reaching effects on the distribution of symbolic power within the field of journalism, as well as on its loss of autonomy. The changes in the political field have had a major role in this transformation and the AKP's domination of the field of politics, along with many other fields in Turkey, since 2002 has resulted in a radically renewed media field, in which the partisan coverage of constitution making process must be contextualized.

The discussions regarding the transformation of media field in Turkey originate in 1980's as a breakthrough in Turkish socio-political context, with the rise of neoliberal ideology (Adaklı, 2006; Yüce, 2007³; Yeşil, 2016). As in many areas, neoliberal policies penetrated the Turkish media structure, particularly in the form of privatization, and the end of state monopoly in broadcasting in 1994, and consequently, the emergence of various political and social interest groups in the media field. The rise of privatization was expected to be the end of state control on media outlets, particularly broadcasting. However, ironically, the media groups, including those

owning majority of the mainstream newspapers, which were heavily commercialized after 1990's, faced the problem of finance, therefore transferred into other areas, and needed government subsidies to support their revenues. Consequently, although state monopoly of media was abolished, the commercialization of media led to a new form of dependency, which pressured media groups to act strategically and sensitively within complex financial and political relations. As argued by Raşit Kaya and Barış Çakmur (2010), the dominant political parallelism in the media, which was an inevitable consequence of state monopoly before 1990s, could not be obviated after the neoliberal shift. Rather, the authors call this new consequence of rising commercialization as "instrumentalization of the Turkish media by the business interests" (Kaya and Çakmur, 2010: 528). At this time, different conservative groups started to become more visible than ever, particularly in the media, by obtaining their own media outlets, which were supported by different religious communities. As Yeşil notes, "the number of Islamic publications increased significantly from a 7 percent market share before 1980 to a 47 percent share by 1996" (2016: 28). The penetration of the Gülen movement into Turkish media landscape is given by Bilge Yeşil (2016: 28-29) a remarkable example of how the changed ideology of this era influenced Turkish socio-political context.

3 Yüce's unpublished doctoral dissertation (2007) is a unique attempt to apply Field Theory to Turkish news making field with a particular focus on the columnists.

In this context, political parallelism and partisan media debates in Turkey intensified after AKP came to power in 2002 and consolidated its political presence with consecutive electoral achievements and referendums. From the first days of AKP's rule, it has been possible to observe direct and indirect pressure on the media, as well as other strategic fields, such as the judiciary and military. Particularly after 2010, government's direct control and intervention in media landscape occurred through two main maneuvers: Controlling existing media groups, and acquiring or establishing new media groups - its own partisan media. As an instance of the former, in the case of *Doğan Group* - one of the biggest media group in Turkey, a tax penalty of more than 800-million dollars was used as a controversial mean of pressure. The latter constituted the most radical transformation in media industry in Turkey, actualized by the formation of partisan or so-called *pool media*. AKP government utilized the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund of Turkey (TMSF) in order to obtain financially struggling media companies and then to sell them to pro-government corporations (Çarkoğlu et al. 2014). By this way, a media support acquired by supporter or partisan media has been created by the AKP government. Andrew Finkel (2015) assess the current situation of Turkish media through the concept of "media capturing"⁴ and con-

cludes that "the circumstances which brought the AKP to power also gifted it with large media groups in public receivership." (2015: 15).

In parallel to AKP's consolidation of its media power via such maneuvers, a reactionary attitude was observed in Turkish media landscape, furthering the polarization in the field. Media polarization was directly linked with the ongoing political polarization in Turkey, which has been a "continuing power struggle between 'secularists' and 'Islamists'" (Haynes, 2009: 105). Jeffrey Haynes describes these two opposing poles: On the one hand there is "the 'new' Anatolian middle class (often regarded as 'Islamist' in the sense not only of their Islamic cultural roots but also of the key role religious beliefs in their business success), strongly supportive of the AKP since its foundation in 2001, and on the other, the 'traditional' Kemalist 'secularist' establishment" (2009: 105). In a similar vein, Keyman (2010) argues that this increasing tension between these two sides and social and political transformation occurring in Turkey in the last decades enhanced the "reaction among mainly secular middle classes, claiming that Turkey faces a serious risk of becoming a social

governance problem where political leaders and media owners work together in a symbiotic but mutually corrupting relationship: Media owners provide supportive news coverage to political leaders in exchange for favorable government treatment of their business and political interests" (2015: 1)

4 Finkel defines media capture as "a systemic

conservative” (2010: 540). In this political context, emerging reactionary media outlets, with evidently much less economic and political sources disposable for their operation compared to government camp, opposed AKP rule through a radical emphasis on Republican and secular principles in their literature and programmes. For a long time, *Cumhuriyet* and more recently, since mid-2000s, *Sözcü* daily newspaper or *Halk TV*, a TV channel, have been considered as the main examples of this reactionary attitude. What sharpens the opposition between the camps and furthers polarization in the media is the production by both sides of contents which disregard or suppress the opposing ideas, while serving their own interests (Kaya and Çakmur, 2010: 533) and setting their own agendas.

To sum up, the decline of the relatively broader autonomy of the journalism field that began during 1990s media transformation, due to the dual pressures (business interests and favoring the political) has accelerated during AKP’s rule, and meanwhile, media in general and newspapers in particular have become much more concentrated on the two pillars between pro-Islamist/conservative and the mainstream tendencies (Yavçan and Ongur, 2016: 2425). A crucial dynamic of this polarized concentration is closely related with AKP government’s use of economic tools (e.g tax penalties, Savings Deposit Insurance Fund) to derive

symbolic power in the media field, and the formation of a reactionary counter-AKP media camp. In this context, Turkish newspapers’ coverage of 2011-2013 constitution making process was heavily characterized by the polarized and partisan approaches, whether pro or anti-AKP. As a result, the impact of majority of newspapers on the constitution making process was far from supportive, if the ideal contribution is defined as creating a mediated platform where public debate on the new constitution would be encouraged according to basic democratic principles.

It is now appropriate to move from the macro-level analysis, where impact of external factors on the journalism field is observed, towards the meso-level, the level where field-specific dynamics can be better analyzed. At this level, the partisan coverage of the newspapers of the failed constitution making process can also be explained, focusing on journalism field’s “own laws of functioning” (Johnson, 1993: 6), namely the prevailing news making norms and practices in Turkey’s journalism field. At this field-specific level, rather than external pressures on the journalism field, one is concerned with “shared cognitive, perceptual, and evaluative structures, which journalists share by virtue of common social background and training” (Bourdieu, 1998: 36), and “a set of shared assumptions and beliefs, which reach beyond differences of position and opinion” (Bourdieu,

1998: 47). At this point, “habitus” concept of Bourdieu is relevant, as a link between structure (external) and action (internal) (Tansel Ilic, 2015: 322). As Loïc J. D. Wacquant puts it:

A field consists in a set of historical objective relations between positions rooted in some forms of power (or capital), while the habitus takes the shape of a set of historical relations ‘laid’ inside individuals in the form of mental and corporal schema of perception, appreciation and action. (Wacquant, 1992: 24).

For Mathieu M. Rhoufari, who applies the concept to journalism, habitus, means objective relations (embodied in institutions, organizations, codes and hierarchies) internalized by social agents – with variations pertaining to the differences in the histories of different individuals – and forming a set of personal dispositions to act, assess, select and so on. By introducing habitus in the study of the journalistic field, the artificial dichotomy between micro and macro levels are overcome (Rhoufari, 2000: 166), and if ethos can be defined as an organization’s habitus (Smith, 2003), then habitus notion enables us to better understand journalism field’s “own ethos, its own formal and informal rules and logics” (Hackett, 2006: 7).

As stated above, the second major problem revealed by the content analysis reports is that major-

ity of the newspapers devoted the vast majority of coverage either to the workings of the commission, or futile debates among high-profile politicians on controversial issues, while failing to inform their readers about the details of the new constitution draft itself, or broadening the contours of public dialogue about the constitution. News organizations’ coverage of any event is an outcome of newsmakers’ actions and decisions, including how to cover the event, on which aspect to focus, or which aspects to exclude from a news piece, and such decisions are results of journalism field’s own laws of functioning. In other words, journalists are most guided by the norms and practices of the professional field of journalism itself (Bourdieu, 1998, 2005; Benson, 1999; Couldry, 2003; Benson and Neveu, 2005; Champagne, 2005).

In the case of covering constitution-making process between 2011-2013, majority of newspapers in Turkey chose to base their coverage almost exclusively on the workings of the Constitution Making Commission, rather than constructing their coverage in other ways. This decision, to focus directly on the Commission, heralded news pieces that failed to extend the contours of public debate about the new constitution, and limited the public dialogue to the progress of the Commission, which at many instances faltered due to harsh disagreements among Commission members from the four political

parties represented in parliament. Covering the workings of the Commission chronologically, a seemingly professional journalistic decision, must be considered in the light of the partisan approach of the newspapers to the constitution making process. When the Commission's progress slowed, for instance during the debate on controversial issue of presidential system, the newspapers' coverage was completely occupied by such fruitless debates, at expense of alternative journalistic outputs, such as opinion pieces or investigative works outside the limits of Commission members' conflicts that dominated the presidency debate. As quoted by Ünlüönen, "when Commission debates were stuck, newspapers failed to conduct a journalism that offered a potential negotiation between sides of the conflict" (Ünlüönen, 2014: 5).

Such approach could be seen as a reflection of a long-standing convention of journalism field, not only in Turkey, but elsewhere, known as an inherent focus on conflict, rather than on negotiation or conflict-resolution. An extreme yet widespread example of this attitude, or an outcome of this journalistic convention, is war journalism, whose main features are the dehumanization of the enemy, a focus on the visible effects of the violence, being propaganda-oriented, elite-focused, victory-oriented, and, having tendency to concentrate on institutions (Keeble, Tulloch and Zollman, 2010: 2). The

concept of war journalism was coined by a group of communication researchers under the rubric of "study of peace journalism", in the context of studies focusing specifically on the media coverage of wars, and thus, for our study, it is inspirational rather than fully-operational. Yet, two features of war journalism, elite-focus and tendency to concentrate on institutions, are highly relevant to the study of the norms and conventions of Turkish journalism field. In the context of coverage of constitution making process, journalists rely on commission workings and debates among high-profile political actors - both elite and institution focused. Such an approach is appropriate to the interpretation of Turkish journalism's long-held norms and conventions, which evidently favor conflict (i.e. war) rather than conflict-resolution (i.e. peace).

It can be argued that the third problem revealed by the content analysis – the mainstream newspapers' exclusion of certain discourses and actors from the discussions on the new constitution, is related to both macro and meso-level dynamics discussed so far, namely polarization of Turkey's journalism field and elite/institution focused journalism norms and conventions. Historically speaking, Turkish mainstream newspapers have devoted more time and space to dominant political discourses and actors while disregarding the politically marginal. In line with Richard Hog-

gart's definitive term, the "cultural air" of different periods, diverse discourses and actors have been excluded from mainstream media spotlights, i.e. particular newspapers, based on their ideological positioning, have excluded coverage of contradictory discourses and actors. According to Hoggart as cited in Bennet, the most important filter through which news is constructed is "the cultural air we breathe the whole ideological atmosphere of our society, which tells us that some things can be said, and others had best not be said" (Bennet, 1982: 303). As stated by Michael Schudson, cultural air is partially created by ruling groups and institutions, but also is the context in which these groups establish themselves, and that the cultural air has both a content and form: the former is the substance of taken-for-granted values, and the latter one is the assumptions that shape the presentation of the journalistic output. (1989: 278) The choice of discourses and actors for inclusion or exclusion debates regarding constitution making process in Turkey between 2011 and 2013, is related to both the content and the form of the cultural air that journalists, as members of society at large, were exposed to during AKP rule since 2002, and particularly after 2010.

In this cultural air, heavily polluted by extreme polarization, social actors unaligned along the existing pro-AKP and anti-AKP division were hardly accepted as legitimate participants of ongoing

debates in issues not directly concerning them. AKP, as the holder of political power, has had the greatest impact on formation of the cultural air that journalists have inhaled since 2002. Thus, its ideological leanings have characterized the mainstream media's understanding of what can be said (reported) and what had best not be said (unreported). However, aforementioned studies reveal that the exclusion of groups that remained on the periphery of the polarization line is observable not only in pro-AKP media but also in the anti-AKP. In this respect, both of the content analysis presented above, provide some notable and controversial examples, showing how the coverage of the constitution-making process may have been influenced by 'cultural air,' including both substance and form. If the substance is related with the content, one of the most explicit examples in TESEV reports (Sözeri, 2013b; Ünlüönen, 2014) is the revelation of the absence of references to women and children within the constitution-making process coverage of Turkish media. Particularly, Ünlüönen remarks that these groups remain outside the power struggle, therefore the media did not consider their thoughts, expectations and rights as valid subjects. In the discussion regarding the new constitution, in addition to being neglected as social actors, women and children are almost invisible to the media due to lack of any interest group support-

ing their rights in political discussions in the mainstream media (2014: 8).

The exclusion of the LGBT initiatives from the coverage of the constitution making debates must be analyzed in this context, this cultural air, as another example of substance. As mentioned in the brief review of Depeli's study (2013), despite some differences between newspapers according to their political orientations, the mainstream media in general, and pro-AKP media in particular, did not consider LGBT groups as significant social actors in the constitutional process. Although LGBT groups attempted to voicing their demands in various ways, some newspapers ignored all their efforts, in addition to their negative framing of the LGBT community. Only a few exceptions (*Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Akşam*) covered their activities and demands in a truly non-discriminatory and politically acceptable style (Depeli, 2013: 54). However, interestingly the research finds that all the newspaper attention toward LGBT issues shifts towards the workings of commission, and away from the demands and activities of LGBT groups immediately after commission meetings started (Depeli, 2013: 56). It is similarly an indication of how mainstream media ignore LGBT groups, similar to their attitude to women and children and prioritize the voices of political power in their content.

In addition to the media content, shaped under the impact of

cultural air, the forms of media outputs are also framed and shaped by the dominant values, according to Schudson (1989: 278). The discussion regarding the inclusion/exclusion of women in the media coverage of constitutional process exemplifies not only substance, but also, form in this respect. As discussed earlier, the mainstream media completely disempower women by making them invisible; however, there are a few news articles referring to related subjects in these discussions. For instance, one example produced by *Star*, discussed by Sözeri (2013b: 7) is entitled "Women touch the new constitution" ("Yeni Anayasa'ya kadın eli değdi") (22.03.2013). At the first sight, the title gives an impression that the article is on the involvement of female groups within constitutional debates, however, a deeper assessment reveals that the article discusses women-related subjects but makes no effort to create a platform for women themselves, by, for example, giving views of different women organizations. Thus, the title - presentation style creates the false impression of women involvement in the constitution-making debates. Thus, one can argue that *Star*, an evidently pro-AKP daily, gives the appearance of promoting women's views in constitution debates, yet in line with the cultural air, fails to accord them the status of legitimate social actors in the debates.

Conclusion

In this article, the failed constitution-making process in Turkey between 2011 and 2013 is approached from the perspective of media in general, and the news-making field in particular. The discussion on the role played by Turkish mainstream media during the process was based on review of daily newspapers' coverage of the constitution-making process, and examination of the context of broader power-related dynamics that was instrumental in heralding such coverage. The newspapers' coverage entails three essential problems, namely the total partisanship of the newspapers in their approach to the constitution-making process; newspapers' failure to inform their readers about the new constitution draft, while devoting almost all coverage to debates among high-profile politicians on controversial issues; and finally, the exclusion of particular discourses and actors from the discussions about the new constitution on newspapers' pages.

It is argued that such deficiencies took place in Turkey's journalism field, resulting in a significant loss of autonomy compared to related fields (politics and economics) since 1990s, and more specifically, since the beginning of AKP's rule. Such lack of autonomy brought a sharp polarization, which necessitated the newspapers to position themselves along political division prevailing in Turkey along

pro and anti-AKP lines, including their coverage of the constitution-making process. In addition, the long-held norms and conventions of Turkish journalism field, which favor conflict-orientation rather than negotiation, have limited potential contribution of daily newspapers to the constitution-making process, by missing the opportunity to expand the public dialogue. Finally, the cultural air that dominated Turkey throughout since early 2000s has determined the actors and issues to be excluded from newspapers' pages, in accordance with the ideological leanings of the holders of the political power.

Such conclusions, drawn from the study of the structural dynamics that shaped Turkey's journalism field and in turn shaped by journalistic conduct (such as coverage of constitution-making process between 2011 and 2013), seem to be verified by the relevant media coverage of another key issue in Turkey, namely Constitution Referendum of 2017: Once again, almost total polarization in accordance with media organs' partisan news coverage has dominated Turkey in regards with the controversial Constitution Referendum. Turkish journalists' long-held practice of devoting space and time to conflicts rather than negotiation or conflict resolution are typical of the Referendum coverage. Some discourses and actors continue to be systematically excluded from newspapers' pages and TV screens, in accordance with the cultural air domi-

nating Turkey since early 2000s. In contrast with the normative expectations of the liberal tradition stated at the beginning of this article, performance of Turkish media performance (both pro and anti-government versions) did not do more than legitimizing the constitution making process, which is an outcome evidently in favor of government's political agenda, rather than public interest.

Future studies questioning the media's role or performance in such political processes, such as constitution making or elections, may go further than limits of this study and focus closely on signifi-

cant actors of such processes, namely media producers/news makers and audiences/individuals. With a better understanding of these two fronts, the macro and meso level analyses presented in this study would make more sense particularly in regards with testing the normative expectations on which media's role/performance is evaluated. Furthermore, such studies would provide us with thicker descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of single, individual experiences with media which would neatly balance the social bias of the approach followed in this article.

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