

Military – Journal/ist Relations from May the 27th to April 27th

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Abstract: In this study, the relationship between the armed forces and journalists in Turkey will be discussed with examples from recent political history. This relationship will be addressed within a historical framework and dated back to the Coup on May the 27th, 1960, a time when the military/journalist relationship started strengthening. The question whether the Journalist uses the Military or vice versa will be dealt with basing the question on historical transformation of the relationship. In contrast to other studies carried out on the triangle of media-politics-capital, this study will take military and the armed forces as a subject or an independent actor. Within this framework, despite the changes in changes in global circumstances, the military / journalist relationship seems to have continuity in Turkey.

Key Words: Journal, Journalist, Media, Army, Politics.

Although the army-journal/ist relationship in Turkey dates back to the early years of the republic, and even as far as the Ottoman Empire, the 27th May 1960 Coup which was a critical point in history affecting Turkish political, social and intellectual life, also determined and brought continuity to army-journal/ist relations.

This phenomenon of continuity is reflected in 21 century's Turkey Ergenekon, Balyoz ve Oda TV Indictments. Kemal Karpat's emphasis on "reading present from history" clarifies the ongoing debate (Karpat, 2011 November). Knowing historical facts may provide a genuine foundation in research studies (Zaim, 2007: 8). Journalists' reflecting political ideologies leads to an ethical discussion (Mardin, 2004: 35-36).

In this study, the armed forces will be regarded as a subject in itself not within a context of politics-capital relations.

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Military Discourse as News: May the 27th and Foundations of Military-Journal/ist Relationship

In C. Wright Mills' words, today's active government agencies are respectively, giant corporations, not easily accessible state agencies, and not very approachable armies (Mills, 1974: 432). Turkish army has a historical heritage that could be summarized as, "state-military identification, modernization, and has undertaken the duty to intervene in civilian politics" (Akyaz, 2006: 15).

Turkey, along with Mexico, according to Huntington, is an example for countries where political generals (army chiefs) in the late 1920s created a political party and then the party ended the political life of the generals (Hale, 1996: 264). This property is also consistent with Weber's "institutionalized strong army" (Weber, 1993:207). The army in Turkey which has these characteristics has been one of the actors of the country's politics since the first intervention (Özbudun, 2006: 95). The May 27, 1960 coup resulted in the execution of a Prime Minister and two ministers, as well as implemented the mechanism of social engineering. The Constitution was amended, and social life was shaped. In this constitution, the National Security Council (Özbudun, 2006: 98) and the Constitutional Court were established.

May the 27th gave the armed forces the role of guarantor of the constitution (Özbudun, 2006: 99). Media was an external factor in the events of May the 27th. Cüneyt Arcayürek states "the army did not only want to influence the universities, but also the media" (Arcayürek, 1983: 93).

The Government of National Unity made wide-ranging changes. Military rule established organizations like the Journalists' Union, The Society of Journalists for a civil mechanism in order to provide self-regulation, and on the other hand established the Press Ad Authority to regulate official advertisements. Also new arrangements were made to extend the rights of journalists.

The headlines in the press during the May the 27th period are revealing the atmosphere of the time.¹ One of them, a report titled "Students Were Minced in Machines", which many years later was falsified and called disinformation by the Journal Chief Editor Orhan Birgit (Birgit, 2011).

1 "Murdered students' graves detected" *Cumhuriyet*, 29 Mayıs.

"Government to deport İnönü" *Yeni Sabah*, 30 Mayıs.

"New corpses found in ice houses and pits" *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Haziran.

"9 found dead in İstanbul" *Ulus*, 11 Haziran.

"Democrat Party was to plot a massacre if not taken over." *Dünya*, 31 Mayıs.

"Officers were to be murdered in mass" *Vatan*, 9 Haziran.

"Plot to annihilate! DP plot to abolish universities and the armed forces." *Dünya*, İkinci baskı, 31 Mayıs.

Depoliticization of the Media: Media-Military Co-operation on September 12.

September the 12th carried press-military relationship a step further. This process ended in closure of many newspapers like Milliyet, Hurriyet, Tercüman and Milli Gazete at different times (Topuz, 2003: 259). As a result of prohibitions of the press, the trend towards tabloidization became popular (Özgen, 2000: 57–58).

Burhan Felek's bending to kiss the hand of the president of the time, Kenan Evren, when visiting the Journalists' Society (Özgentürk, 2008) shows that the attitude of the press at the time. Economic news was a priority (Gokmen, 1996: 718). Management of institutions by the armed forces caused closure of a large number of newspapers, and led to the arrest of the journalists especially in Istanbul (Zürcher, 2001: 406). According to Kalaycıoğlu, after September the 12th, the press did not mention a desire for a military coup anymore. But media's attitude began to change after the election of Prime Minister Turgut Özal.

Media as a Government: The media and Capital Integration in the 1990s.

The press made its new position in the post 1983 period clear with the words of Erol Simavi, Hürriyet's boss, to Prime Minister Turgut Ozal, "The first force is the Press" (Simavi, April 1988). Dinç Bilgin donated some money to the armed forces following the sale of Hürriyet to Aydın Doğan and commented on this act as "This is a way of getting approval from the armed forces and in fact most of the big businessmen are in line to make donations" (Bilgin, October, 2010). The power of the media in the 1990s is also exemplified by the fact that the DYP-SHP coalition was formed in the house of Emin Çölaşan, a journalist (Türenç, Kaplan, 2006: 129).

According to Ahmet Altan, this attitude of the media could be explained by the desire to make more money (Altan, 2011). Sadık Ünay says media's ideological discourse on national security is economically linked to mechanisms of political profit distribution (Ünay, 2009: 51).

The media as a State: February the 28th Process, Institutionalization of "Secularity and Security" Journalism.

With the February the 28th process, the media-military relationship was cemented. According to Levent Ünsaldı, "Throughout the history of Turkey,

no such direct participation of the media in a military coup had been experienced until then” (Ünsaldı, 2008: 183-184). Newspaper headlines of the period are of a military nature. Ertugrul Ozkok expresses his sentiments for the 1990s, as such “Let us admit we got the feeling to see ourselves even higher than the Parliament. This feeling was overtly pleasant for some of us”(Ozkok, 1995). Ergun Babahan says “All media owners were anxious about being in good terms with the armed forces to secure their status” (Babahan, 2010).

Nazlı Ilıcak expresses that during the February the 28th period, the media, including newspapers like Hürriyet and Sabah were not successful in taking a democratic stand. (Ilıcak, 2011). The Hürriyet newspaper is described as the “newspaper of the state” (Doğan, 2002), which expresses Hürriyet’s identification with the official ideology. Mainstream media created propaganda about secularism by instilling a fear of Islam.

As Gürkan stated, “The media played an important role in spreading and sustaining the official ideology in Turkey in the social sphere. Mainstream journalists and their bosses gathered around common values and attitudes within the framework of Kemalizm, and they carried out the mission of educating the people and changing the society”(Gurkan, 1998: 69-72). In this context, the military ideology shaping the state was defended by the media (Gokmen, 1996: 719).

Remembering the “Young Officers Anxious” Journalism

“Young Officers anxious” headline is put into circulation whenever the military wishes to rearrange politics. The most recent use of this headline was in May, 2003, in Cumhuriyet (Republic) newspaper. The source of this headline is the officers who performed the coup in May the 27th. Also before the military warning on March the 12th, the Chief of the Armed Forces, Memduh Tağmaç, expressed this discomfort of the young officials to the President (Çapalı, 2011). According to Kenan Evren, young officers need to be kept under control because as he said, “In 1980, young officers would not have stayed calm if they had not carried out the military coup” (Evren, 2006). Former navy chief Salim Dervişoğlu indicates that the headline is produced with the purpose of provocation. (Dervişoğlu, 2009). In this context, it could be asserted that the media almost calls the armed forces to overthrow the government (Dervişoğlu, 2009). Emphasizing young army officers is a feature of sociologically developing countries. According to Bottomore, young

army officers as a social cluster are more influential than intellectuals and political leaders and revolutions are usually made by this group (Bottomore, 1990: 113). In this context, the “Young Officers Anxious” headline is both a message representing the media-military alliance against politics and a sociological message directing the society.

Journalists and Soldiers as Defendants in Custody

Since 2002, Turkey has been debating the allegations of a coup attempt against the civil power linked to journal/ist-military cooperation. Some journalists and officers have been linked to the Ergenekon Investigation , Oda TV case and Balyoz Coup Indictment with the allegation of “participating in a plot to overthrow the elected government.” The suspects are alleged to have used the media as a means of laying the foundations for a coup, just like May 27th, March 12th, and February 28th.

Conclusion

The media-military relationship as an alliance has left its mark on the Turkish political history. These two structures, one of which is official and the other civil, work together in the field of politics. The fear of losing secularism and being replaced by fundamentalism is the main principle. Although this is seemingly the case, when we look at the post-coup conditions, economic concerns are apparent. This “historic coalition” between the two different elements (Gramsci, cited Kahraman, 2008: 124) has been activated in the above mentioned cases. Within the military-bureaucratic-intellectual triangle, the military is usually the safe haven (Kahraman, 2008: 125). The media in Turkey has taken over the mission of spokesperson of power-worshipping, in other words “missionary secularism” rather than being the spokesperson of the people in the country (Kaplan, 2007).

However, despite this cooperation, the press was the first organ to be oppressed following the coups. Military interventions which were supported by the media ended up with journalists being dismissed and newspapers closed. This current structure which ignores the principles and ethical codes of journalism could be improved by the media making peace with society and internalizing the superiority of law.

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