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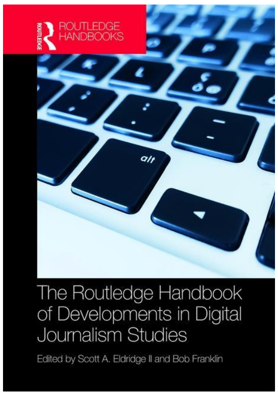

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Outsourcing Censorship and Surveillance

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OUTSOURCING CENSORSHIP AND SURVEILLANCE

The privatization of governance as an information control strategy in the case of Turkey[1]

Aras Coskuntuncel

When Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) attempted to purge almost all dissent in the aftermath of the July 2016 coup attempt,[2] the state-run news agency, Anadolu Agency (2016), reported that police arrested 1,213 users because of their online activities, while Twitter and Facebook provided real-time data to help Turkish authorities identify these citizens. This was but one of the many examples of the privatization of governance online – outsourcing surveillance, censorship, and law enforcement functions to information intermediaries – in which the private intermediaries serve the political power. As part of the strategy to control the flow of information, the government's efforts to privatize governance, surveil, and organize state-sponsored information campaigns intensified after the Gezi Park uprising in 2013. At that point, the party was already enjoying a clientelist[3] relationship with traditional media conglomerates, and since the 2002 elections, the AKP has given particular significance to exerting control over the flow of information and instrumentalizing media as a whole in favor of powerful interests while consolidating its undemocratic grip on power. This chapter analyzes the privatization of governance as one of the realigned strategies of information control in the digital era in the case of Turkey, as the political and economic elites adjust to incorporate digital technologies into the task of perpetuating power relations.

The AKP regime faced one of the biggest challenges in its 16-year tenure during the nationwide Gezi movement in 2013. What started as a sit-in to protest the government's plans to privatize and demolish a park in central Istanbul in order to build a shopping mall turned quickly into widespread discontent against the AKP's neoliberal and anti-democratic policies in particular and the qualities and politics of urban daily life in general – from neoliberal urbanization projects without any input from citizens and civil society organizations to undemocratic regulations and practices affecting citizens' daily lives. The protests widened as more people became frustrated by the government's response, its excessive use of police force, and the mainstream media's performance. For example, after days of clashes and police violence, on June 7, 2013, seven national newspapers bannered almost identical headlines citing the prime minister's reaction to the protests: "I would give my life for the demands of democracy". These stories implied that the government was the real victim and the real guarantor of democracy. When the police attacks intensified on the third day of the protests, CNN's Turkish franchise, CNN Turk, opted to air a documentary about penguins. The penguin was then made a symbol of the protests by the protesters, who turned to anti-government outlets and seized upon digital media, from livestreaming to micro blogging, to create spaces to express themselves, report from the ground, coordinate, and disseminate information and their narratives while both bypassing and demanding mainstream media coverage. Networking sites, specifically Twitter, became a crucial component of the protests for all sides; the number of Twitter users increased by almost 9 million during the peak of the protests between May 29 and June 10 (Kuzuoglu, 2013).

After the protests, the demonstrators discovered that authorities were monitoring and detaining many of them based on their interactions on networking sites; for example, people were posting their addresses so that those who were injured or fleeing police could find sanctuary. Volunteers created mobile first aid stations and tweeted their locations. Protesters and residents posted the locations of safe corners, which streets needed barricades, and where police were gathering. Government agencies, meanwhile, tracked these interactions so that later they could detain and/or investigate those who were involved, and they did. Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook shuttered accounts and censored statuses per government request, including newspapers and journalists' accounts and statuses, while Twitter introduced a 'country-withheld content' tool, which blocks content in a specific country, in Turkey (E. Sozeri, 2015). In addition to delegated censorship and access restrictions, the AKP also utilized new technologies for surveillance and state-sponsored propaganda campaigns. These efforts include forming online media teams and creating and strengthening extralegal relationships with media companies. The telecommunication agency and the country's biggest internet service provider (ISP), meanwhile, integrated their servers, and the national police launched a smartphone app for citizens to snitch on each other's online posts and accounts.

An overall analysis of the struggle to control the flow of information during recent protest movements in various countries reveals a similar pattern: digital media were crucial to the often radicalized, oppressed, and surveilled groups from Ferguson to Istanbul and São Paulo as they created a space to express themselves and utilized these technologies to coordinate. But this is also exactly where they are vulnerable; the same digital technologies are the tools of surveillance, control, and exploitation – again, predominantly of the same groups. The Turkish case within the broader trend illustrates a pattern of increasingly sophisticated tactics and regeared strategies of control that strongly counter the democratic potential of interactive technologies (Deibert et al., 2010; Tufekci, 2014; Tsui, 2015; Coskuntuncel, 2016).

Ronald Deibert et al. (2010) identify "three generations" of gradually more sophisticated controls by analyzing the "colonization of cyberspace" within the 56 states of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The "first generation of internet control techniques" includes filtering and blocking, while the second and third generations include creating legal and technical capabilities for content removal requests, network attacks, surveillance, and counter-information campaigns. Turkey effectively uses all three generations of control. But the internet is not a free-floating entity, and the issue of control is not solely about governmental censorship; claiming otherwise and ignoring the role of the private companies results in the failure to analyze the process of the privatization of governance, which is progressing in Turkey and which has already been realized to a much greater extent in the United States.

Private internet intermediaries are playing a central role in regulating content, governing expression, and carrying out law enforcement functions – often through the arrangements of technical infrastructure – on their own volition (DeNardis, 2012, 2014), and part of this privatized governance is governance in service of the ruling elite. The ruling political, bureaucratic, and economic elite establish a relationship similar to their relationship with mainstream media and outsource censorship and surveillance to private information intermediaries using legal cases, access restrictions, and flak.[4] As DeNardis points out (2015), the internet is a control network as much as it is a communication network. In the context of recent protest movements around the world, it is not only a tool for revolt but also a means of suppression. Just like with many other technologies, these contradictory politics are perpetually reproduced by the social relations within which the medium operates; technologies shape our relations to each other and to nature, while those same technologies are being shaped by the same relations. In this chapter, I first address the prevalent 'digital democracy' discourse and then analyze the political economy of the Turkish media and the relationship between the government and media companies.

The 'digital democracy' discourse

The 'digital democracy' discourse defines democratization and empowerment as inherent within the new communication and information technologies. The progressive potential of these technologies, just like previous ones, is by no means insignificant, but there is a difference between analyzing how these technologies open up new possibilities for democratization and inclusion on one hand and claiming that the potential of these technologies is already realized on the other. It is crucial to analyze how these technologies are owned and operated and to explore the changes, continuities, and contradictions in digital media.

Considering the continuing ownership concentration and commercialization, increasingly sophisticated state-sponsored information campaigns, and privatization of governance and surveillance online, the contemporary struggles to control the flow of information look quite different than they were once envisioned in both popular and academic discourses. Nicholas Negroponte (1996), for example, talked about the upcoming death of media barons; *Time* magazine (2006) claimed a shift in power in cultural industries as the magazine celebrated Web 2.0 users "for seizing the reins of the global media, for founding and framing the new digital democracy" (Grossman, 2006); and Henry Jenkins (2006), Yochai Benkler (2006), and Manuel Castells (1996, 2008), among others, suggested a rigid distinction between "old" and "new" media based on passivity vs. interactivity and control vs. emancipation. Castells, for example, defined emancipation within the medium's technological features and argued that the medium's architecture will resist commercialization (1996: 356). He also claimed the recent protest movements spontaneously emerged from and were based on the internet (2012: 106, 229). This popular tendency to treat recent uprisings as isolated and sudden awakenings ignores the long-term struggles, turmoil, and even wars in various contexts leading up to the protest movements. It also undervalues the use of other media available to the protesters and the crucial role of face-to-face interaction. These accounts are more heavily centered on the supposedly inherent qualities of technologies than the conditions and the relations within which they operate and are deployed. Jenkins (2006) repeated the claims that, thanks to the internet, "new consumers" are now empowered, creative, and rebellious, while Benkler (2006) argued that digital technologies are changing the mode of production. Meanwhile, in the same year Benkler, Jenkins and *Time* magazine published their celebratory accounts about digital technologies, media mogul Rupert Murdoch, then the founder, chairman, and CEO of one of the world's largest media conglomerates, purchased MySpace for more than a half-billion dollars and also hailed the "new media" by stating: "Technology is shifting power away from the editors, the publishers, the establishment, the media elite. Now it's the people who are taking control" (Reiss, 2006).

The digital democracy discourse sees new technologies and the ways to appropriate existing goods and services as a source of value instead of as the relationship between capital and labor. According to celebratory accounts, the internet is inherently changing and democratizing power relations as the audiences of 'old media' become active participants; such accounts are shared across disciplines and the political spectrum. This ahistorical dichotomy between 'old media' and 'new media' and the rigid understanding of 'top-down' vs. 'bottom-up' media neglect the power/resistance dialectic, ignore the reproduction of 'old media' in 'new media', and assume that the digital media is inherently resistant to being controlled by elites. This logic also suggests that there is no need to worry about the workings of power. As Darin Barney rightly emphasizes, "[I]f this is true – if network technology is inherently revolutionary – it leads one to wonder why existing bureaucratic and corporate elites are so enthusiastic about, and so heavily invested in, the success of this technology" (2000: 19). Mark Andrejevic notes, despite the "revolutionary promise of participatory media [. . .] power relations remain largely unaltered" (2009: 1); in fact, in many contexts, they are strengthened.

What these variants of the 'digital democracy' discourse are missing is not only an analysis of the changes and continuities but also the power/resistance dialectic that existed in the 'old media' era. The sharp contrast between critical interactivity and passive consumption related to the 'old' and 'new' media is ahistorical and mechanic. The commercial characteristics of active participation may very well lead to a new kind of passivity that neglects critical political thinking and engagement (Barney, 2000; Sterne, 2012). And, as Zachary Glass (2007) argues in his study of product placement in video games, passively viewing can also stimulate critical engagement. From Jenkins to *Time* magazine, the proponents of the digital democracy discourse essentially see the new information and communication technologies as a source of value instead of social relations and perceive social relations as relations between things, which is a form of commodity fetishism. This fetishism of technology also breeds the emphasis on the appearance (signifier, medium, form) over the underlying social relations.

"We endow technologies – mere things – with powers they do not have (e.g., the ability to solve social problems, to keep the economy vibrant, or provide us with a superior life)" (Harvey, 2003: 3). Today, the internet might be one of the most fetishized technologies. Technology, according to Marx,

> reveals the active relation of man to nature, the direct process of the production of his life, and thereby it also lays bare the process of the production of the social relations of his life, and of the mental conceptions that flow from those relations.
>
> *(1990: 493)*

In Marx's analysis, technology itself neither determines any particular social outcome nor is it "some free-floating *deus ex machina*"; all these elements are interconnected "in the construction and reproduction of the social order" (Harvey, 2003: 4). Highlighting the embeddedness between technologies and the conditions of their deployment, Marx states that "machinery in itself shortens the hours of labor, but when employed by capital, it lengthens them" (1990: 568). Instead of a biased approach toward particular features of technologies, Sheila Jasanoff's (2004) concept of the coproduction of technology and social order is also useful when considering how these relations are dialectically intertwined. Based on Marx's explanation of how superior technology can be a source of excess profits for capitalists only for a while, Harvey points to the difference between seeing the machines themselves as a source of value and understanding that "profit arises out of the social relation between capital and labor" (2003: 7).

Although no approach should rule out the technologies at hand as contributors to the solution, bold claims of transformation tend to ignore the power relations behind them. Matthew Hindman, through various data sources, shows that the internet actually is not capable of inherently challenging the monopoly of elites, nor will it inherently amplify "the political voice of the ordinary citizens" (2009: 6). John Goldsmith and Tim Wu (2006) and Laura DeNardis (2014) show how cyberspace is already controlled by private intermediaries, often regulating the flow of information through the arrangements of the infrastructure in favor of the bureaucratic and financial elites.

Joseph Turow (2012) provides a detailed explanation of how commercialization transforms cyberspace into a mechanism to stimulate consumption and commodify desires. McChesney (2013) analyzes the increasingly concentrated and commercialized corporate media system in relation to media's democratic potential (see also: Pickard, this volume, Chapter 16). Schiller (2000, 2007), Andrejevic (2007, 2013), and Fuchs (2014) offer excellent critiques of digitalization and the new dynamics of the centralization of power from various perspectives including surveillance, commodification, and labor. Rather than endowing powers such as social change to particular features of a technology, it is still important to analyze how these technologies are owned and operated.

Media ownership

Capitalism has monopolistic tendencies. Cultural industries have been no exception, and ownership concentration, including conglomeration, in the information and communications sector is well documented (Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney, 2004; Noam, 2009). Concentrated ownership is crucial as it is closely related to "the central problem of democratic media" (Baker, 2007: 205). The immediately visible issues related to ownership and control are the concentration of the right to hire and fire, of decisions over budgets and allocation of resources, and of lobbying power (Hesmondhalgh, 2013. Moreover, especially as they relate to the news media, some of the social and political implications of concentrated private control are the marginalization of the voices and issues of disadvantaged groups (McChesney, 2012); the standardization of news choices and the dominance of corporate logic in the public sphere (Allen, 2005); and a heavy reliance on official, elite sources (Greider, 1992). As Edwin Baker points out, diversity in media ownership "is most importantly a *process* value, not a *commodity* value" (2007: 16, emphasis in original). In other words, the issue of ownership is not necessarily about diversity of content or viewpoints but a "fairer, more democratic allocation of communicative power" based on the basic democratic principle of one-person/one-vote. Also, in concentrated media systems, bottom-line investment tends to be more extreme, and those few owners' choices for profitability are standardized. And finally, conglomerates are vulnerable to outside pressure within the market system (Baker, 2007).

Another issue that applies to both the so-called 'old' and 'new' media related to concentrated ownership is the creation of "extralegal relationships" between the owners of media companies and authorities, which Benkler (2011) and DeNardis (2012) discuss in the context of the internet governance. The internet is controlled by information intermediary companies that perform the role of gatekeeping and increasingly carry out law enforcement functions (DeNardis, 2014). Internet service providers perform deep-packet inspections, search engines take down content, networking sites block content and accounts, and credit companies terminate money transactions; the crucial point is that these companies are increasingly acting on their own volition, often in favor of the interests of the political power. A well-known example of the privatization of governance is the WikiLeaks case (DeNardis, 2012, 2014). In 2010, WikiLeaks, a prominent whistle-blowing site, published U.S. diplomatic cables that irked the U.S. government. During the CableGate saga, MasterCard, PayPal, Visa, Amazon, and internet services firm EveryDNS.net terminated their services to the whistle-blowing site, to the benefit of the U.S. government, without any government or legal action. Moreover, internet intermediaries "perform governance function" not only when enacting censorship – per government request or not – but also when they decide to deny censorship requests (DeNardis, 2014: 159).

When governance is privatized, both the government and corporations appear unaccountable because private intermediaries are neither under democratic scrutiny from voters nor subject to constitutional and other institutional confinements. In March 2016, WikiLeaks published a database of more than 30,000 emails and attachments sent from Hillary Clinton's private server. One of the communiques between the State Department and Google reveals how the digital giant reached out to the State Department to promote a new tool it created to encourage "more to defect" from the Syrian army, "giving confidence to the opposition", in line with U.S. government interests and regime change goals abroad; the email was then circulated among high-level officials (WikiLeaks, 2016b). Concentrated media ownership and a conglomeration model, in which most media are owned by corporations that own other businesses and which is rife with extralegal ties, are central to the discussion of the strategies of information control in Turkey.

Turkish media environment

The Turkish media environment is neoliberal and fraught with censorship and self-censorship.[5] Due to the (de)regulation periods of 2002 and 2011, today there are almost no legal restrictions on media ownership in the country.[6] Most media products and therefore most advertising revenue are owned by a handful of corporations, and this trend is only exacerbated after the post-coup attempt purges.[7] These conglomerates also own many other businesses, which account for their main sources of revenue (see Table 38.1). The Demiroren group, one of the country's energy and construction giants, for example, in addition to owning newspapers, television channels, radio stations, and digital platforms, also owns many companies in different sectors, including energy, industry, tourism, and construction. Other media conglomerates also own dozens of companies from construction to banking, most of which are dependent on state contracts and privatization. As a result, these media outlets are more vulnerable to pressure and likely to promote government interests in order to secure the government's favor in public tenders and accumulate more profits.

Table 38.1 Demiroren Group's investments

Company	*Media Investments*	*Other Investments*
Demiroren Group	**Newspaper:6 national titles** (Hurriyet, Posta, Fanatik, Vatan, Milliyet, *Hurriyet Daily News*) **News Agency: 1** (DHA) **TV Broadcasting: 7 channels** (Kanal D, Euro D, Kanal D Romania, CNN Turk, teve2, DreamTV, Boomerang Turkiye) **Radio Broadcasting: 2 stations** (Radyo D, CNN Turk Radyo) **Digital TV Platform: 1** (D-Smart) **Online Platforms:** Almost two dozen platforms including web and news portals, e-commerce, and stock quote services **Printing and Distribution: 2 companies** (Dogan Distribution, Dogan Printing Center) **Advertising: 1 company** (MedyaNet)	**Energy: 3 companies** (Milangaz, Milan Petrol, Total Oil) **Industry: 4 companies** (Demiroren Heavy Metal, Parsat Piston, MS Motor Services, D-Mermer) **Real Estate and Construction: 3 companies** (Lidya Flats, Lidya Construction, Seyhan Park Residences) **Tourism: 2 companies** (Kemer Country, Demiroren Istiklal Palas) **Shopping Mall: 1** (Demiroren Istiklal) **Port Management: 2 companies** (Zeyport, Dolfen Dock) **Education: 1 private school** (includes kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school).

Source: Compiled from Demiroren.com.tr, mulksuzlestirme.org, and bianet.org

The Demiroren Group bought two high-circulation newspapers, Milliyet and Vatan, from another conglomerate Dogan Group in 2011 and the rest of Dogan's media investments in 2018. After both acquisitions , Demiroren fired journalists it saw as critical of the government.[8] The company, meanwhile, went on to increase its energy and construction investments, including the bid to build one of the biggest seaports in Istanbul. In another example, Zirve Holding's media outlets are known for their pro-government coverage; the conglomerate periodically wins many infrastructure and road construction bids throughout the country in addition to being part of the consortium that won the bid to construct Istanbul's third airport. Zirve also controls hydroelectric power plants, has investments in international water and gas pipelines in the region, and was the contractor of the Taksim development plan, which eventually led to the Gezi Park protests. The Albayrak group, which also owns pro-government media outlets, frequently bids for and wins public tenders including defense and urban development projects. Dogus Holding, the owner of the NTV news channel, which sparked anger during Gezi protests because of its pro-Erdogan coverage, also owns other television and radio stations, magazines, and online portals in addition to power plants and banking, tourism, and construction companies. As a result, even before the Demiroren's acquisition of Dogan Media, at least 7 out of 10 most-read print newspapers, 7 out of 10 most-watched TV channels, and 5 out of 10 most-read online news portals were owned by companies that support or are affiliated with the AKP government, according to a joint report by the Reporters Without Borders and Bianet (2016).

Because of the clientelist relationship that arises from the ownership structure and neoliberal policies, the ruling elites often do not have to directly enforce their views; media companies perform the role of governing the information flows themselves on behalf of the bureaucratic, political, and financial elites. In exchange, these conglomerates gain the government's favor and accumulate more influence and profits. This delegated governance is not unique to Turkey, nor is it changed by new technologies. Overtly or covertly, the privatization of governance is the product of this narrow alliance of bureaucracy and private capital globally, of profit and control, and the Turkish government is establishing a similar privatization of governance model with digital media companies, using access restrictions in addition to legal and economic means and attacks from government officials.

Herman and Chomsky (2002) identify five filters in their analysis of the performance of mass media in the United States. These five filters are (1) concentrated ownership and profit orientation, (2) dependence on advertising as the primary income source, (3) heavy reliance on elite sources and official debate, (4) the use of flak by government and business figures to discipline the media, and (5) ideologies of anti-communism and anti-terror. Through these filters, money and power influence the flow of information, "marginalize dissent, and allow government and dominant private interests to get their message across the public" (2002: 2). In Turkey, under a heavily concentrated media ownership structure, their model operates visibly. Moreover, it appears that the information control model at work has incorporated interactivity, which digital democracy proponents purport should have rendered these filters moot.

The AKP and digital media

In addition to the already strong presence of government supporters on various networking sites, the Turkish government recruits digital media teams to propagate, harass, and deter critics and journalists, surveil citizens, and drive the discussion online. After the Gezi protests, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that the government was "recruiting a 6,000-member social media team to woo citizens and fight critics"; a senior party official told the newspaper in 2013 that those teams would focus on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram to "promote the party perspective and monitor online discussions" (Albayrak and Parkinson, 2013). In 2016, WikiLeaks published Energy Minister Berat Albayrak's hacked emails in a searchable archive, which demonstrated not only the extralegal relationship between the government and media but also revealed details of the AKP's social media strategies. According to the emails, the AKP setup teams consisting of experts (coders, designers, script writers, psychological warfare experts), users, and Twitter bot accounts to disseminate pro-government propaganda, intimidate dissidents, and create a network of informants (WikiLeaks, 2016a). According to a member of the Parliament's security and intelligence committee, by the beginning of 2017, the authorities prepared summaries of proceedings for 17,000 users because of their online activities, and another 45,000 accounts were being monitored (Cumhuriyet, 2017). And after the contested presidential referendum,[9] access to many accounts and statutes were restricted, especially those who opposed the decisions of the country's election authority and those who posted from the demonstrations held against the outcome (Birgun, 2017).

Almost 80% of the Turkish population lives in urban settings, and the country has Europe's largest young population (World Bank, 2015). Turkey's internet penetration rate was 61%, and 82% of the individuals participated in social networks one way or another in 2016, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK, 2016). In addition to restrictive deployment of the penal code, anti-terror laws, and intellectual property laws in terms of speech and media, Turkey's internet-specific legislation and regulations also have grown more control- and surveillance-oriented since the first internet law in 2007. In 2008, the country's telecommunication authority and the ISPs synced their infrastructure against online crimes such as child pornography; in 2014, the content of these integrated servers between the government and the private ISPs expanded to include deep-packet inspections; and the March 2015 amendments allowed the telecommunication agency to ban sites based on government request unless a court intervenes. And according to a leaked email from California-based tech firm Procera Networks, the Turkish government, through the country's largest ISP, could perform an "NSA-grade" deep-packet inspection (Fox-Brewster, 2016). Moreover, the ISPs, the telecommunication authority, "and by proxy the government" developed and deployed more sophisticated control and censorship tools, including "blocking individual URL addresses instead of banning the entire domain, wholesale banning of news *topics* instead of banning news websites", and bandwidth throttling, false routing, and cutting internet services in specific regions instead of using the nationwide kill-switch option (Yesil et al., 2017: 9).

The AKP often used legal, economic, and technical tools and tactics together to control the flow of information, not because the party "hates" the internet or just because these actions "resonate" well within Erdogan's voter base, as some scholars like to claim (see, for example, Tufekci, 2014, 2016) – as if AKP supporters constitute a homogenous body or as if the internet cannot be deployed as a means to control and suppress. These tools and tactics of information control by the AKP regime are of course in part attempts to reinforce the party base and block different opinions, but Turkey's political and economic elites love the internet as a control network, encourage the use of digital technologies, and use and develop sophisticated digital surveillance and censorship capabilities. Moreover, one of the core reasons for these censorship and access restrictions is to establish a relationship with digital media companies based on the privatized governance the AKP enjoys with traditional mainstream media companies.

Turkey made headlines when Twitter was blocked in March 2014 – several months after the Gezi movement and a series of leaked wiretapped conversations of AKP officials strongly indicating corruption on all levels – under the pretext of content-related legal cases like defamation. During talks between the Turkish government and Twitter representatives after the ban, the Turkish Constitutional Court overruled the ban. But although the ban was lifted (and the number of users increased, accessed through Tor and VPNs), Twitter not only took down the accounts and content subject to the court order but also started censoring accounts upon the government's requests (Bianet, 2014; E. Sozeri, 2015). Twitter at first encouraged Turkish users to continue tweeting and instructed them how to tweet via SMS text message. After the talks, the company agreed to strengthen communications with the Turkish government; the then-deputy prime minister declared, "Twitter now toes the line" (*Hurriyet Daily News*, 2014a; 2014b). A year after the first wave of bans, Turkey again in 2015 blocked access to Twitter, this time only for several hours, along with YouTube and 168 websites, because of another court order banning content related to the murder of a public prosecutor. Twitter and Google this time were quick to satisfy Turkish authorities' demands, and Facebook was quickest to remove the material and therefore did not face a ban.

Although Twitter releases "transparency reports", the company does not give details about the accounts and statuses in question. A study in 2015 on Twitter's censorship in Turkey, for example, "discovered over a quarter million censored tweets – two orders of magnitude larger than what Twitter itself reports" (Tanash et al., 2015: 1). In their efforts to monitor the banned accounts and tweets, individual researchers identified many anti-government accounts and cases involving journalists and newspapers' tweets and accounts in addition to those implicated in criminal cases (E. Sozeri, 2015; Silverman, 2015). After these and many other occasions, news outlets and bloggers started to ask, "Why is Twitter aiding Turkish censorship?" (Silverman, 2015). It is highly possible that, at the end, these accounts are worthless to Twitter because the user information is inaccurate or obscured due to the usage of Tor and other services, and the company does not want to risk falling far behind other networking sites in Turkey.

Conclusion

The concentrated, commercialized media system and surveillance-based business model of the digital media open up channels for the reproduction and strengthening of the existing power relations and control. Surveillance is employed increasingly as an extension of workplace management in addition to security and policing and reproduces asymmetrical and undemocratic power relations (Lyon, 1998; Andrejevic, 2007); governance is privatized, through which censorship and law enforcement are delegated, while both the governments and private intermediaries emerge unaccountable (DeNardis, 2012, 2014); profits are increasingly derived from rentier activities online and via offloading previously paid labor onto consumers through digital technologies – which in addition to deepening old forms of exploitation and alienation, efficiently enable "dicey work arrangements" (Scholz ed., 2013; Huws, 2014); and state-sponsored information campaigns easily expand and create an "infoglut" online, in which everything, including facts, turns into just another opinion and loses its "symbolic efficiency" (Andrejevic, 2013).

The corporate media's power to mobilize an elite consensus, reaffirm its legitimacy and manufacture consent lies in its omnipresence and aggregative nature. Every day through various forms of content from various media, with all those experts, pundits, and politicians, we consume different versions of the same elite agenda and framework; most of the time even the changes in the dominant discourse are tied to tensions within elite circles. Hegemony, as Gitlin interprets Antonio Gramsci's writings, is "a process that is entered into by both dominators and dominated. Both rulers and ruled derive psychological and material rewards in the course of confirming and reconfirming their inequality" (2003). The condition of penetrating the dominant ideologies into the masses' common sense and everyday practices in capitalist societies is far from being a mechanical, top-down process but rather is distilled through net-like structures, where not only the struggle between the dominant and dominated but also the struggle within the dominant classes and ideologies takes place. And cultural industries are not only "increasingly sources of wealth and employment in many economies" but also "involved in making and circulating products that [. . .] have an influence on our understanding and knowledge of the world" (Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 4–9) as we reproduce "the world by symbolic work and take up residence in the work we have produced" (Carey, 2009: 13). At the nexus of these struggles, mainstream-corporate media specialize in the "production, relaying, and regearing of hegemonic ideology" (Gitlin, 2003: 254), and the internet, from the arrangements of technical architecture to the content layer, is not an exception.

From cutting off services to WikiLeaks in accordance with the U.S. government's interests to Twitter and Facebook's censorship to please the Turkish government, private corporations fulfill the role of governance on behalf of the bureaucratic/financial elites. As a result of this privatization of governance, the conditions of "delegated censorship, delegated surveillance, delegated copyright enforcement and delegated law enforcement" (DeNardis, 2014) have no less significant outcomes in terms of rights, freedoms, and hegemony than seven national newspapers using the same front page headline based on the prime minister's speech about the Gezi Park protests or CNN's Turkey franchise airing a documentary about penguins when the first clashes erupted in Istanbul.

Because systemic change will not happen overnight, the struggle for democratization and emancipation should start today with realistic goals under current conditions with the tools at hand and extend into the future, even if it goes against the logic of capitalist accumulation (Foster, 2015). Today, as Andrejevic (2013) also points out, the core of the problem is the commodification of previously nonproprietary information that results in the separation of the user from her/his data, which is being tracked, stored, and sold, and the expansion of the restrictive legal regime for the enforcement of property rights over this information. The appropriation of this information breeds not only privatization of governance and hegemony but also new forms of surveillance, exploitation, and alienation. Short and midterm goals should include the development of public service digital media without detailed monitoring and tracking.

Further reading

For a critical overview of the history, political economy, and impact of the internet, *Misunderstanding the Internet* by James Curran et al. (2016) is a great starting point. Laura DeNardis's *The Global War for Internet Governance* (2014) provides an excellent analysis of the internet governance struggles and the workings of the layers of the internet from the perspective of power relations. Matthew Hindman puts bold claims of empowerment and emancipation to the test in his *The Myth of Digital Democracy* (2009). In *iSpy: Surveillance and Power in the Interactive Era* (2007) and *Infoglut: How too Much Information is Changing the Way We Think* (2013), Mark Andrejevic powerfully analyzes and critiques the strategies of control from surveillance and exploitation to data overload and manipulation. And Edwin Baker, in *Media Concentration: Why Ownership Matters* (2007), comprehensively explores the links between democracy and media ownership.

Notes

1 Parts of this chapter are a modified version of text excerpted from Aras Coskuntuncel, "Privatization of Governance, Delegated Censorship, and Hegemony in the Digital Era: The Case of Turkey," *Journalism Studies*, June 2016.

2 A group of commanders (mostly affiliated with a religious and political group, which was previously an ally of the government) with mostly clueless foot soldiers in Istanbul and Ankara attempted to take over the country (during almost prime-time), but they did so without capturing a single government minister and instead carried out spectacles like occupying the bridges over Bosporus that connect Asia and Europe. The subsequent purge was nevertheless massive: In just the first week of November 2016, for example, Turkish

authorities sacked more than 9,000 public servants, arrested 11 elected members of the second-biggest opposition party, detained nine journalists and managers of an anti-government daily newspaper, closed 15 media outlets, used throttling to restrict access to networking sites, and blocked popular VPN services – all based on an extended state of emergency (Ilgun 2016; Nebil 2016).

3 The concept signifies a patron-client relationship in political processes, where public office is treated as private property so that parties establish their support based on nepotism and reward their supporters with private goods. For an analysis of clientelism in the context of Japan, see Ethan Scheiner, *Democracy Without Competition in Japan: Opposition Failure in a One-Party Dominant State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

4 Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (2002) define "flak" as one of the "filters" of their "propaganda model"; in this context, it refers to attacks and/or "negative responses to a media statement or program" through various means, including communicative, legal, and economic, to discipline media.

5 The term "neoliberalism" often is used excessively and inconsistently. Here I refer to the political economic practice of (de)regulation, privatization, and marketization, meaning both the withdrawal of the state from many areas and the creation of the markets by state action if markets do not exist (water, social security, telecommunications, etc.) in favor of capital accumulation that has been commonplace since the early 1970s. For a detailed discussion of neoliberalism, see: David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005).

6 In 2002, restrictions on cross-ownership were lifted, while in 2011 the cap on foreign capital was raised to 50%, which combined with various bypass methods eventually resulted in a hyper-neoliberal market in which both national and international mergers and acquisitions further concentrated the media ownership.

7 Before the controversial coup attempt on July 15, 2016, there were 2,813 local, 107 regional, and 180 national newspapers in Turkey, while there were 39 national, 15 regional, 209 local, 93 cable, and 193 satellite television channels, and 1,074 radio stations nationwide (TUIK 2014) according to official reports. Between the coup attempt and the contested presidential referendum in May 2017, a total of 158 media outlets were shut down, and 150 journalists were put behind the bars in the purges under the extended state of emergency, according to an OSCE report (2017).

8 After the first acquisition in 2011, then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan casually explained that the new owner asked for his recommendation for whom to hire as Milliyet's editor-in-chief soon after the buying the newspaper – confirming the extralegal relationship between them. For more information, see Ceren Sozeri, "Hukumeti Destekleyene Butun Kapilar Aciliyor," *P24* (2015) and Bianet, "Dogan Medya'da Cikarilanlar, Istifalar, ve Atananlar," *Bianet* (2018).

9 The country's election board (YSK) issued a decision deeming even the ballots without official seals valid and therefore cast serious doubts on the integrity of the results. For more details, see Jennifer Amur, "Why Turkish Opposition Parties are Contesting the Referendum Results," *The Washington Post*, April 17, 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/04/16/heres-why-turkish-opposition-parties-are-contesting-the-referendum-results/

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