

# THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN POLITICAL REALITY AND IDEOLOGY OF MEDIA

Gülsün BOZKURT

İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Türkiye

glsnbozkurt@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9558-7577>

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## ABSTRACT

The power of influence led the communication science treated as an individual science, which was originally as a part of social sciences; today determines the ideological frame of media as well. The purpose of mass media, which is supported by technological improvements, is transforming ideological tasks as well which are attributed to the media. The manipulation of media by political elites, which is used with all its functions to build the desired social reality, obliges individuals to live under circumstances of mass, which are created, by politics and media. That pressure disrupts the media-public relation, meanwhile leads up to the end of the moral values, which is essential for the existence of media. Regardless of circumstances, media field and name, staying in favor of society can be possible with the existence of media workers who behave in an ethical way. Otherwise, media can be shaped with every individual condition and eventually will lose its ideological responsibility. In this study, the reason why the media failed to defend its fundamental ideology against political influence is questioned. It is aimed to draw attention to how the reality that created by media and politics is perceived by the public and the individuals. In this context, the main ideology, influence of media, and the relation with the public are studied. The frame of political reality, which is generally used by political scientists, is usually associated with the way of the usage of the language. Therefore, in this study, instead of emphasizing the functions of the language, it is aimed to link political reality and media in a descriptive way.

**Keywords:** *Ideology of Media, Political Reality and Media, Economic Politic of Media*

## POLİTİK GERÇEKLİK VE VAR OLMA İDEALOGİSİYLE ÇELİŞEN MEDYA

### ÖZ

Toplum bilimlere ait bir olgu olarak ortaya çıkan iletişimin tek başına bir bilim dalı olarak incelenmesinin önünü açan etkileme gücü, bugün medyanın ideolojik yapısını da belirlemektedir. Teknolojik yeniliklerle desteklenen kitle iletişim araçlarının kullanım amaçları özünde medyaya atfedilen ideolojik görevleri de dönüştürmektedir. İstenilen toplumsal gerçekliğin inşası için tüm işlevleri kullanılan medyanın siyasi elitler tarafından yönlendirilmesi kamusal alanda var olmaya çalışan bireyleri yalnızca politik ve medyanın yarattığı gerçeklik kıskacında yaşamaya mecbur bırakmaktadır. Bu baskı, medya organlarının kamuoyu ile ilişkisini sekteye uğratarken var olma gerekçesinin özü olarak atfedilen değerlerinin de yok olmasına zemin hazırlamaktadır. Medyanın koşullardan bağımsız bir şekilde toplumdan yana bir tavır sergileyebilmesi, hangi platformda olursa olsun meslek etik ilkeleri doğrultusunda hareket eden medya çalışanlarının varlığıyla mümkün olabilir. Aksi takdirde koşullara göre şekillenebilen ve ideal sorumluluklarını yitirmiş bir medya gerçekliği ortaya çıkar. Çalışmada politikanın yarattığı gerçeklik kıskacında var olmaya çalışan medyanın temelde var olma idealine neden ters düşmek durumunda kaldığı sorgulaması yapılmaktadır. Çalışmada medya ve politikanın yarattığı gerçekliğin toplumsala nasıl yansıdığı ve bu gerçeklik doğrultusunda bireydeki mevcut algıya dikkat çekilmek istenmiştir. Bu bağlamda medyanın temel ideolojisi, etkisi ve toplumla olan ilişkisi irdelenmiştir. Literatürde çoğunlukla siyaset bilimciler tarafından kullanılan politik gerçeklik kavramının çerçevesi de genellikle dilin kullanım biçimleriyle ilişkilendirilmektedir. Bu nedenle çalışmada uzun uzadıya dilin işlevlerinde bahsetmek yerine politik gerçeklik ve medya bağlantısı betimsel bir biçimde kurgulanmaya çalışılmıştır.

*Anahtar Kelimeler: Medya İdeolojisi, Politik Gerçeklik ve Medya, Medyanın Ekonomi Politikası*

### INTRODUCTION

“The Post” by Steven Spielberg, which was released in our Country at the beginning of 2018, draws the attention that the relation between media and politics needs to be questioned always. It is a reality that despite the fundamental contradictions between the ideology of media and the reality of politics, they work with perfect harmony when it comes to the mutual benefits of international politics. In this view, the relation between politics and the media is scripted and

filmed in “The Post” which is about the government-media relationship and 17 days which fundamentally changed the course of the Vietnam War, is so important subject to evaluate the journalism and media ownership. The film is about the inspiring struggle of a newspaper editor and his boss against the President of the USA who constantly lies to the public during the Vietnam War (URL-1).

It is an understandable political reality that politics don’t tell the truth all the time, in other words, they lie. The six principles of realism by Morgenthau (URL-2) underlines why it is understandable. On the other hand, ignoring the fundamentals of the existence of the media, and functioning just over the political reality, leads up not to fulfill the inspection duty of the media on behalf of the public and ends the codes of ethics of journalism like it is reminded in “The Post”.

Even though the media was originally only a part of public communication, it turned into a most powerful tool by changing and transforming over time. It became an independent power besides legislation, judiciary, and execution in the public area. Media is effective not only against the power elites but also in whole social areas like justice, health service, educational system, abuses in the family, etc. The power of media comes from the effective and quick usage of its dynamism in comparison to the other institutions in a public area. With the need of today’s circumstances, it became the “first” power instead of “forth” as it is called traditionally. Media, with its power, has the ability to mobilize the people, set the agenda of a country, and keep people away from the real world by creating a fake public opinion. On the other hand, media uses that influential power with the groups that have their own agenda, for a mutual benefit. The political and economical structure of media organizations is surely behind the relation between media and these groups. Even the reason for the mentioned relationship is based on the influence of media on the public; the usage of that power is usually in contrast with its ideological function.

The ideology of media is based on the public right to access information. Regardless of the circumstances, the media is obliged to convey to the public the right information. As a “first” power, media is a tool to build a public opinion and functioning of democracy without disruption. Independent institutions such as legislation, judiciary, and media have to control each other to have a sustainable democracy. Media, which is primarily responsible for the control, has to play a pioneering role in the public’s dynamism and productivity by providing the right, honest and constructive messages. Media also creates a public awareness by its power. At this point, the media has to be in an objective, independent and honest position to reach “power of control” function over not only political authorities and also over the ones who hold the economical power. Otherwise, it is counted

that it ignores one of the most important aims of public awareness and control function. Therefore, the conditions of the healthy functioning of democracy (Gezgin, 2001: 37-38).

As with all the other factors which affect society, there are some legislations for media as well. Besides the legislations, media workers have to be stick to ethical principles to completely fulfill the requirements of their duty. The main objective of the ethical principles is to avoid misuse and to support the journalists that are willing to behave ethically during and after their professional life period. It is so important that all the regulations and legislations for media have to be in line with democratic principles to sustain peace of society and not to exceed the limit of the freedom of the individuals. Avoiding the negative intervene of legislation on the media regulations reminds media workers to behave ethically and responsibly. Those who have not got the responsibility and awareness will eventually not be respected by society (Özgen, 2006: 26). Maintaining the order in society and performing the tasks with a complete “value-added” approach of all professionals in different industries are very much related to happy individuals and healthy functioning of the public life. With this approach, ethical behaviors are so vital.

There are some vital rules to define the limit of the rights and freedom of the individuals. The relation between mass media and the individuals can be sustained with these rules to maintain the harmony of the society. Since all events, subjects can be used as a source of media, all social events such as wars, crimes against humanities, natural and sports events, protests, achievements, etc. are subjected to media ethics.

### **THE POLITICAL REALITY**

The reasonability and the nature of realism can be questioned when it is about ethics, sense of aesthetics, causality, science (URL-3). The realism paradigm with its long historical past plays a key role in the political-economical area. Intellectual principles, which define the actions of the countries in international relations, can be interpreted as the basic steps of both international relations and international economics. Realism is an important philosophy of politics that helps us to understand political relations and modeling (Wohlforth, 2010: 132). Nowadays, according to the realistic approach that affects globally the foreign economical policies, there is a logic behind the economical and political events.

Realism, which is supported by many influencer philosophers, has six basic principles according to Morgenthau;

- 1- The origin of the politics like the origin of societies is based on the

objective codes of human nature. Therefore, it is needed to understand the codes before making the law. Even political laws are not fully objective and perfect, they can be created a theory that reflects the codes of human nature. Realism detects the facts and gives meaning to them by using the mind. The effects of a foreign policy can be determined by investigating the political actions and the results. Therefore, it can be understood what the political leaders did and targeted.

2- The key factor of realism is the power that is based on benefits. That interests are used especially in international relations by the authorities who hold the power. It approaches politics as a stand-alone subject that is different than economics, ethics, aesthetics, or religion. There would not be possible to have either domestic or international theory without political realism so it would not be possible to distinguish political and non-political events or would not be possible to organize a systematical approach to political areas.

3- Realism assumes that self-interest exists as a universal category but the meaning of it is not the same for all. Interests are actually the core of politics and are not affected by time and place but national interests, which are changed by the political and social circumstances, are not static.

4- Even though the political reality is aware of the ethical principles of political action, it believes that it cannot be expected from the states and ethical principles must be eliminated from the real conditions of time and places. At the same time, it aware of the tension and conflict between ethics and successful political actions. Ethics is related to the manners in the spiritual World but in political ethics, it is judged as a result of the political action.

5- Political reality refuses to consider the equal expectation of a nation with universal laws and thoughts. Since all nations believe that their own ethical values are superior to the others, it has to be avoided to protect moral values. Therefore, universal moral values should be taken as an acceptance criterion.

6- The difference between the other theories and approaches against realism is huge. A political reality that acts in a specific way about the political events defends the political area. Realists are aware of the intellectual thoughts and approaches other than political ones but they try to ignore them (Morgenthau, 1978: 10-15).

Morgenthau, with these rules, tried to explain the legality of the rational actions of

the states with the constant rules of politics. But, recent global facts and concerns point out that states can act out of the constant rules of politics in an international area. During the period of handling international politics and economical balances with power and interests, states can try to manage the social life with the same motivations and they can use all necessary tools to reach their targets. Media, which is the most important ideological tool of the states, exists under the state's political influences.

The most important passage of "The History of Western Philosophy" "cave allegory" actually refers to many things that should be questioned intellectually by individuals and societies. The illusion of reality that human beings believe is real and continue their life with this thought can be counted as an example of the theory. In the 7th chapter of "The Republic", (Platon, 2014: 514-518 or URL-4) Sokrates tells Glaucon to imagine a group of prisoners in an underground cave with chain without having a possibility to move since their childhood. The only thing they saw in their whole life is just the back wall of the cave. All the things that are reflected in that wall from the outside of their world, which the prisoners try to convert to their own understanding can be interpreted as an illusion. All their lives and all these conversions are based on the perceptions that they imagined from the puppet show that is reflected in the wall.

Going out of one of the prisoners from the cave by somehow getting rid of the chains and discovers the reality of the subjects can be commented as the effort of human beings to reach the reality. None of his friends believe what the prisoner told them when he returned to the cave shows that nobody wants to give up their own conformism about things. The human being has to develop steps that make the enlightenment possible to reach more than it is shown to him/her like in the metaphor. It is not easy to reach the real information and human beings have to push themselves to learn the reality. Otherwise, thoughts will be developed according to the social imposition, which will lead to the damage of the reality and the meanings, and therefore, it causes individuals to live what is imposed on them.

The word of political, which was derived from the Greek word Polis (city), also given names to the city-states at that period. Political concepts, which mean states related works basically evaluated by the political scientists in two different meanings even it has different connotations. In the first approach of state models, politics is related to the functioning of the states and its institutions. In a narrow approach, it is called governing the state, in a wider approach; it is called a legal frame about the management (Eyigün, 2015: 249-250). The second approach, which functionally handles politics, believes that political activities differ from

social ones. Politics is the name of the struggle for the sake of power. The struggle is shaped not for the human requirements but to have the power (Bozkurt, 2020: 59). Politics is a tool for the authorities to have the power in their hands and also sustain it. The reality, which is the indispensable factor of social life is created under the power of authorities, is usually called social reality. Politics is affected by social reality and also affects social reality. All facts that want to exist in that area cannot be thought of without these realities. The concept of art, literature, and the media cannot develop their own reality under the political and social influences.

It is believed that the language in modern linguistics and philosophy is not only the tool to explain reality, and also a mechanism to build reality. Usage of language to be a tool for many social functions creates different representations of reality. The physical reality version of the reality can be separated from the language; the other realities keep on their existence as semiotics. Nevertheless, both conditions cannot be thought apart from the language.

Political reality is an expression of reality. But it can differ with the language. There are 3 types of usage of the language. The first one is about the wording, which conveys the nature of the information. For example, the information about the fight between two groups can be conveyed differently but in the end fight itself is a negative thing. On the other hand, to call any of the reality socially valuable and meaningful, it has to be connected with the linguistic tools. That situation refers to the manipulation of the language. Manipulator tries to impose its own thoughts or ideas directly or indirectly under the guise of information. In other words, the information that is aimed to explain a situation can be transferred to a distortion of reality (Zolyan, 2019: 132).

The questions about the existence and sustainability of the political reality, which is isolated from the language, show the meaningful level of the language. A language is a tool both to create and to comment on reality. In the semantic ground, language is a social and verbal behavior. Language is the meaning of the political events that people experienced and the developments. Therefore, political language is the political reality. There is no meaning for the actors and audiences (Edelman, 1985: 10).

Ideologies are the ideas that are related to the control and struggle in society. In another word, the combination of the meanings, values, and believes. A group of philosophers believes that the ideas that appear in human minds can be examined objectively; therefore, there should be a way to make them think the correct thoughts. That opinion is actually the starting point of the ideological concept

(Gönenç & Bozkurt, 2017: 42). As a result of that, an ideology that cannot be thought separately from the political and economical area comes together with them and builds social cohesion. Sustaining the domination of any powerful factors at an ideological level can be managed by media tools. The media tries to transform the ideological ideas of the authorities to the public's common ideas and interests by using many different methods.

### **POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MEDIA AND MEDIA-POLITICS RELATIONS**

Political economy is a science that is about the industrial relationships between humans. It researches the economical regulations and laws that manage the developments of socio-economic events over history. The perspective of the political economy researches the source of the production, the distribution, and the consumption and with its special role in the societies; it is necessary especially for the media. The media industry, which is recently called a free time industry, is developed with literacy throughout society. But, in the end, media is so important since it became a social institution that manages the mobilization and recreation within the political structure of the society (Picard, 1989: 65). The first question about the political economy of media is to have mass media tools and to control them. One of the important issues is the capital and ownership structure of the media area which is a much wider industry compared to the past thanks to technological improvements. While the perspective of the economy-politics tries to explain the relation between media and the capital owners, at the same time it tries to draw attention to the media ideology. All the developments with technological improvements in the communication area should be researched again (Yücesan, 2009: 31).

The transparency of the ownership and the control in the media area is so sensitive because, to protect the freedom of the individuals, media should stay free and objective while developing. The media industry plays a vital role, especially in developed countries and societies. Media provides not only information but also adds value to people with its effect on political and cultural processes. The fast-growing media industry always creates research areas thanks to an important relationship with businesses, governments, and eventually with states themselves.

The fulfillment of the duties that media performs on behalf of society very much relies on its freedom and objectiveness. In order to have sustainable democracy, media has to be free, pluralist, and participatory. The main obstacle that media face is monopolization. Because monopolization means to have a single voice instead of multi. As a result of it, the perception of any of the ideas by the humans will be more or less similar since everybody gets the same information, news.

Generally, the subject of monopolization can be handled in three topics; horizontal, vertical, and cross monopolization (Bilget, 2001: 17). Monopolization takes place when a single or a few people/corporations own the whole mass media (Avşar, 2004: 89). Monopolization occurs in production or distribution if small companies are acquired by the big ones. If the acquisition is within the same industry/subject, it is called a horizontal monopoly, if it is within the different industries/subjects it is called vertical monopoly (for instance: Newspaper owner acquires a TV channel) and if different industries joined under one roof it is called a cross monopoly (Food producer acquires a TV channel) (Girgin, 2003: 54). Cross monopoly is the main obstacle to the free media. Because the priority of media might change according to the owner's interests and benefits that lead the media workers not to perform and execute their duties with objectiveness.

In these circumstances, the main responsibility of media is to reflect itself objectively. But it is hard to achieve due to the ownership structure of the media.

Media, one of the power factors of the recent World, instead of conveying real, correct, and objective information, became a transformer of reality. Societies are formed by the information filtered and passed by media. Although there are different approaches, it would not be wrong if it is told there is a dependency between the media and politics. Not only does politics use its power to impose and influence media, but media also has the power to do vice versa. Public institutions, which have the power to influence media, holds much more power through the hierarchy. Media is somehow systematically controlled directly or indirectly by the authorities (Arslan, 2001: 138-140).

The ability to change and setting the agenda of the whole society or a Country places media in the middle of politics. The objective of the leaders, governments, and oppositions, somehow makes them dependent on the media (İnal, 1999: 19-21). Media also plays a vital role to define the political agenda. Although the expectation from the media is to collect and distribute the information objectively, it affects the political agenda by defining the subjects to be manipulated or highlighted. This manipulated and purposely-highlighted information has a direct effect on the direction and the nature of the politics. Therefore, the politicians and political elites, that aware of the influence of the media, give importance and priority to media relations.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF “THE POST” FOR MEDIA**

“The post” was filmed in 2017 by Steven Spielberg. Besides its messages and reference, mostly the film is about the fight of one of the biggest newspapers

The Washington Post for democracy. The film pictures the revealing process of the secret documents which are stolen from the Pentagon by Daniel Ellsberg, who participated in the Vietnam war, in 1966. Ellsberg believed Vietnam War is not a right war. Actually, the Pentagon documents revealed that US Government continued the war even they also believe it is an endless and hopeless war. Eventually, whoever sees the documents believed that this war only helps for some politics and elites, business owners (especially the defense industry) and can be ended if public awareness is created (URL-5).

The New York Times made news in 1971, which is based on the Pentagon documents, about the failure of America in Vietnam. Just after the news, Nixon Government decided to impose a broadcast ban. After the ban, despite the view of the advisory committee of The New York Times, a broadened news about the Pentagon documents are published in The Washington Post by the persistence of the editor. Showing the courage to broadcast that news during the political circumstances of that time was not an easy decision since it was just about the time for the newspaper for the initial public offering in order to overcome the financial difficulty. But, according to the editor of the newspaper Ben Bradlee, what brings the end of the newspaper is losing the ability of free pres. Therefore, he believed that it is needed to share the information with the public and he did his best for his struggle. Regardless of political and economical conditions, the existence of free and objective media from the design, production, and distribution is vital to convey the right information to the public. Otherwise, media creates and passes the wrong, manipulated information, which will of course affect the social developments and the attribution of the individuals.

## **CONCLUSION**

Media, which has become an important industry with the development of technology, started to gain economical and political functionality. The dependency of the media and politics is sometimes resulting to convey the information as it is desired and sometimes it ends with the creation of a completely new reality. Both for the dependency on politics and also for not being objective and independent from the point of economic-politic perspective, it is unable to fulfill its essential responsibilities.

The problem of the trustworthiness of the media, which holds the power of influence on the societies, individuals, businesses, and politicians, is being questioned more than before with the diversified media channels and the tools and with the technological improvements.

With the view of the politico-economic perspective, freedom of the media seems a problematic issue. The development of the media industry raises the importance

of the media in the macroeconomy as well as the transformation of the ownership structure. The mentioned transformation is not only about the economy. It is transformed mainly to form the ideology of the people and limit the flow of uncontrolled information.

Despite the essential duties of media, due to the political and economical influences, it loses the objectiveness and independence. “The Post” is a real story that shows us the importance of the struggles of the ethical and responsible media workers to fulfill the essential duties. Regardless of time and place, the main issue for the media is to be ethical and responsible.

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