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Findings

This study demonstrates that political culture in Turkey is not a fixed or homogeneous national characteristic but a historically constructed and contested field shaped by shifting power relations. Across the various periods from the Ottoman to contemporary era, political orientations have been continuously redefined through institutional reforms, ideological struggles and media interventions. Rather than reflecting one civic culture, Turkey manifests multiple competing political subcultures including secular, Islamic, Kurdish, nationalist and leftist orientations, each seeking legitimacy within the mediated public sphere. The pivotal finding of this research is that mass media in Turkey functions not as a neutral transmitter of information but as a political institution embedded within structures of authority. From Ottoman reform newspapers to Republican nation-building broadcasts and contemporary pro-government media concentration, communication institutions have consistently constructed political legitimacy. Media have historically functioned as instruments of ideological dissemination, socialization and boundary demarcation regarding acceptable dissent.

The study further demonstrates the reciprocal interplay between political culture and media. Media reflect existing social values and identity cleavages yet simultaneously reshape political perceptions through agenda-setting, framing and narrative construction. For example, Republican-era media campaigns actively cultivated secular civic identity while contemporary media regulations have narrowed discursive space and redefined political culture. This mutual constitution challenges linear causal explanations and instead reveals a feedback loop between communication systems and political orientations. A key finding is that political hegemony in Turkey operates through negotiation rather than total domination. Drawing on Gramscian analysis, the research shows that consent is cultivated through media ownership concentration, regulatory mechanisms and digital governance strategies. However, counter-hegemonic practices persist through alternative journalism, Kurdish media networks

and digital activism. These prove particularly evident during the Gezi park protests. Hegemony, therefore, requires continuous maintenance and remains vulnerable to contestation.

Finally, the study identifies the emergence of digital authoritarianism characterized by algorithmic filtering, legal repression and heightened media dependency. While media expansion has increased technological access, it has not automatically deepened democratic deliberation. Instead, it has intensified polarization and echo chambers within a hybrid political system. Overall findings demonstrate that Turkish mass media functions dually as both a mirror and a motor of political culture, shaping and being shaped by enduring struggles over legitimacy, participation and power.
