

Covering Turkey: The Dilemmas of Foreign Correspondents between the Desk and the Field

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Eylem YANARDAĞOĞLU

kadir has üniversitesi, yeni medya bölümü
eylemy@khas.edu.tr

Abstract

In the last decade, Turkey's appeal for international news organizations has risen dramatically. In 1991, there were 85 accredited foreign reporters based in Turkey, the number was recorded as 145 in 2000, 200 in 2005. At the end of 2013, there were 317 accredited members of the foreign media, working for 284 different media organizations. This study accounts for the noticeable increase in the number of foreign correspondents in Turkey. By analyzing data collected via 20 in-depth interviews and online questionnaires, it offers insight on the personal and professional characteristics and practices of foreign journalists covering Turkey. The findings suggest that correspondents "feel responsible" for explaining the complexities in Turkey for their audiences, highlighting the dilemmas between the "desk" and the "field". They also indicate that Istanbul as an emerging global city does in its own right attracts new media connections.

keywords: foreign correspondent, Turkey, journalists, foreign, news, international

Résumé

Couvrir la Turquie: Les dilemmes de correspondants à l'étranger entre le bureau et le terrain

Dans la dernière décennie, l'appel de la Turquie pour les organisations de presse internationales a augmenté de façon spectaculaire. En 1991, il y avait 85 journalistes étrangers accrédités basés en Turquie, le nombre a été enregistré en tant que 145 en 2000, 200 en 2005. A la fin de 2013, il y avait 317 membres accrédités des médias étrangers, travaillant pour 284 organisations de médias différents. L'étude tient compte de l'augmentation significative du nombre de correspondants étrangers en Turquie. En analysant les données recueillies par 20 entretiens en profondeur et des questionnaires en ligne, elle offre un aperçu sur les caractéristiques et les pratiques personnelles et professionnelles des journalistes étrangers couvrant la Turquie. Les résultats suggèrent que les correspondants «se sentent responsables» pour expliquer les complexités de la Turquie pour leur public, mettant en évidence les dilemmes entre le "bureau" et le "terrain". Ils indiquent également qu'Istanbul comme une ville mondiale émergente fait dans son propre droit attirer de nouveaux contacts avec les médias.

mots-clés : correspondant à l'étranger, la Turquie, les journalistes, étrangers, nouvelles, internationale

Özet

Türkiye'yi Haberleştirmek: Yabancı Gazetecilerin Alan ve Haber Merkezi Arasındaki Açmazları

Son on yılda Türkiye'de yerleşik yabancı gazetecilerin sayısı düzenli olarak artış gösterdi. Basın Yayın Genel Müdürlüğü (BYGEM) tarafından tutulan kayıtlar, 1991 yılında 85, 2000 yılında 145, 2005 yılında 200 yabancı basın mensubuna akreditasyon verildiğine işaret ediyor. 2013 yılı sona eren Türkiye'de 284 farklı medya kuruluşu için çalışan 317 yabancı gazeteci bulunmaktaydı. Bu çalışmada, çevrimiçi anketler ve 20 yabancı gazeteciyle yapılan derinlemesine mülakatlarda elde edilen bilgiler ışığında, son 10 yılda yabancı basının Türkiye'ye gösterdiği ilginin artışı incelenmekte, yabancı gazetecilerin kişisel ve profesyonel özellikleri ve çalışma pratikleri üzerinde durulmaktadır. Çalışmanın bulguları, yabancı gazetecilerin Türkiye'nin zor anlaşılabilir karmaşık yapısını okuyucularına anlatmak için belli bir "sorumluluk" hissettiklerini, bunun da çoğu zaman haber merkeziyle "alan" arasında bir ikileme yol açtığına işaret etmektedir. Bulgularda ayrıca, son 10 yılda küresel bir şehire dönüşen İstanbul'un, tarihsel ve kültürel zenginliğinin kendi başına yeni medya bağlantılarını Türkiye'ye çeken bir çekim gücüne sahip olduğu görülmüştür.

anahtar kelimeler: yabancı basın, yabancı, gazeteci, Türkiye, haber, uluslararası

Introduction

The need for news developed in tandem with the development of “modern capitalism”, because it required gathering and diffusion of a special form of information for “political communication, trade and pleasure”. News in this way contributed to the process of “construction of national identity”, as well as “imperialism” - in the case of major empires - due to the need of accessing financial information about the colonies. (Boyd-Barret and Rantanen, 1999: 1). It was the telegraph lines laid under the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean that connected major empires such as the British and the French with their colonies. The use of telegraph in mass communication in order to disseminate news faster was a groundbreaking event. It led to the growth of news agencies and facilitated greater globalization as the telegraph companies divided the world into spheres of influence¹ through these telegraph connections (Boyd-Barret and Rantanen, 1999).

Foreign correspondence had much in common with the growth of international news agencies - such as Reuters, AFP, AP - which traditionally employed the largest number of foreign correspondents (Williams, 2010). Despite the lack of a precise definition, the following is generally accepted: “The foreign correspondent is a journalist who works in a state different from the one in which his information-medium is located” (Marx 1970 cited in Hahn and Lönnendonker, 2009: 499). In accordance with that, it was also described as a “system of the journalistic information mediation, in which information and news cross state-borders” (Hafez, 2002 cited in Hahn and Lönnendonker, 2009: 499).

The Crimean War (1853-1856), a long-running contest between the major European powers, was the event that marked the emergence of this new type of journalist known as “foreign correspondent” (Hesse, 1989). In 1854, Havas news agency sent a reporter to Istanbul. A year later Vienna - Black Sea telegraph line was opened and connected to Istanbul (Topuz, 2003). The Crimean war turned the city a natural base for foreign media due its strategic position which was already an economic and a political center. In 1862, an office in Istanbul was established for foreign correspondents, which formed the backbone of Turkish Directorate General of Press and Information (Basın Yayın ve Enformasyon Genel Müdürlüğü, BYEGM). This is the institution in Turkey where foreign correspondents should be registered for their accreditation and press cards.

However, reporting from abroad proved to be an expensive business. On January 17th 1870, Havas, Reuters and Continental news agencies signed an agreement where they carved the world into regions of news coverage within which Ottoman Empire and Egypt comprised the “common news region”.

1 The domination of the “news cartel” dissolved in 1937 (Williams, 2011).

Havas and Reuters opened a joint bureau in Istanbul the same year. This was the first foreign news bureau in the city (Topuz, 2003: 81).

After the foundation of modern Turkey, Ankara became the new capital. It was a small Anatolian town where the only newsworthy event was the Liberation War and the reforms introduced afterwards. None of these necessitated for foreign media to keep permanent correspondents. Istanbul as the commercial center, continued to host the headquarters of media organizations for both Turkish and foreign news organizations. The office for correspondents continued its presence under different names in the Republican Era and was re-branded as Directorate General of Press and Information (BYEGM) on June 18, 1984. It was also placed under the authority of the Office of the Prime Minister.² BYEGM has kept the electronic records of accredited foreign media members since 1991. The data collected by the institution demonstrate a steady increase in the number of correspondents in Turkey.³

The way foreign news outlets cover Turkey has always been a matter of interest for the Turkish media. The national press usually dedicates space for what the foreign media comments about events in Turkish politics or social aspects. The studies that consider the journalistic practices of foreign correspondents in Turkey and how they produce the news on the ground is scarcely studies subject. Mine Gencil Bek’s (2011) study offers one of the very few analysis of foreign correspondents working in Turkey. Bek considers the self-perception of journalists about their profession. She discusses the issue in a comparative way by focusing on both foreign correspondents and Turkish citizens working for media organizations based in Turkey. Unlike Bek’s study, this paper solely focuses on foreign correspondents and aims to analyze the reasons for their noticeable increase in Turkey in the last decade. It investigates the working routines and self-perception of foreign correspondents in Turkey and by so doing, aims to fill in that gap in the existing academic literature on news organizations covering Turkey. By focusing on issues/practices/challenges that influence the experiences of foreign correspondents, it provides some insight into the human sources and practices of foreign correspondents working in the country.

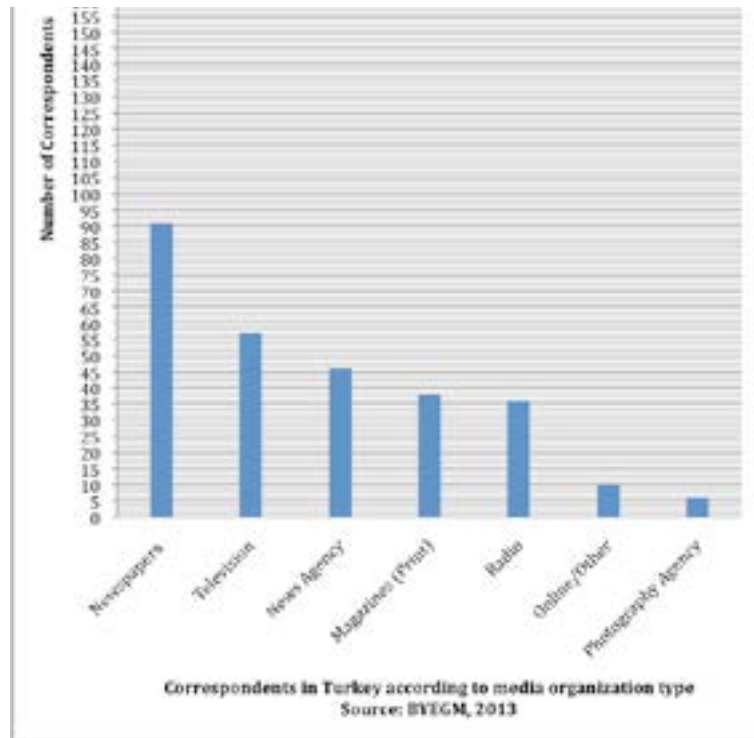
This research started after following a lead on a news item⁴ which reported that the “number of foreign correspondents has risen 8 fold since 2001” according to the numbers provided by BYEGM in 2009. In 2000 there

2 http://www.byegm.gov.tr/docs/katalog2013/ebook_en/FLASH/index.html p. 7-13 [accessed 26 July 2013]

3 http://www.byegm.gov.tr/docs/katalog2013/ebook_en/FLASH/index.html p. 7-13 [accessed 26 July 2013] According to an anonymous DGPI officers interview on 20 July 2013, the sudden increase in the last 2 years is considered to be due to the recruitment of Arab journalists for the Arabic service of the public broadcasting company TRT.

4 http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/yabanci_gazeteci_sayisi_katlandi-952378

were 145 accredited foreign reporters in Turkey and in 2010 this number rose to 220. In two years, from 2010 to 2012, 107 more foreign journalists were added to the number of foreign correspondents based in Turkey bringing the number to 327. In its 2013 report, the number of foreign media members was recorded as 327.⁵



Continuity and Change in Foreign Correspondence

Foreign reporting traditionally operated within the “systems of states and governing institutions”, answering the informational needs of nation state in areas such as foreign affairs, defense, politics and economics (Livingstone and Aslomolov, 2010). But in contemporary media ecology, there is an increasing trend towards “internationalization” where the messages and images “spill-over” across the national borders. There is also growing “global interdependence” which is increasingly challenging nation-states in fields like media, technology, politics and economy (Hesmondalgh, 2006). The nation states come under

5 http://www.byegm.gov.tr/docs/katalog2013/ebook_en/FLASH/index.html p. 7-13 [Accessed 26 July 2013]. According to an anonymous BYEGM officer, who gave an interview on 20 July 2013, the sudden increase in the last two years is also considered to be due to the recruitment of Arab journalists for the Arabic service of the public broadcasting company TRT.

pressure to co-exist with these globalizing networks, and find a “balance” between the requirements of its own needs and needs of “contemporary globalization” (Held, *et al.*, 1999).

Therefore, scholars attract our attention to the intertwined relationship between the national/local and global news. For instance, Vargas and Pauline (2007: 20-24) argues that the characterization of foreign news as separation of “external and internal event” is opposite to what characterizes globalization, which “de facto blurred the lines among many nations and the conventional distinction between the ‘foreign’ and ‘local’ news”.

Contrary to the globalizing trends, the so-called “international news hole - the space and time devoted to international news” is shrinking and there is a general decline of interest in international news (Vargas and Pauline, 2007: 42). Williams (2011: 4) considers this process a “global paradox” because the work of the foreign correspondents can now be faster and more interconnected due to new technology. But the interest in their work is declining. He explains the global paradox in foreign correspondence as follows:

“There is however a paradox that confronts the growing interconnectedness. As more people go to more places than ever before, and the news media enable far off events to encroach into people’s everyday consciousness, the men and women who are charged with reporting what is happening in other places are disappearing. While people have a greater opportunity to know and learn and understand more about the world, foreign news is declining. This trend has been apparent since the end of the Cold War.”

Observers note that there was a revival in the interest for foreign news after the events of September 11th, and the subsequent war in Iraq. But not even these events have been able to reverse the trend of a continuous decline in the coverage of international news (Vargas and Pauline, 2007; Jenner and Hamilton, 2004: 302-303). The decline in this interest is usually attributed to the ending of the Cold War. During the Cold War, international communications very much reflected the tensions between the “East-West” tone, reflecting “communism/democracy” divide. In this context, foreign correspondents and foreign news were actively sought after by the diplomatic or secret services (McPhail, 2006: 25). However, when the Cold War ended there was more transparency, and less perceived threats such as communism or nuclear weapons. According to McPhail (2006: 26) this was one of the facts that explained the decline in international news because “With no counterpoint or dramatic confrontations between East and The West, there were no engaging images to attract the public’s attention to international coverage”.

The Cold War rivalry between the US and USSR also determined the “newsworthiness” of countries and locations but this has also changed and

most news organizations “re-organized news priorities” and “deployment of personnel” in the period that followed (Williams, 2011: 7). Most authors agree that foreign correspondence continues to change and the correspondents adapt to changing circumstances. For instance, Jenner and Hamilton (2004: 303) identify three significant transformations that have shifted the way foreign correspondence is done. Two of those, “technological innovations” and “global interconnectedness” have previously been mentioned. The third factor according to these authors is the “recent economic pressures on traditional news coverage”.

The decline of audience interest in international news is just one of the problems associated with foreign news reporting. Scholars also identified problems such as high cost of international reporting; restrictions that the host country authorities attempt to exercise on foreign reporters to control the kind of stories that are available; and the phenomenon of ‘parachute’ journalism where the reporter is sent to a location and s/he has little or no knowledge on the context in which he is reporting from (McPhail, 2006). Other issues for criticism involved too much reliance on news agency coverage and decreasing research conducted on the country that needs to be covered (Paterson and Srebeny, 2004: 6). For example Hachten and Scotton (2007: 133) note that maintaining a newspaper foreign news bureau for one reporter for a year cost 150.000 - 250.000 USD, a television bureau costs around 1 million USD per year. Given these figures, they said they don’t find it “surprising” that many media organizations rely on news agencies for foreign news.

According to Hahn and Lönnendonker (2009: 499) after September 11, there emerged a necessity for a better understanding of foreign reporting in the US and in Europe but “an extensive model for theoretical model for research on foreign correspondents in general is missing”. In their review of the existing knowledge on foreign correspondence, they indicate that some studies are found in the forms of history of foreign correspondence, or in the form of memoirs of journalists who worked in various spots all around the world but these books usually focus on individual experiences and contain little empirical data (Hahn and Lönnendonker, 2009: 501). There are also studies which focus on the socio-demographics of foreign correspondents such as Hesse’s (1996) work which documented the profile of international news corpses in the USA and mainly focused on their personal background details.

A European Union funded project (AIM Research Consortium, 2007) interviewed 140 journalists from 11 different European countries and focused on work routines of journalists, their self perception as professionals, and relationship between the editors back home. Recent studies on international news also consider working experiences and professional problems of foreign correspondents in other contexts, such authoritarian states such as Russia (Kester, 2010) or the Middle East (Sakr, 2010). These studies investigate the

applicability of established norms of “Western” journalism in non-democratic and non-transparent settings. Bek (2011) similarly focused on the so-called “Western values” of the journalist profession and enquired whether there would be a difference in the ways Turkish journalists and foreign journalists covering Turkey would adhere to different standards. The findings interestingly indicated that the both groups of journalists adhere to the same professional codes, but Turkish journalists would experience differences in the ways these codes could be practiced in real-life conditions.

Methodology

As previously mentioned, there were around 40 correspondents in Turkey at the beginning of 2001, but by 2009 this number reached as far as 250 correspondents. In order to gather more information about the increase, this study began in March 2010, and involved different stages and forms of data collection. The research questions which motivated this study were: What are the factors that contribute to steady increase in the numbers of foreign correspondents in Turkey in the last decade? Who are the foreign correspondents covering Turkey and what are their working routines and self perception about their work in Turkey?

In order to answer these questions, firstly, BYGEM headquarters in Ankara was contacted and available information/lists on foreign correspondents were retrieved though personal e-mail correspondences. According to these initial data, the countries with the highest number of correspondents were the following respectively: Germany, United States, Great Britain, Holland, Iran, France, Italy, Azerbaijan, Qatar and China. The research firstly focused on the correspondents working for the European media organizations. Officers working in the Directorate of Press and Information attributed the increase in the numbers to be a positive result of betterment in the regulations and laws that governed the working conditions of foreign correspondents since the 1990s.⁶

The said shift took place in 1988 in the principles that apply to “Foreigners Seeking to Do Scientific Research or Study or to Shoot Films and to Those Applying on Behalf of Foreigners and Foreign Members of the Media”⁷. The new principles aimed at providing foreign journalists certain privileges for those who get accredited on permanent basis in Turkey as resident journalist.⁸ The

6 Interview with an anonymous officer at the DGPI. Date 16 May 2010.

7 Principles accepted by the Council of ministers (Decision No. 88/12839) on 4th April 1988 and published in Official Gazette No. 19799, April 29, 1988. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/icerikdetay.aspx?ld=45> (Accessed 16 April 2012).

8 The privileges include: Duty free importation of all sorts of technical equipment and spare parts, personal and household goods, and one personal and one service vehicle upon approval by the DGPI; Facilitation by DGPI for interview and filming demands; Opportunity to receive residence permit until the expiry date of the press card; accredited foreign media members get from DGPI

officers at the BYGEM suggested that the new regulations were specifically aimed to attract foreign correspondents from Athens to Istanbul, by offering them a number of privileges provided that they make Istanbul their regional center.

In order to further investigate how these betterments might have contributed to the rise in the number of correspondents in the last decade and the ways in which they might have influenced the works of foreign journalists this study began by circulating an e-mail introducing the research to a random selection of correspondents whose contact details were retrieved from the BYGEM records. A short questionnaire to gather demographic profile of the correspondents was sent to this random selection of group of journalists by email. Later, with the ones who agreed to participate in the study, semi-structured face to face interviews which last about 45-60 minutes were conducted. The study also employed snow-ball sampling technique, like the way it followed suggestions made by two foreign correspondents who have been living in Istanbul since 1980s. The interview questions were organized around issues about correspondents' personal experiences, about their organizations, work routines and self-perceptions as identified in a previous study.⁹ These questions centered on questions around the profession (how did they become a FC?), about the institutions they work with (the importance given to foreign news in that media organization, work routines, relationship with editors back at the main desk, the type of stories the editors prefer) and about Turkey (perception of Turkey before becoming a correspondent in Turkey, whether covering Turkey differs from covering other places, and how). A total of 15 interviews were conducted between May 2010 and February 2011 in Istanbul with foreign correspondents who accepted to participate in the research. At the beginning of 2012 the research joined a larger research project¹⁰, and 5 more in-depth interviews were combined with an online survey that was completed in 2013.

Findings and Discussion

The work routines of the foreign correspondents and their relationship with the news organizations vary from each other. Foreign correspondents can be staff correspondents who are based abroad and work for a single news organization; general reporters (who can be sent to a country to cover a breaking story), or stringers, which fall into two types: first, reporters who work for one

the same press card given to Turkish journalists and upon their demand they may also get Press Traffic Card that may be useful in executing their professional work.

9 Wilnat and Weaver (2003: 410) : personal background, work routines, perceived problems in correspondents work, job satisfaction (how free they feel to choose the topics they want to choose?) and factors, journalistic role perceptions (how do they see themselves, their work?) and perceptions of reporting practices about correspondent.

10 This is a book that covers surveys with foreign correspondents in 27 different European countries due to be published later in 2014 (Yanardağoğlu and Tılıç, 2014).

or two specific media organization for a special fee and provide them news regularly or, reporters who get paid by the article or video they produce (Boyd-Barret, 1970 cited in Williams, 2011: 98). When conducting the interviews, attention was given to include representatives of these different kinds of foreign correspondents. There seems to be an inclination towards more freelance and stringer type of contracts for foreign correspondents working in Turkey, than staff correspondent contracts. This can be seen in the complexity of the lists compiled by the BYGEM, they were organized according to organizations as well as countries. The list revealed that there were 284 organizations (with headquarters outside Turkey) and 317 registered correspondents.¹¹ Of this total number, 243 journalists are working for foreign media organizations, 74 are working for Turkish media mostly in foreign languages.¹² A correspondent can be registered for one outlet but can work for three different media when covering Turkey. The survey results indicate that they usually have basic command of Turkish, but use English as a primary language for making research or interviews, and most are competent in other languages such as French and German. The survey results also show that the majority of the foreign correspondents are single, and more than half of them hold a bachelor degree mostly in social sciences. A quarter of the correspondents hold a post-graduate degree qualification and about half of them are under the age forty (Yanardağoğlu and Tılıç, 2014).

Foreign correspondents have always been considered as enjoying more "prestige among professional peers" (Hamilton and Jenner, 2004: 301) or as the "the princes of the profession" who usually cover stories of famines, coups, terror, conflict and war (Yemma, 2007: 110). A male foreign correspondent for a major agency explains how the job of the foreign correspondents are going through significant changes:

The job has effectively disappeared from all but a few newspapers. At the agencies (such as Reuters or AP or Bloomberg) the days of the lazy foreign correspondent who drinks and wanders into the office at 11 with a tipoff from a friendly diplomat are over. The pace of work is faster, the demands higher and the work environment more regimented.

As the respondent also verified, the traditionally privileged image of the correspondent is changing as foreign correspondents are more and more connected to their "desk" and editors due to new media technologies, which

11 Numbers provided by officers in the Information Department of the BYEGM in e-mail correspondence, 27 November 2013.

12 The list is according to media institutions and indicates 298 different organizations. There are 14 media organizations that are based in Turkey which have 74 journalists working for them. These are *Cornucopia Magazine*, *Turkish Review Magazine*, *Hürriyet Daily News Newspaper*, *Sabah Newspaper*, *Olay Newspaper*, *Today's Zaman Newspaper*, *Ihlas News Agency*, *A Haber Television* and various parts of *Turkish Radio and Television (TRT)* which usually use foreign languages. There are more organizations than journalists in this list because some FCs work for several media and also the list does not include Turkish nationals working for foreign media.

facilitates greater editing of the copies they send back to the office (Yemma, 2007). Especially for correspondents working for news agencies, this process involves team working/editing when writing their stories.

The expertise in the country or culture or language can be considered as one of the obvious reasons for becoming a foreign correspondent. This could be the case for a veteran journalist, Andrew Finkel, one of the first foreign correspondents in Turkey who also worked for Turkish media. But, he said he would not have become a foreign correspondent if he was not “frustrated” with his academic career. A female staff correspondent for a major international news agency has been in Turkey for 2 years at the time of the interview. She was an example for reporters who are not experts in the language or culture academically, but who has grown an interest in the country as part of their profession. She had made the decision to come to Turkey after she was sent to support Istanbul office for the coverage of the 2007 elections and after that experience she decided to work in Turkey permanently because she said she finds it “fascinating”. She said she specifically wanted to come to Turkey, and even began learning Turkish before she actually moved to Istanbul.

Martin Selsoe Sorensen, who is a stringer for various Danish publications, similarly wanted to be based specifically in Turkey and managed to “convince” one of the publications he works for to “open a position in Istanbul” and give it to him. He said he wanted to cover Turkey because he found it attractive:

It is attractive because it is under covered, people either feels very much against or very much for Turkey. But it is always usually based on an emotional argument. I thought both sides needed factual reasons to base their argument. Also Turkey was interesting for me on a different news agenda. There was the EU process, the democratization reforms, torture at the time, issues around the place of women and minorities in the society, as well energy issues and Turkish involvement in the nearby regions, also the debate between religion and state and Islam and Christianity. It was obvious that it won't be just one issue.

The reasons for choosing Turkey as a base as a correspondent seem to be varied. These could be due to a “personal interest to go abroad as a reporter” without having a specific interest in Turkey or a specific “expertise/personal interest” in the country. Some of the correspondents can have very more personal reasons such as following a partner.

When we consider the responses of the journalists, thematically, we can see that “politics” and “business” make the bulk of the typical stories correspondents in Turkey usually work on. The foreign correspondents need to find interesting angles for their stories on Turkey, especially if they are covering it for a country which does not have constant interest in Turkey or its politics. Martin Selsoe Sorensen remarks how he tries to make the stories about Turkey relevant for the audience of the media organization s/he works for:

In Denmark for instance Turkey does not come up on the radar, so it is usually me who pick the topics and tell the editors what is going on and what is interesting and why. Turkey's image is changing these years. For many years Turkey was just a country applying for the EU membership so it has always been interesting from an EU perspective... But I see now a broader and deeper interest in other issues. There are still larger stories with an EU angle, I prefer not to do that, because the prospect is too far down the line, I prefer to look at Turkey in its own right.

One thing that is an advantage for the foreign correspondents to produce stories and story angles on Turkey that are relevant to the “home country” is the existence of the Turkish diaspora in the country where the media organizations are based. Germany is a good example, with a considerable Turkish migrant community. The German TV correspondent explains it as follows:

The situation of German correspondents is very comfortable compared to for example, a British colleague that I am sharing my office with. Our media is interested about everything in Turkey, economics sports, culture. I do politics anyway. Turkey is just important. While for the British correspondents there needs to be a bomb attack, a visit of British ministers, etc. They are not very interested in Turkey. The French are the same. The French colleagues can hardly sell a story because the French are not interested. They are more interested in Morocco or Algeria. German public is quite informed. They would know who Tayyip Erdogan is, ask in London, they would not know.

It is one of the functions of foreign correspondents to “cross cultural barriers” and “make the unfamiliar familiar to their audiences” (Williams, 2011: 27). If we follow the definition given above for foreign correspondent, as a journalist who works in a state different from the one in which his the media s/he works for is located, then they are required to know about their “home” and their “host contexts” well enough to be able to make the unfamiliar familiar. But sometimes this can be difficult. Jerome Bastion is a stringer for a major French radio and television who has been living in Turkey for more than 15 years and this is how he explains such difficulties:

My role is difficult and I don't say that as a joke, and I should say it is my colleagues or my editors and the French population, they all have difficulty to understand what Turkey is, it is different for them. I even don't speak about the fact that some of them think that Turkish population is mostly Arabic, because of religion and most of the time they used to ask me, they don't do that anymore, when I ask for a crew for example, 'don't you speak Arabic why you need a translator?' I don't even speak about this. It is difficult to explain why and how Turkey is nationalist or patriotic you know. Where does it come from? Because it is not the same nationalism that we see in Europe. What is the Turkish left? Leftist movement? The question of the minorities is also difficult to explain, Cyprus question is difficult to explain.

The French radio and TV journalist is confident that he tries to explain the complexities of Turkey and Turkish politics, but he says he “does not know how

it will be received” by the audiences. Firstly he thinks because nowadays Turkey is difficult for audiences to understand especially because of “the government which is considered to be conservative but at the same time introduced many reforms” and secondly because there are already many existing “pre-judgments” in people’s minds that are “hard to break”. The difficulties of explaining the audiences back “home” the news on Turkey can also be due to the established norms of foreign correspondence - the state system - as mentioned above, that is geared towards “answering the informational needs of nation state in areas such as foreign affairs, defense, politics and economics” (Livingstone and Aslomolov, 2010). Andrew Finkel who had worked as a stringer for various media organizations was able to comment on the institutional routines of the correspondents when covering Turkey:

British national press has a system of stringers; every British (quality) newspaper has always been represented in Turkey as far as I remember. Depending how important the newspaper is, there is a stringer, a super stringer, some contractual relationship with the place you work for. In that case nothing much has changed. American press and German press they don’t really work that way so they really depend on their staff correspondents. They divide the world into regions and depending on the region Turkey is either at the center of a region or periphery of a region. You could have our correspondents based here or in Rome or Athens and they come here to cover the news. The British press, when I worked for the Times I was the stringer here, if they need anything they would contact me. If it is a huge story they would fly over a staff member. In the [1999] earthquake we had 2 staff correspondents working, it can be slightly uncomfortable because you are competing with each other if the story is big enough. I could get an interview with the prime minister so I had my value. In the Öcalan trial, Turkey only allowed people who only had yellow Turkish press cards to attend the trial. So [even though] CNN had sent somebody, I was the only person on the island.

The fact that Andrew Finkel worked in Turkey for many years and worked for news organizations based in Turkey, is quite unique for foreign correspondents. Nicole Pope similarly has a unique place. In fact when first approached for the study, the first point she instantly questioned has been whether she can still be “foreign” after spending more than 25 years in Turkey. These two examples reflect the tension between the necessity to go “deeper” to convey the specificities of a cultural and political context, and the necessity to “stand away from a distance in order not to lose the critical ‘eye’”. This is the balance that a foreign correspondent feels the need to keep. The correspondents such as Nicole Pope, Jerome Bastion and Andrew Finkel, all touched upon this notion, the balancing act between the “home” or the “host” country, usually referred to as the risk of “going native” (Hamilton and Jenner, 2004).

This could especially be the case for correspondents who had been based in a country for a long time. For example in news agencies such as Reuters, or the German ARD television and radio network, the staff correspondents expressed

institutional principle that they need to change every 3-5 years, in order to avoid this risk and balance it by employing “local stringers”, a Turkish national who works for a news network that is based abroad. One of the correspondents who participated in the study was a local stringer who worked for another German news network. He suggested that his value comes from the fact that he can provide contextual information on “recent political history, making connections between events and reading between the lines” for the staff correspondents in the office.

Another related dilemma with “going native” is the balancing act between the angles which the editors back at the desk wishes to see and those that are considered to be relevant and important by the correspondents. As one German correspondent explains:

The editors are interested in a German link in the stories. Once you start living here you look differently on the things. You are confronted with a lot of prejudice by the editors those who give you the job. The editors back home have lack of knowledge. I don’t know what is going on in South Africa either. Also some stories come up all the time; the headscarf, the Kurds, but they are also in the Turkish newspapers too. There is prejudice and lack of knowledge, and the editors’ demands are very much influenced by internal debates. So when a debate comes up in Germany, for example immigration debate as there is now, they call up and ask ‘so what do the Turks say about our discussion?’ Due to the very special relationship between Germany and Turkey I feel some kind responsibility. I do. That does not mean I refuse to report on ugly things because that would make Turkey’s image worse in Germany. I try to explain maybe more than other areas. I think it is important to explain, because I see that there is little knowledge on certain areas when it comes to Turkey. I feel like that is rather more important than if I had been a correspondent in Stockholm.

Most of the correspondents who participated in the study similarly expressed that they “feel responsible” for explaining the difficulties and complexities of Turkey to their audiences. The female news agency staff correspondent explains this responsibility as follows:

The way I see my role is, I am here to cover Turkey for those who are outside the country, who may not know the country very well, but have an interest in knowing it further. I have to explain things also it is looking for strands. There is huge amount of interest here in Turkish Islam, but also seeing how Turkey is as an emerging economy and how it manages youth unemployment. I am also looking for elements here that can fit in with trends in other countries. So it is about making links. It is also about presenting what is fun and exciting about the country.

Almost all foreign reporters that took part in the interviews consider themselves “lucky” when compared to their colleagues in other countries where finding a “story” is quite difficult. Political agenda of Turkey has always been very active and this turned the country and its surroundings into a “paradise of

news” for the reporters. “Imagine being in Sweden or Norway. You can find may be in a year the exciting news stories you could find here in a few days” said a foreign correspondent working for Spanish media. Bek (2011: 183) also expressed similar findings in her study on foreign correspondents who positively welcomed the fact that “political agenda is always heavily active” in Turkey, even it would mean more workload for journalists covering Turkey.

Another reason for finding Turkey attractive is especially due to the location of Istanbul and its fascinating history as well as its developing dynamic cultural and economic spheres. It must be noted that this is one of the most important reasons attract foreign correspondents in Turkey and they always preferred Istanbul to Ankara. Andrew Finkel suggests that Istanbul is to some extent emerging as a hub to cover the region because “If you are in Istanbul you can cover Iraq, you can cover Caucasus. If you are in Athens you can cover Greece”. Indeed some correspondents said they are now covering Greece from Turkey, because Istanbul has access to better and more extensive direct international flight connections. Another reason for locating in Istanbul is not only due to professional needs but there are also what we may call “lifestyle” reasons because the correspondents find the city a fascinating place with a vibrant entertainment, music and art scene. They also said they can find better schools for their children.

Conclusion

Historically, Istanbul has been one of the oldest locations to host foreign media bureau, but until the mid 1980s correspondents mainly covered Turkey while being based in Athens. This research began with a simple curiosity after reading an article that reported the steady increase of foreign correspondents covering Turkey in the last decade. It aimed to account for the noticeable increase in the number of foreign correspondents in Turkey and through data collected via 20 in-depth interviews and online questionnaires, it attempts to map the characteristics and practices of the foreign journalists covering Turkey.

The foreign correspondent’s characteristics and practices may vary according to the contract they have, institutional preferences of media of a specific country. The main topics that foreign correspondents in Turkey mainly focus have shifted according to the ways in which main political and social cleavages gained prominence in domestic politics in Turkey, which could sometimes focus on Kurdish question; issues of human rights and democratization. But the findings reveal that the ways in which Turkey negotiates Islam both politically and socially is a factor that continues to attract international media organizations. Turkey’s acceptance as an accession country to the EU in 2005 has also been a catalyst that increased the number of correspondents covering Turkey. In the last five years Turkey’s economic well-being in the face of the global economic recession attracted more media attention. In addition to dynamics of domestic and foreign

politics, its burgeoning economy reflected in a growing consumer culture as well as an expanding art scene have elevated Turkey, especially Istanbul, to a focal point for foreign media institutions. Due to a worsening economic situation in Western countries in this period, Turkey has begun to attract more freelance foreign correspondents, who wish to escape the worsening economic and working conditions in their home countries. The foreign correspondents have expressed different reasons for becoming a foreign correspondent in Turkey. Whilst some have followed their partners, others were truly fascinated by Turkey and deliberately chose to work in Turkey. They are comprised of a diverse crowd where personal needs especially determine freelancer’s practice.

Foreign correspondents had no problem in finding news stories in or around Turkey. The country’s geo-political position between the East and the West makes it attractive for international media institutions interested in covering European, Middle Eastern and Central Asian politics and affairs.

One of the most striking common feature that the foreign correspondents all agreed upon was the necessity to find a balance with the type of the news they want to cover about Turkey, and the demands of the “editors back home”. The interviews reveal that the main attraction for Turkey is the ways in which Turkey “negotiates” Islam as a predominantly Muslim secular country. But they also stressed the fact that they would like to move beyond this point, and focus on other aspects because they consider themselves “responsible” for explaining the complexity of Turkey for Europe.

References

- AIM Research Consortium (2007), Reporting and Managing European News, Final Report of the Project, “Adequate Information Management in Europe” 2004-2007. Bochum, Germany: projektverlag
- BEK Gencil Mine (2011), “Turkish and International Journalists Comparing the Media Systems, Journalistic Practices and News Production Process”, **Media Research**, 17 (1-2): 177-197
- BOYD-BARRET Oliver, RANTANEN Terhi (eds.) (1998), “The Globalization of News”, O. Boyd-Barret and T. Rantanen (Eds), **The Globalization of News**, London, Sage
- HACHTEN A. William, SCOTTON F. James (2007), **The World News Prism: Global Information in a Satellite Age**, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing
- HAHN Oliver, LÖNNENDONKER Julia (2009), “Transatlantic Foreign Reporting and Foreign Correspondents After 9/11 Trends in Reporting Europe in the United States”, **International Journal of Press/Politics**, 14 (4): 497-515

HAMILTON M. John and JENNER Eric (2004), "Redefining Foreign Correspondence", **Journalism**, 5 (3): 301-321

HELD David *et al.* (1999), **Global Transformations Politics, Economics and Culture**, Oxford, Polity

HESMONDALGH David (2006), **Media Production**, Maidenhead and New York, Open University Press

HESS Stephen (1996), International news & foreign correspondents. Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution.

KESTER Bernadette (2010), "The art of Balancing: Foreign correspondents in non-democratic countries: The Russian case", **International Communication Gazette: Special Issue on Transparency in Foreign Reporting**, 72 (1): 51-69

LIVINGSTONE Steven and ASMOLOV Gregory (2010), "Networks and the Future of Foreign Affairs", **Journalism Studies**, 11(5) : 745 - 760

MCPHAIL L. Thomas (2005), **Global Communication Theories, Stakeholders, and Trends**, Oxford, John Wiley & Sons

PATERSON Chris, SREBERNY Annabelle (eds.) (2004), **International News in the 21st Century**, Eastleigh, University of Luton Press

SAKR Naomi (2010), "News, Transparency and the Effectiveness of Reporting From Inside Arab Dictatorships", **International Communication Gazette: Special Issue on Transparency in Foreign Reporting**, 72 (1): 33-50

TOPUZ Hıfzı (2003), **Türk Basın Tarihi: II. Mahmut'tan Holdinglere**, İstanbul, Remzi Kitabevi

WILNAT Lars, WEAVER David (2003), "Through their eyes: The work of foreign correspondents in the United States", **Journalism**, 4 (4) : 403-422

WILLIAMS Kevin (2011), **International Journalism**, London, Sage

VRAGAS Lucas, PAULIN Lisa (2007), "Rethinking 'Foreign News' from a transnational perspective", in David Perlmutter and John Maxwell Hamilton (eds.), **From Pigeons to News Portals: Foreign Reporting and the Challenge of New Technology**, Baton Rouge, Louisiana University Press: 20-25

YANARDAĞOĞLU Eylem, TILIÇ L. Doğan (forthcoming), "Foreign Correspondents in Turkey: Between the home and host agendas", in George Terzis (ed.), **Mapping Foreign Correspondence in Europe**, London, Routledge

YEMMA, John (2007), "Instant Connection-Foreign news comes from the Cold", in David Perlmutter and John Maxwell Hamilton (eds), **From Pigeons to News Portals: Foreign Reporting and the Challenge of New Technology**, Baton Rouge, Louisiana University Press: 110-122.

Are we Consuming Goods or Cultural Values through Commercials? A study on Television Advertisements on Communication Service Providers

Doç. Dr. Hatice ÇUBUKÇU
Okt. Fatma Şeyma DOĞAN
Okt. Gülten KOŞAR

çukurova üniversitesi, iletişim fakültesi, hcubukcu@cu.edu.tr
adiyaman üniversitesi, yabancı diller bölümü, sciftci@adiyaman.edu.tr
ankara sosyal bilimler üniversitesi, gencoglugulten@gmail.com

Abstract

Advertising, oftentimes construed as a hypnotizing phenomenon, has turned out to be an ever-growing sector the main aims of which consist of giving information, persuading, and triggering action. Provided that the percentage indicating the ratio of television viewing, and the prevalence of advertisements promoting the campaigns of communication service providers are scrutinized, embodied cultural values into these advertisements as a means of attention-getting appear to be evident. In this study, the key concepts constituting the texts were identified by means of analysing the discourse of 30 communication TV advertisements via the method of content analysis, and these concepts were described with respect to their relationship with cultural values. The findings revealed that the most widely-used concepts in the selected advertisements were the underlying concepts of traditional values such as "family", "love", "sharing", "solidarity", "friendship".

keywords: advertising, advertisements on communication service providers, cultural values, associating, cultural change