

**To cite this article:** Katamba, M. (2024). Press and Military Coups: A Study of the Günaydin Newspaper's Approach to the Türkiye's Military Coup of 1980. *International Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences (IJSHS)*, 8(3), 81-100

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**Submitted:** September 06, 2024

**Accepted:** November 21, 2024

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## **PRESS AND MILITARY COUPS: A STUDY OF THE GÜNAYDIN NEWSPAPER'S APPROACH TO THE TÜRKIYE'S MILITARY COUP OF 1980**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Due to the conflicting relationship between coups and democracy, there is a demanding need to analyze the media's interpretation of such events. This study aimed to examine the approach of Günaydin newspaper towards the 1980 military coup in Türkiye by assessing its performance and approach during that period. Descriptive content analysis was employed as the research method to provide a clear picture of the newspaper's approach to reporting and writing during the coup. Over 30 copies of Günaydin Newspapers published between September 12 and early November 1980 were evaluated from the national library of Türkiye in Ankara, and the assessed copies were enough to provide sufficient information for this study. The study found an interconnectedness between Günaydin newspaper, elites, and the coup. The newspaper played a significant role in shaping people's minds during this period and served the interests of the coup leaders to some extent. Although the newspaper served the interests of the coup leaders, it is difficult to say that it explicitly supported the coup since every piece of information published was attributed to various sources. Results also found out that the coup leaders were the primary sources of information and news at the time, but the newspaper also covered other aspects of life.

**Keywords:** Günaydin Newspaper, 1980 military coup, Democracy, Press/Media, Türkiye.

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## BASIN VE ASKERİ DARBELER: GÜNAYDIN GAZETESİ'NİN 1980 TÜRKİYE ASKERİ DARBESİ'NE YAKLAŞIMI ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME

### ÖZET

Darbeler ve demokrasi arasındaki çelişkili ilişki nedeniyle, medyanın bu tür olayları nasıl yorumladığını analiz etme ihtiyacı doğmuştur. Bu çalışma, Günaydın gazetesinin Türkiye'deki 1980 askeri darbesine yönelik yaklaşımını, o dönemdeki performansını ve yaklaşımını değerlendirerek incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Araştırma yöntemi olarak, gazetenin darbe sırasındaki habercilik ve yazarlık yaklaşımının net bir resmini ortaya koymak için betimsel içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Günaydın Gazetesi'nin 12 Eylül 1980 ile Kasım 1980 başları arasında yayımlanan 30'dan fazla nüshası Ankara'daki Türkiye Milli Kütüphanesi'nde değerlendirilmiş ve değerlendirilen nüshalar bu çalışma için yeterli bilgi sağlamıştır. Çalışma, Günaydın gazetesi, elitler ve darbe arasında bir bağlantı olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Gazete bu dönemde insanların zihinlerini şekillendirmede önemli bir rol oynamış ve darbe liderlerinin çıkarlarına bir ölçüde hizmet etmiştir. Gazete darbe liderlerinin çıkarlarına hizmet etse de, yayınlanan her bilgi çeşitli kaynaklara atfedildiği için gazetenin darbeyi açıkça desteklediğini söylemek zordur. Sonuçlar ayrıca darbe liderlerinin o dönemde birincil bilgi ve haber kaynağı olduğunu, ancak gazetenin hayatın diğer yönlerine de yer verdiğini ortaya koymuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Günaydın Gazetesi, 1980 Askeri Darbesi, Demokrasi, Basın/Medya, Türkiye.

### INTRODUCTION

When democracy spread throughout the world, countries eagerly embraced it and made plans to implement it effectively (Markoff, 1999). In order to ensure that democracy flourishes, nations drafted constitutions, which serve as a set of laws governing the country and outlining the process of transferring power from one democratic administration to another (Birikorang, 2013). Although many constitutions prohibit military involvement in politics, some have been disregarded or violated by

military forces in various countries. According to Birikorang (2013), military interventions in politics have been a significant cause of conflicts and coups, hindering democracy and the rule of law, regardless of the consequences of such conflicts.

Furthermore, some scholars argue that the press can contribute to the causes and persistence of military coups as a mediating factor (Yanardagoglu, 2017), but the attitudes of citizens toward coups can also decide their failure or success. For instance, the 2022 coup in Burkina Faso and the 2021 coup in Guinea might have been successful due to the public's support for the coup, as evidenced by the jubilations on the streets during the coup periods. On the other hand, according to Yanardagoglu (2017), the 2016 coup in Türkiye was not successful because the people were largely against it, primarily through social media. This suggests that citizens' contributions towards or against coups should not be disregarded. From the above background, successful coups indicate that people may feel frustrated with the current government and have no other means of effecting change, while unsuccessful coups suggest that the public has a strong affinity for the ruling class.

Although it is impossible to disregard the impact of the press in disseminating information and propaganda, it is also used to transmit messages of hope and determination during times of crisis, such as coups and other conflicts. According to Jowett and O'Donnell (1999), the press plays a crucial role in the coup process, as it is used to transmit the propaganda of both the coup leaders and the citizens. Küçüközyiğit (2016) also noted the press's influence during coups, stating that it falls within the same frame as elites and militarism, making it difficult to separate them. Therefore, like other external and internal factors, the press has the power to influence coups effectively or ineffectively, as noted by El-din and Cheick (2017). Therefore, we can state that mass media can be known as an exploited tool that turns into promoting coup activities and propaganda, and also a tool for promoting peace during coups.

The approach of the media towards the positive impacts and true role in promoting peace during coups remains unclear (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999). Therefore, this study aims to analyze Günaydın newspaper's approach towards the September 12, 1980 coup in Türkiye. The results will provide insight into the press approach and

Günaydın newspaper's role during the coup, as well as contribute to a better understanding of Turkish political life and military participation in politics worldwide.

### **The 1980 Military Coup in Türkiye**

The 1980 coup in Türkiye took place on September 12, 1980, under the command of then-Chief of General Staff Kenan Evren and other military leaders who overthrew the democratically elected government and grabbed power forcefully (Daily Sabah, September 11, 2020). This marked the third time in Türkiye's history that the military had overthrown a democratically elected government, with the previous occurrences happening in 1960 and 1971. During the 1980 coup, the military took control of all powers in the country with the intention of ruling and governing it (Küçüközyiğit, 2016). As a result of the coup, Hurriyet Daily News, of April 04, 2012, stated that Türkiye experienced human rights violations, the closure of the parliament and political parties, arrests, convictions, and executions, among other acts.

Although any coup can be seen as a curse to the country, Reuters, an online publication dated April 4, 2012, reported that some Turks who were tired of the instability caused by rival gunmen in the late 1970s were happy about the coup. They hoped the coup would bring an end to the instability and bring back peace in the country. General Evren, who led the coup, defended their actions, stating that the move was intended to stop political violence between left and right military groups, in which over 5000 people lost their lives. According to Daily Sabah, of September, 11, 2020, the 1980 coup leaders established a Military-run National Security Council (MGK) of five military members, including leader Evren, Tahsin Şahinkaya, Sedat Celasun, Nejat Tümer, and Nurettin Ersin. The MGK put an end to the national constitution and introduced a new constitution on which they controlled the country through decrees until a civilian government was reinstated in 1983. The MGK military constitution contained within a provision that barred the coup leaders from being tried for war crimes they committed (Tek, 2006), but as per some writings, this constitution was amended in 2010 through a referendum, and the then-existing few coup leaders, including Evren, were tried in 2012 and sentenced to life imprisonment in 2014.

The 1980 in coup was considered to be the most severe in the country's history, according to a statement made by the President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as

reported by Anadolu Agency, a Turkish media outlet, on 12 September 2020. In his statement, President Erdogan referred to the 1980 coup as the darkest days in Türkiye's political history, highlighting that it caused extensive destruction in political, social, legal, economic, and diplomatic areas, and had long-lasting effects on the country. Although the 1980 coup was labeled as a "bloodless coup," fewer than 50 individuals were executed, thousands were arrested, many were tortured, and numerous deaths occurred in prisons (Reuters, April 4, 2012). This coup marked the third time that the army had attacked a democratically elected government in Türkiye, but it was not the last. On 15 July 2016, Türkiye experienced another attempted coup, which was orchestrated by the Gülenist Terror Group (FETÖ), intending to overthrow the elected government; however, the government managed to control and thwart the attempt.

### **Press and military coups in the course of Türkiye's 1980 Coup**

During times of coups, conflicts, and war, the media is often faced with the challenge of maintaining the truth, as the first casualty of these situations is often the death of truth (Bratik, 2008). The media may struggle to maintain credibility due to intimidation, threats, and arrests of journalists. As a result, many journalists rely on coup leaders as their primary source of news, as a result of limited press freedom and media independence. Consequently, the media may end up serving the interests of the coup, attempting to spread information to persuade people to support and believe in the coup activities because, persuasion especially with rhetoric is one of the ways through which people can be convinced to do or to believe something (Yanardagolu, 2017; Katamba, 2022), leading to a loss of trust in the press as the primary source of firsthand information during coup, conflict, and war (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999). It is possible that, like in other instances, the press was targeted during the 1980 coup in order to suppress the truth and disrupt the flow of information.

According to Küçüközyiğit, (2016), not like Türkiye's 1960 coup where many literatures indicate that it was supported by the press and media, it is not well known whether the press either supported or it was against the 1980 coup, because there is no evidence to shed light on it. He also asserted that in the context of coups, milita-

rism, media, and elites converge to form a single photograph, and a thorough examination of the image reveals the presence of all three elements and their attitudes toward the coup. In other words, the press cannot be overlooked in the coup environment, despite its often-unrecognized positive contributions to promoting peace during times of conflict, as noted by Jowett & O'Donnell (1999).

The power of the press lies in its ability to shape public knowledge and shape perspectives on various aspects of life, ultimately influencing how people think and act (Severin and Tankard, 1992). According to Durna and İnal (2010), the press played a pivotal role as a weapon for economic, political, and ideological change during the September, 1980 coup, effectively ending its oppositional function. This suggests that due to fear of being shut down, arrested, or convicted by coup leaders, the press in 1980 could not openly oppose the actions of the coup leaders, leading to the deliberate and systematic dissemination of the leaders' behaviors to achieve their objectives. On the other hand, Lasswell (1927) argued that during coups, media cannot act against enemies and instead should work towards reconciliation between conflicting parties in order to bring about harmony and peace. This indicates that media can disregard the concepts of truth and reality in favor of promoting harmony and peace, which can sometimes result in spreading incorrect information. This appears to have been the case with the press during the 1980 coup in Türkiye.

As per the observations of some writers, the 1980 coup in Türkiye was purportedly developed as a Washington-based project, with media playing a significant role in promoting the coup even prior to its existence on September 12, 1980 (Burton, 2002). The media was utilized to market the concepts of the coup to the Turks, but Burton (2002) also emphasized that pressuring people to accept societal happenings does not yield the anticipated results since media remains on a path of social transformation but without adhering to certain professional journalistic ethics. This indicates that although there was political control of the press in 1980, media in Türkiye was not entirely diverted from serving citizens for social progress.

During times of conflict, the press may depart from the journalistic principles of truth, balance, fairness, and verification, among others, and become known as a dishonest and misinforming tool (Buric, 2000). For instance, when Kenan Evren, who



orchestrated the 1980 coup, disclosed it in the media with promises of benefits for the people, he was not criticized, instead, the media reported everything as he stated it. This was a clear indication that the media had been corrupted by the fear of negative repercussions from not reporting the news but instead serving the objectives of the juntas rather than the interests of the citizens. It is also not always easy for the media to determine and classify audience preferences and interests, and therefore, during the 1980 coup, the press attempted to serve the interests of all the people by publishing information about social life and progress. Meanwhile, due to fear of closure, media could not get views from the people who were with contradicting opinions about the coup, and according to Shoemaker and Reese, (1997), this makes press unfair to citizens by not getting their views about events in the first place, multi-sourcing and balance are profession principles of the press.

According to Katamba (2023), the press is typically the primary source of news and information when the public is more interested in learning about events in a country especially during crisis such as coup. Although the media in Türkiye during the 1960 coup was successful in disseminating information, challenges such as the arrest of journalists, threats, and the closure of media outlets hindered news distribution during the 1980 coup (Küçüközyiğit, 2016). This situation was problematic for both journalists and the press, as it demonstrated that no media person or journalist was safe from imprisonment or death due to their beliefs or ideas (Burton, 2002). Despite the fear that such situations evoke, the press worked hard to disseminate information about coups to keep the audience informed (Burton, 2002).

To control the press, the 1980 coup leaders revised the press law and reformed media performance policies, prohibiting newspapers from raising resources to fund their publications. This led to an increase in newspaper prices in the first month after the coup, indirectly reducing newspaper sales and later a decline in the audience (Alrmi-zan, 2019). Consequently, the dominance of newspapers did not last long. Moreover, the press was under attack from various economic, social, political, and military fronts as the coup spread further (Durna and İnal, 2010). Many literature says that

the suffering of the press is typically characterized by an increase in the imprisonment of media personnel and journalists, censorship of information, the shutdown of newspapers, intimidation and strict press laws.

During the 1980 coup, for example, the shutdown of newspapers could automatically lead to the decrease in circulations of newspaper copies and a gradual decrease in finance. Media intimidation and closure always happen in the first days of military coups to streamline media, which also go on to reorganize minds of people. With this therefore, people get feed on available information at that time which probably impact them to act as per the cause of the coup. Intimidations and threats towards press from military side also affect information flow and kill the truth since press embark on serving the interests of coup propagandists and politicians than public interests (Alrmizan, 2019). This builds societies of half informed and uninformed populations. Since this is not limited to any society, citizens in Türkiye had no access to some information due to closure and under performance of the media during the 1980 coup. On the other hand, during the coup, press in Türkiye became economically and financially dependent due to limited support from advertisers, the occurrence of a general economic crisis as a result of the coup, and reduced numbers of audiences since some people could not buy newspaper copies for political reasons (Durna and İnal, 2010). This suggests that press could receive state loans from government tenders and banks to finance their operations and productions, leading to newspapers working on political ideologies and interests (Alrmizan, 2019). Therefore, we might believe that press and other publications that serve specific audiences with specific content, such as fashions, music for entertainment, business, sports, and finance, are likely to remain standing during coups, increasing their sales and becoming more popular. Additionally, non-political newspapers might not face significant threats since coup propagandists typically monitor political information.

During the 1980 coup period, disunity in the media and press was also characterized by the lack of a media association that could fight for the working environment of journalists and to protect their professional rights (Küçüközyiğit, 2016). Like in other coup areas, each medium in Türkiye was on its own to see how to survive and navigate the difficult situation of turmoil (Alrmizan, 2019). So, each and every medium



during the coup should be observed individually since they operate independently without any unifying body that controls media performance and activities.

### **The Shutdown of the Günaydın Newspaper during the 1980 Coup**

Günaydın was a daily newspaper publication based in Türkiye, and it used to publish in Turkish language. It was founded on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1968 and served up to 1999. According to Akgün (2006), Günaydın was started by Haldun Simavi who founded it after cutting off his partnership in Hurriyet newspaper which was owned by his brother Erol Simavi. He added that Günaydın was mainly known by its style called “good morning school” which attracted a lot of people’s attention in media industry in Türkiye and up to date this style is still influencing press in the country. The success of this newspaper was attributed to various factors, including technology and style, which led to its high daily circulation of one million copies. Technology has been applied in journalism since its (technology) inception and it has increasingly impacted the entire information process in the journalism profession (Katamba and Kayıhan, 2024). Necati Zincirkıran, Esfender Korkmaz, Mehmet Barlas, Hasan Cemal, Akgün Tekin, Can Ataklı, Ruhat Mengi, Melih Aşık, Rahmi Turan, and Bekir Coşkun were some of the newspaper's original writers. Günaydın was known for promoting conservative and nationalist viewpoints (Akgün, 2006).

However, the Günaydın newspaper experienced a shift in its name and became known as Yeni Günaydın from 1991 until its closure in August 1999. The decline in circulation and subsequent loss of popularity led to its shutdown, which occurred after it was accused of voucher fraud in 1998 (Akgün, 2006). Despite facing media challenges during the 1980 military coup in Türkiye, Günaydın newspaper continued to serve its readers, along with other newspapers that endured closures during that time. According to an Obianet independent communication network report on the 12th of September 1980 Military Coup, several newspapers and other media in Istanbul, including Cumhuriyet, Milli Gazete, Güneş (Sun), Milliyet, Translator, and Hürriyet, were shut down at least once during the coup, and some were closed permanently. Also, Günaydın was shut down twice for a total of 17 days, and its writers, along with those of other newspapers and magazines, were interrogated multiple times, with cases opened against them and some were arrested.

## ANALYSIS

### The Günaydın Newspaper's Appearance and Design.



**Figure 1:** The Günaydın Newspaper's front page showing its layout, design, and colors.

Unlike certain newspapers that alter their operations in response to significant events, this study found that this particular newspaper did not modify its format, design, or layout, its appearance stayed the same as it was prior to the coup. All sections, including business, sports, advertisements, youth, and leisure, continued to publish content relevant to their titles and target audiences. The newspaper featured stories and photographs of individuals engaging in various activities, as well as lifestyle information and other forms of entertainment. In line with standard media practices, it published stories in the column section that focused on hard news, features, and opinions, aiming to convey information and promote courage among the audience. In addition to promoting courage, crisis reporting also helps to inform and uplift the public's attitudes regarding the situation at hand (Burton, 2002; Katamba, 2023). Although it is customary for media outlets to maintain balance, fairness, and objectivity, the writing style of the Günaydın newspaper exposed a slight pro-coup bias. The newspaper primarily relied on coup leaders as its main sources of news, with these individuals providing information, evidence and shaping the language used in the articles to appease the temporary government of the time. The newspaper was filled with information that highlighted the importance of the coup and its aftermath.

In addition, the writing style and language used had elements of fear with excessive appeal to the wave which were shown by putting headlines in quotations and reporting evidence directly from the coup leaders. This might be the case because the 1980 coup was on commands and orders of the army leaders but not on ideological conflicts, and this could have resulted into the closure of the publication (Küçüközyiğit, 2016). Regardless of the challenges as a result of the coup, it was discovered in this study that Günaydın newspaper covered all the fields such as business, sports, politics, social aspects, and there was no reason for the people to be uninformed or buying a different type of newspaper. Meaning, this paper published the information needed at the time amidst conflicts. However, as we have seen in the literature, there might have been some exclusive information in the Günaydın newspaper as a result of limited space, threats, censorship and inaccessibility to some news sources.

### **An analysis of Newspaper's reporting approach on the Türkiye's 1980 coup**

On the first day of the coup, 12 September, 1980, the Günaydın newspaper did not report on the event, possibly due to a lack of knowledge about the situation or because they had already set the copy for circulation before learning of the event. On that day, the newspaper reported on the CHP agreement with MSP, which seemed unlikely to occur. In the same copy, it also made a publication on how Turkish economy was getting better.

However, on September 13th, the newspaper published its first news story about the coup with a big headline that read, "The Aim is to Put Democracy on Track." Another headline in the same story stated, "Evren Promised to Change the Election Law and Constitution for the Purpose of Bringing Back Democracy." These headlines conveyed a sense of hope, indicating that the newspaper wanted to inform and prepare the minds of citizens and the audience for the events that were unfolding. The story explained how the country had reached the point of the coup, and the headline "We are in a Situation that is Not Heartwarming" followed the photographs of the coup leaders. The story summarized the intended objectives of the coup and what the people could expect.

Another headline in the same story, "What was in the National Security Council Statement?" showed that the first published stories about the coup were centered on

the National Security Council statement read by the coup leader, and thus, the newspaper attributed everything to the coup propagandists. The press has a responsibility to filter news, even if it is under attack, and press ethics have to remain vital in every environment due to their role in shaping societies and promoting democracy (Burton, (2002). In this line, according to the results, the gate keeping and agenda setting theories of press were neglected in many observed copies of Günaydın newspapers which indicates that the newspaper followed the agenda which was set up by the coup leaders. As a public serving newspaper, I was to serve public desires not coup policies (Bratik, 2008).

According to Günaydın newspaper, coup leaders expressed "trust in the great Turkish nation and stated that Türkiye would remain committed to all its alliances." While Günaydın newspaper in general aimed to instill hope in its readers regarding the coup, an article published on page two of the September 13th edition presented a different perspective that was not related to the coup. The headline of the article read "the worst depression in the history of the republic" and "a vacuum of authority had arisen," which was the editorial team's opinion. By publishing this story, the newspaper demonstrated its dedication to reflecting the opinions of its editors and writers from past events and warning the audience of potential consequences. This act of courage and adherence to journalistic principles also involved reporting on the negative aspects of the situation, rather than solely focusing on the rhetorical speeches which are mainly intend to persuade (Taylor, 1995; Katamba, 2022). In this case these speeches were of the coup leaders.

In addition to publishing news, Günaydın newspaper also featured the opinions of the people and wrote feature stories to provide balance and protect the truth. For instance, on September 14th, the newspaper published an opinion piece by an Italian representative in Ankara who expressed hope that Türkiye would recover soon. This demonstrated that Günaydın newspaper not only wrote in favor of peace but also served other sections of society amid political challenges (Burton, (2002). This commitment to social responsibility and productivity was evident in the newspaper's report on September 15th, 1980, where it pronounced on page one that conflicting politicians Demirel and Ecevit had finally reconciled. This was not coup related news

but it was the news people were waiting to know about since the coming together of the two leaders was a sign of peace to their supporters and the country.

As Küçüközyiğit (2016) reported, the 1980 coup aimed to end political conflicts between left and right wings. The *Günaydın* newspaper also confirmed this on the 14th, stating that a right-wing terrorist, Zeki Yumurtacı, had been captured. This story, along with others such as "all MHP and MSP parliamentarians are under surveillance," demonstrated the early positive effects of the coup. According to Lasswell (1927), these positive impacts of the coup, as reported by the newspaper, could shape public opinion to believe in the coming democracy as a free criminal and for the public good. In addition to national news, the *Günaydın* newspaper also published international news on the 14th, such as Korea's warning to North Korea and the anarchy in England. This may have been an attempt to reassure the public that instability was not unique to their country and that they had to remain patient with the coup situation they were facing.

After the coup had been in progress for several days, the coup leaders announced their intention to restore the constitution, which *Günaydın* reported. The newspaper also looked back at the 1961 constitution to provide insights on "why and how the 1961 constitution was prepared?" Although media does not directly influence people's behavior (Severin and Tankard, 1992), this report may have reminded the constitutional review committee to refer to the old constitution and seek input from responsible citizens on what to keep and what to change from the 1961 constitution. The newspaper went further to have consultations with the former chairman of the 1961 constitution committee Prof Enver Ziya Karal who said in the copy published on 16th September that "some necessary changes should be made in the 1961 constitution" since a lot were changed in the country. Prof Ever Ziya Karal's acceptance to make some changes in the old constitution was to probably make people believe that change was necessary in the administrative structures of the country for peaceful and democratic nation.





**Figure 2:** The *Günaydın* newspaper referring to the 1961 constitution to restore peace after the coup.

Additionally, writing about constitution review was the beginning for the call for the end of the coup because that news story was followed by some other stories that revived peace and democracy. Willy Brandt, the leader of Germany's Social Democratic Party, stated on September 16th that "if the murders stop in Türkiye, that's a big win." When foreign media inquired about the timeline for reinstating democracy, the coup leader replied that "we didn't abolish democracy but promised to form a government soon after fulfilling all the people's wishes." *Günaydın* newspaper's publication of hopeful information, opinions, and news stories signaled a path toward constitutional leadership and a restoration of peace in the country.

On September 18th, *Günaydın* newspaper ran the headline "Various old constitutions are being examined." Subsequent headlines on September 19th read, "The people who will prepare and organize a democratic and secular constitution took an oath" and "Evren's meeting was widely covered by the foreign press." These stories brought joy and happiness to citizens, reflecting the peace that had been established in the country (Markoff, 1999). However, even as the country worked to restore democracy, *Günaydın* newspaper tried to highlight the changes that had been made to the old constitution and how they were implemented, such as the transformation of Atatürk's 12 ministers into 34.



After shaping minds of the people, *Günaydın* newspaper reported off of the coup for the first time on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1980, when it published stories mainly on education, business and economic, and social life. This was a clear indication that everything was moving on well and perhaps nothing they had not informed the public. A serious amusing news story about the coup was published again on 22 September, 1980 and this was to inform the people that “the new government was announced”. This is the news probably people were waiting for long and the *Günaydın* newspaper elaborated the story further to the extent of reporting that “no members in the new government were recruited from the political parties whose activities were suspended”. The declaration of the new government was almost the end of the coup. From there, the newspaper was much reporting about the expectations and the progresses of the new government. For example, days from 23 September to mid-October it published stories on political issues mainly on the new ministers’ first statements, promises, new government goals and all were stories and statements of hope, peace, democracy and constitutionalism.

### **The *Günaydın* Newspaper’s influence during the 1980 Coup in Türkiye**

The media's impact is significant and far-reaching (Bratik, 2008). However, this study focuses primarily on the influence of *Günaydın* newspaper, which became evident after one week of consistent reporting on the coup. *Günaydın* newspaper provided information about the start, development, and conclusion of the 1980 coup. By fulfilling the role of informing the public (Severin and Tankard, 1992), the newspaper set the minds of the people for the coup and helped them to navigate the situation without feeling overwhelmed. According to the findings, *Günaydın* newspaper emphasized that the 1980 coup was a means of restoring constitutional governance and streamlining democracy. It also reported on the coup leaders' ideologies, stating that the coup aimed to end political conflicts between left and right political groups, which had caused the country to lose many lives. This persuasive role of the press, as noted by Bratik (2008), shaped people's minds to believe in the coup, which was one of the major factors that influenced their trust in the coup and had a positive impact on the newspaper's performance.

During the coup, *Günaydın* newspaper continued to provide entertainment to the citizens. Youth programs, sports, and other entertainment stories were published in every edition to lift the spirits of the people, even in the midst of a challenging situation. This diversion of people's minds towards entertainment helped them to forget about the conflict and tension caused by the coup by injecting a sense of hope and positivity into their lives. Entertainment also brought happiness to the people, which refreshed their minds and preserved their mental health by keeping their attention and interests engaged. According to the discoveries in the *Günaydın* newspaper copies of September 1980, feature stories were published and news and opinion formats which makes us believe that *Günaydın* newspaper played a public sphere role through giving space to people's opinions which might have influenced the ending of the coup and restoration of constitutional leadership.

The *Günaydın* newspaper may have positively influenced people's beliefs in the coup through its reports. This could be one of the reasons for the short duration of the coup, as individuals replaced their concerns with optimism about the achievements reported in the newspaper. In its first week of reporting on the coup, the newspaper promised stability and peace following the coup period. However, the press rarely acts independently to bring about change, instead functioning as a stabilizing force for other social systems that promote change (Severin and Tankard, 1992). The newspaper's news articles that promoted positive attitudes and behaviors were mainly focused on topics such as business, leisure, unity, and constitutionalism. These were reported in every published copy of the newspaper since the coup began. The main message of the *Günaydın* newspaper was about unity and peace within the country and abroad. For instance, the newspaper published a story on September 23, 1980, about the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war, possibly to emphasize that the 1980 coup was not between nations but rather a misunderstanding between Turks. Unity was achieved later, thanks to the press.

However, the *Günaydın* newspaper showed some imbalances in its writing and reporting, with many of its news stories being one-sourced. The newspaper primarily obtained its stories from coup leaders, which suggests that many societal events were overlooked by the paper. For example, the newspaper reported on "tourism inflation"

on September 29, nearly at the end of the coup, although the story indicated that this inflation had occurred prior to and during the coup. In the same line, on September 27th, the newspaper reported on the arrest of 439 terrorists in Istanbul, but did not publish stories about terrorist existence during the coup. This decision was likely made to avoid inciting violence and minimize the negative impact of the press on the citizens. This tactic is commonly used by the press during coups, conflicts, and wars to reduce violent messages and increase confidence in the population (Bratik, 2008). Despite its alignment with the coup, *Günaydın* newspaper also published messages of warning against coup ideologies and provided information to citizens, including youth, sports persons, and business persons. However, the newspaper's impact cannot be solely determined by the September 12th coup as the press has never been completely positive and is not directly responsible for all crises like coups and their surrounding impacts (Katamba, 2023). Meanwhile, newspapers are critical for the way people interpret some events like coups since everything in such situations is driven by information and media is the main tool that transmits it. During the coup, *Günaydın* newspaper gave columnists space to share their views on sensitive issues in the country. These columnists were experienced academicians and politicians who delivered credible messages to positively impact the audience. As said by Lasswell (1927), overall, the press finds the good for the public and try to provide it amidst the challenges faced during conflicts, coups or wars.

The *Günaydın* newspaper experienced two closures and reopening, yet it remained committed to serving the public. This shows that while democracy involves the rotation of power among various factors such as military, coup, and politics, the choices of individual citizens play a crucial role (El-din & Cheick, 2017). Citizens make their decisions based on the information they receive, which is influenced by factors such as time, location, level of understanding, and content from the press, which in turn shapes their actions and reactions during events like a coup (Severin & Tankard, 1992). Consequently, the press significantly impacts people's reactions and actions to such events, and the approach used by *Günaydın* newspaper aimed to positively influence the audience, although different attitudes towards information may have led to varying outcomes for others.

## CONCLUSION

Media alone cannot bring about any transformation without the support of other institutional factors such as social, economic, legal, and political systems. So, media is as important as other societal institutions to influence people. However, it can be seen as a tool for promoting peace building under certain conditions. Also, the approach of the press to a coup is influenced by various factors, including democratic knowledge and maturity, which can impact its effectiveness (Severin and Tankard, 1992; Küçüközyiğit, 2016). In the absence of democracy, media can become a tool for propaganda rather than serving the public freely. Based on these findings, Günaydın newspaper's approach to the 1980 coup was characterized by fear, non-democratic actions, and intimidation ultimately resulting in its shutdown twice.

During the 1980 coup, which was heavily influenced by military directives, the army's identity became more prominent than any other ideology. As a result, Günaydın newspaper did not report extensively on social-economic ideological conflicts, such as murder, inflation, and terrorism, until the declaration of the new government. This study found that Günaydın newspaper did not publish stories that excessively praised the coup, indicating that it did not openly support the coup even though the content in the news and feature stories of Günaydın newspaper suggests that its approach towards the coup was influenced by coup propagandists.

However, except for columnist opinions, no direct news story was observed against the 1980 coup. Therefore, this study cannot conclude that the press, and Günaydın newspaper in particular, were directly responsible for the coup's decisions, ideas, and actions. The newspaper appeared to follow the agenda set by the coup administration, likely out of fear of being closed, facing arrests, and experiencing intimidation. Finally, regardless of the approach applied by the press during the coup, press remain necessary either to the population, coup administration or both but with the aim of calming the situation.

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