# REFLECTIONS OF SOCIO-POLITICAL EVENTS ON POLITICAL ADVERTISING: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE JUNE AND NOVEMBER 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS

CANSU ÇAM

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IZMIR UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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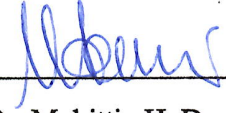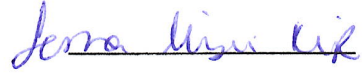
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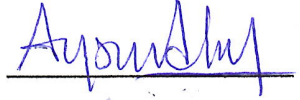
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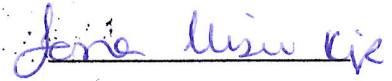
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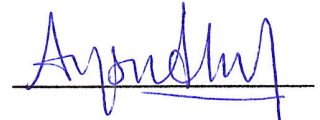

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ABSTRACT

REFLECTIONS OF SOCIO-POLITICAL EVENTS ON POLITICAL
ADVERTISING: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE JUNE AND NOVEMBER
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Çam, Cansu

MA, Marketing Communications and Public Relations

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This thesis analyses the influence of sociopolitical events on the messages of political advertising. In addition to this, it is aimed to reveal the reflections of political party ideologies on these messages. In this context, the advertisements of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) which were prepared for the General Election in June 2015 and the Snap Election in November 2015 are analysed. The socio-political climate before the June Election is described and the negative events which paved the way for the snap election in November 2015 are explained in detail. The reflections of these events are analysed through the advertising messages of these parties. Semiology is one of the important research methods in the analysis of written and visual texts. Therefore, selected advertising samples are analysed by using semiotic analysis method. Samples from different mediums are selected and analysed by using Ferdinand de Saussure's and Roland Barthes's methods of semiology. The AK Party and HDP's advertisements for the June and November elections are analysed and the findings from these two parties' advertisements from both two elections are compared. Findings from June and November elections indicate that the sociopolitical events between June and November 2015 had an influence on the advertising messages of both AK Party and HDP. Additionally, party ideologies also have an influence on how these parties handle these sociopolitical events in their messages.

Keywords: Political communication, political advertising, political campaigns, general election, Justice and Development Party, Peoples' Democratic Party

ÖZET

## SOSYO-POLİTİK OLAYLARIN SİYASAL REKLAMLAR ÜZERİNDEKİ YANSIMALARI: HAZİRAN VE KASIM 2015 GENEL SEÇİMLERİNİN GÖSTERGEBİLİMSEL ANALİZİ

Çam, Cansu

Pazarlama İletişimi ve Halkla İlişkiler Yüksek Lisans Programı

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Bu çalışma, siyasal iletişim çerçevesinde toplumsal olayların siyasal reklam mesajları etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca siyasi parti ideoloji ve parti kimliklerinin bu mesajlarda yansımalarının da ortaya çıkarılması hedeflenmektedir. Bu kapsamda, 2015 yılında gerçekleştirilen 7 Haziran 2015 Genel Seçimleri ve 1 Kasım 2015 Erken Seçimleri için Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Ak Parti) ve Halkların Demokratik Partisi için hazırlanan reklam çalışmaları incelenmiştir. 7 Haziran seçimleri öncesi sosyopolitik ortam ve seçimlerin hemen ardından 1 Kasım 2015 Erken Seçim'lerine neden olan olaylar detaylıca açıklanmış; bu olayların yansımaları seçilen reklam mesajları üzerinden analiz edilmiştir. Yazılı ve görsel metinlerin analizinde göstergebilim önemli araştırma yöntemlerinden biridir. Bu yüzden seçilen reklam örnekleri göstergebilimsel yöntemle analiz edilmiştir. Farklı mecralardan seçilen reklam örnekleri, Ferdinand de Saussure ve Roland Barthes'ın ortaya koyduğu göstergebilimsel yöntemle analiz edilmiştir. Ak Parti ve HDP'nin Haziran ve Kasım seçimleri için hazırladığı reklamlar analiz edilip her iki partinin iki seçim için hazırladığı çalışmalardan çıkan sonuçlar karşılaştırılmıştır. 7 Haziran Genel Seçimi için hazırlanan reklamların analiz sonuçları 1 Kasım Erken Seçimi ile karşılaştırıldığında, iki seçim arasında gerçekleşen sosyopolitik olayların her iki partinin reklam mesajlarını etkilediği görülmektedir. Ayrıca, partilerin ideolojileri de bu konuları mesajlarında nasıl ele aldıkları üzerinde etkilidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyasal iletişim, siyasal reklamcılık, siyasal kampanyalar, genel seçim, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Halkların Demokratik Partisi.

To my grandparents Ayser and İlhan Tütüncüoğlu.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# INTRODUCTION

Political advertising is one of the important elements of political communication. Especially in the pre-election period, many examples of political advertising by political parties can be seen. Although the importance of digital media increases with technological developments, television and other traditional channels such as newspaper and outdoor advertising still maintain their importance for political communication. Political parties usually make commitments and give information to the public and they seek votes from people through political advertisements. In addition to this, the reflections of party identities and ideologies can be observed in these advertisement activities. This study thoroughly discusses all aspects of political advertising and explains the history of political advertising activities of political parties in Turkey. All political parties' abbreviations are given in parenthesis through the study and parties are referred to by their Turkish abbreviations in the rest of the study.

The year 2015 was a significant year in terms of political communication. Turkey had two general elections in June and November 2015. The first one was expected and held on 7th of June, 2015. When their roles are considered, Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) were the main actors of this election. The AK Party had been the ruling party for three terms in parliament and they wanted to continue in power. In addition to this, the AK Party aimed to reach a sufficient number of deputies for a constitutional amendment in order to establish a presidential system. On the other hand, the HDP took part in the election for the first time as a party and their main objective was passing the election threshold. In addition to this, the AK Party reaching a sufficient number of parliamentarians could be endangered if the HDP crossed the election threshold. Hence, the AK Party and the HDP became the main opponents. The reflection of this opposition can be observed

directly in their political campaigns as well. According to the election results, four political parties, which were the AK Party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and the HDP passed the election threshold and had the right to be represented in the Turkish Parliament.

As a result of the election results, the AK Party, surprisingly could form a government alone and the HDP passed the election threshold and had the right to be represented in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM). Since none of these political parties could reach a sufficient number of seats to form a government alone, president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan gave the mandate to Ahmet Davutoğlu, who was the leader of the majority party in parliament, for from a government. Davutoğlu started to negotiate with the opposition parties to form a government. However, disagreements between the party leaders affected this process negatively. In addition to this, events such as the armed conflict in the Southeast Anatolia Region in Turkey and bombing attacks in city centers occupied the agenda of Turkey. As a result of all these sociopolitical events, governments could not be formed, and an early election was held on 1st November, 2015. According to the election results, the AK Party reached a sufficient number of parliamentarians and come to power alone. The CHP, HDP and MHP were the other parties which passed the election threshold and had the right to be represented in the TMBB.

Comprehensive election campaigns for June Election were conducted by political parties since it was a planned election and parties had both the time and the budget. However, for the November Election parties had two months to create their election messages and conduct their campaigns since it was an unplanned and early election. Therefore, the events which had an effect on public opinion and the agenda in Turkey during the negotiation period which was between the June and November 2015 had an influence on the parties' political communication messages.

In the election in June, parties declared their objectives and commitments, and the communication strategies were formed around these messages. However, the socio-political events which set the agenda in Turkey during these five months caused the changes in the messages in the campaigns for each party. This study focuses on the communication messages of the AK Party and the HDP for the elections in June and November 2015 by considering their roles in the election period. Hence, the aim of this study is to understand how socio-political events influenced the campaign

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messages and to what extent party identities influenced these messages. In order to comprehend these questions, the June and November Elections are good examples for analyzing the changes in messages when their contexts are considered. Selected advertising activities of the AK Party and the HDP are analyzed by using the method of semiology in order to interpret the signs in images in detail. The Saussure and Barthes methods of semiology are used in this study, which analyzes the relation between signifier and signified and denotative and connotative meanings of the messages. At the end of the study, findings from the June and November elections of each party are compared on the basis of the elections and parties.

The results revealed that the advertising messages of the AK Party and the HDP were both influenced by the socio-political events which occurred between June and November 2015. It can be understood better when the findings from the November Election are compared with the findings from the June Election. Both the content of the AK Party and the HDP messages for the November campaigns changed in accordance with the agenda of Turkey. The influence of party identities and ideologies on messages are also revealed by analyzing advertising activities. Therefore, the influence of sociopolitical events on political parties' advertising messages and the reflections of party identities on these advertisements are revealed at the end of the study.

# CHAPTER I


# THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION


## 1.1. Evolution of the Concept of Political Communication

### 1.1.1. A Brief History of Political Communication

The concept of 'political communication' goes back to the ancient Greeks. Even if the idea of political communication was not fully developed in ancient Greece, it has been extensively used in the following eras. As communities grow, social improvements accelerate progressively, cultures differ from one another and technology advances, the contents, actors and procedures of political communication have gradually diverged. The fact that the notions of both political science and communication have evolved as independent scientific disciplines and those who have been dealing with the distinctive affairs of political science and communication have utilized the outcomes of both branches have caused the notion of political communication to advance and create its own scheme. (Aziz, 2015; p. 1)

Political communication is now considered as a separate academic field of study. Köker (2007) has emphasized that political communication has evolved as a field of academic affairs and studies within the process of politics' advancement as a scientific framework and these improvements have occurred through the reconstruction of the worldwide democracy accompanied by the Second World War. Thus, political communication has been constructed as a field of academic intellect by collecting and

combining the independent scientific techniques and procedures of the fields of political science and communication. (p. 22)

Political communication aims at changing attitudes and behaviours of a given public for an intended purpose. In this sense political communication is different from other types of communication, since it requires extra knowledge and capabilities in addition to existing communication know-how. (Aziz, 2015; p. 2)

Growing human population and technological advancement have required new political structuring, which has affected the notion and practice of political communication. In this regard, even if face-to-face communication used to be the chief way of political communication in ancient Greece, no doubt such a way of interaction is not sufficient to provide access to highly complex communities. (Aziz, 2015; p. 4) Governments and authorities have utilized the tools and experiences of public relations and advertising to reach a target group that led to the emergence of a highly specialized discipline of political communication (Köker, 2007; p. 23).

The public's role in the democratic process is crucial for the development of political communication. Lilleker (2006) emphasizes the importance of the democratization process in this study of the history of political communication. The majority of political systems changed the nature of political communication and political activity moved into the public sphere. People become involved in politics because they were expected to have a political role. At that point, the increase in information accessibility and the increase in the level of education increased the demand for greater political involvement and influence. In this regard Lilleker has stressed the changes in the expectation of the electorate, as he put it "the voter was not content with the simple act of voting, the voter became an active citizen". (p.5)

### 1.1.2. Definition of Political Communication

Attributing the whole notion of the political communication to a single definition is rather difficult due to the scope of the notion (Aziz, 2015; p. 3). When Denton and Woodward (1990) underline the general features of political communication, they emphasize that political communicators have been directing it with the aim of reaching some specific objectives. Among these general features, Denton and Woodward have drawn attention to the importance of the media within political communication in terms of its capabilities of reaching a wide variety of

audiences. Additionally, political communication has been put forward as a practical, process-centered and decision-oriented activity. (p. 9-11)

Based on these characteristics, Denton and Woodward (1990) have defined political communication of "public discussion about the allocation of public resources (revenues), official authority (who is given power to make legal, legislative and executive decisions), and official sanctions (what the state rewards or punishes)" (p. 14).

However, McNair criticized Denton's and Woodward's definition on the basis that it was incomplete. According to him (2011), in spite of comprehending the verbal and rhetoric notions of the political communication, this is not sufficient to explain the role of symbols in political communication; therefore, it is not capable of understanding the notion of political communication as a whole. (p.3). Hence, McNair (2011) defined *purposeful communication about politics* as:

All forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives.

Communication addressed *to* these actors by non-politicians such as voters and newspaper columnists.

Communication *about* these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics. (p. 4).

As mentioned, the concept of political communication has many different definitions. One of them is; the notion of political communication was described for the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences by Pippa Norris (2004) as "an interactive process concerning the transmission of information among politicians, the news media and the public." and divided the literature in political communication into three major categories as production, contents and effects. In this definition, "production" process concentrates on transmission of messages through direct and indirect channels. The "content" part focuses on the content and finally the "effect" category refers to the potential effects to be predisposed to diversified types of messages (p. 1-3)

Yet another of political communication is:

Utilization of various means of communication by the political actors with the purpose of making their own political aims and stances be accepted by specific

groups, masses, countries or blocks and, under necessary conditions, putting them into practice (Aziz, 2015; p. 3).

### 1.1.3. Functions of Political Communication

There are various perspectives on the functions of political communication While Lilleker (2006) defines political communication as a win over the governmental power or power over the media, he underlines attracting the media attention and not only the importance of gaining political power (p. 11)

Others like Uslu (as cited in Özkan, 2015) indicated seven functions of political communication. These functions direct political communication process to understand what should be done, who should be influenced and how they are influenced. (p. 10). As seen from the above discussion on the functions of political communication, an emphasis on communicating political messages comes forward, which includes political symbols, ethical issues, norms, ideological arguments,). This function necessarily includes solutions offered for social issues and the political objectives of political parties (p. 11).

Establishing feedback channels for two-way communication; influencing opinion leaders; having an ability to setting the agenda in order to communicate; offering solutions for large masses to gain political advantage over the other competitors Uslu (2015) lists. (p. 12-13)

Media management is considered to be a complex issue due to the fact that non-political communicators also use media and report events: however, Lillker (2006) suggests that the most important function of political communication is to gain media attention, because the power of the media lies in its capacity to inform the public and highlight events (p. 19).

### 1.1.4. Elements of Political Communication

#### 1.1.4.1.    Political Organizations

Political communication as a process includes many different elements. These actors are "individuals who aspire (…) the decision making process" and "they may seek to do this by attaining institutional political power, in government or constituent assemblies, through which preferred policies can be implemented. (McNair, 2011; p. 5)

These actors are supposed to act and communicate in accordance with the rules, objectives and principles of the groups they are involved in. (Aziz, 2015; p. 19). These groups include political parties which are formed by individuals who have similar opinions and ideologies, and public organizations which are divided into sub-categories such as trade unions, consumer groups, and professional associations are prominent political actors. Pressure groups and terrorist organizations also constitute actors in political communication. (McNair, 2011; p. 5-9)

Political parties are organized groups that emerge to govern the public with a political aim and political communication is used in its narrow sense for political parties. Each individual who has a political identity and participate in the political party is a political actor at a different level. All activities made by political parties towards the public are a part of political communication and, this communication activity comes to a head in the course of elections. (Aziz, 2015; p. 22)

Identifying solely political parties and voters as actors of political communication is not accurate when the functions of political communication are considered. All individuals are organizations which work for gaining legitimacy by strengthening their power in political process. They are also actors of political communication as political organizations. These actors are constituted by political parties, organizations work for public welfare, civil society organizations, pressure and interest groups, media organizations, central and local governments and citizens. (Özkan, 2015; p. 13)

### 1.1.4.2. Audience

The audience turns out to be the second most important element of political communication. All of the activities of political communication are conducted with the aim of posing an influence over this second key element, the audience, without which the message of political communication will not have any sense. (McNair, 2011; p. 10)

Additionally, irrespective of the size and different interests of the audience, the common purpose among all of the political communication messages is to create an impact on the audience. (McNair, 2011; p. 10) In terms of the persuasive capabilities of these messages, it is significant for them to be consistent with the interests and concerns of the audience. In this regard, being able to create a convincing message is

an important parameter of being a good communicator. (Cartee and Copeland, 2004; p. 75)

### 1.1.4.3. Media

Media organizations are the third crucial element of political communication. These media organizations consist of print, broadcasting and online channels. At this point, the media have two functions "both as transmitters of political communication which originates outside the media organisation itself, and as senders of political messages constructed by journalists and other producers such as bloggers. "In this case, political actors should use media for conveying their messages to a desired audience (Mc Nair, 2011; p. 11).

The media communicates news, interviews, comments, analysis, research types and political messages from organizations to public; and it conveys feedback from the public to political organizations by using the same techniques as political organizations use for reaching their audience (Aziz, 2015; p. 67).

Understanding the role of media in the democratic process is also crucial for understanding the function of the media during the political communication process. When the media and democratic process are discussed, five functions of the media for the ideal type of democracies should be underlined. These five functions are firstly the media should inform the citizens; and, secondly it should educate them in the light of facts. At that point, the objectivity of media is underlined. The third function positions the media as a platform for political discourse and forming public opinion. Another function in ideal type of democracies emphasize that the media gives publicity to governmental and political institutions. The last function indicates the advocacy role of the media as a channel (McNair, 2011; p. 18-20).

### 1.1.5. Persuasion and Rhetoric

The concepts of persuasion and rhetoric are considered to be at the heart of political communication. Although the concept of political communication has been in use since the 1960s, the notions of rhetoric and propaganda had already existed well before. The origin of the term "propaganda" goes back to the Ancient Greeks (Çankaya, 2015:16). "The *Rhetoric,* which is written by Aristotle, has an enormous influence on the emergence of the concept of rhetoric." (Aziz, 2015; p. 53).

In his book, The Rhetoric, Aristotle defines the concept of rhetoric as a competence in using the existing means of convictions (Aristoteles, 1995; p. 37) In Aristotle (1995; p. 35-37) studying rhetoric is closely associated with persuasion. Persuasion is a type of demonstration, since we believe in something when it is demonstrated.

Rhetoric is beneficial since real and true arguments override contrasting arguments. On the other hand, however, having the most exact information is not enough to convince the audience since knowledge based evidence requires an education, and there are uneducable people in the audience. Aristotle (1995) emphasises the importance of using common concepts in persuading the audience for manipulation (p. 36).

There are, then, these three means of effecting persuasion. The man who is to be in command of them must, it is clear, be able (1) to reason logically, (2) to understand human character and goodness in their various forms, and (3) to understand the emotions-that is, to name them and describe them, to know their causes and the way in which they are excited (Aristotle, 1994/1998; p. 9)

Aristotle (1994/1998) divided rhetoric into three subcategories as:

Rhetoric falls into three divisions, determined by the three classes of listeners to speeches. For of the three elements in speech-making–speaker, subject, and person addressed–it is the last one, the hearer, that determines the speech's end and object… it follows that there are three divisions of oratory-(1) political, (2) forensic, and (3) the ceremonial oratory of display. Political speaking urges us either to do or not to do something: one of these two courses is always taken by private counsellors as well as by men who address public assemblies. Forensic speaking either attacks or defends somebody: one or other of these two things must always be done by the parties in a case. The ceremonial oratory of display either praises or censures somebody (p. 15)

When examined in the context of political communication, persons who will give political messages have abilities to realize the objectives of rhetoric, in other

words, should have a powerful rhetoric. In this regard, these abilities depend on having strong sources, efficient arguments and effective use of language. At this juncture, appropriate selection of communication channels is crucial to convey the messages successfully to the target audience. (Aziz,2015; p. 55)

### 1.1.6. Propaganda and Public Opinion

It is necessary to understand the concept of propaganda very well first of all. In order to understand political communication thoroughly, it is necessary to explain the concept of propaganda. One of the broadest definitions of the term propaganda is explained by Lilleker (2006) as: "Communication that is deliberately designed by one group in society to influence the attitudes and behaviours of others. It often uses symbolism and rhetoric, and appeals to the emotional and irrational aspects of our sensibility." (p.162)

Propaganda is considered to be the oldest form of political communication. The basis of the term is derived from the Roman Catholic Church in 1622 against the rise of Protestantism (Lilleker, 2006:162). The term can be defined as "communicating the messages unilaterally and densely with an authoritarian style to the target audience." (Aziz, 2015; p. 15). In the concept of propaganda, the messages are expected to be received and accepted as given in format and in content. Propagandist messages are not open to dispute and interpretation. Correspondingly, it is expected that attitudes and behaviours will change. In this case, transmitting the message takes precedence of communication. (Aziz, 2005; p. 16)

By the time of the 19th century, propaganda was a tool to influence the masses by governments in the direction of their purposes. The concept of propaganda, on the other hand, has changed over time. Especially with the development of modern media, it has been possible to reach larger masses, and the rise of world wars and radical political parties make the use of propaganda an important part of political life.

The term has been used to describe the persuasion tactics used during the First World War. By the 20th century, propaganda had become the greatest tool for mass manipulation for all dictatorship regimes. (Çankaya, 2015; p. 22). Lilleker (2006), also mentions the use of propaganda for the purpose of social control in the hands of the Catholic Church, Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot. It is in this context that propaganda has assumed a negative connotation.

Lilleker (2006), discusses the extension of propaganda:

into the works of political advertising, permanent campaigning and the public relations state and is evidenced through the continued use of spin and news management. Its use reinforces the hegemonic model of the public sphere, increasing cynicism and disengagement from the political process due to its undermining of the pluralist democratic process (p. 163).

Lilleker (2006) points to the fact that negative meaning of the term propaganda prevents many political communicators and media professionals from acknowledging the use of propaganda techniques in their works (p. 163). Nevertheless, Lilleker (2006) warns us not mix persuasion with pure propaganda, as he argues: "at the heart of true propaganda are three key elements: rhetoric, myth and symbolism" (p. 163). Although these three are the most distinguishing aspects of propaganda, there are further rules that make a message propaganda:

seeks to draw the reader into and beyond the text, causing internal conflict over issues or reinforcing prejudices we often like to deny we possess: racism particularly; highlights that change is possible through action by the reader, comparing negative aspects of the past to a positive future as a result of the action; conveys the impression of being objective truth, unsponsored and coming from the public sphere rather than attempting to influence the audience; treats the audience as passive, there is no hint that the audience can use differential decoding to block out parts of a message and so not be motivated to act; is overt in using visual, rhetorical and symbolic tools, but those must belong to society and be simply and universally decoded as the originator intends. (Lilleker, 2006; 163-164)

## 1.2. Political Communication in Political Campaigns
### 1.2.1. Definition and Importance of Political Campaigns
Elections are important since they give the right to the public to participate actively in the process of selecting their leaders to serve their interest. This is

considered to be one of the core principles of democracy. Political campaigns are crucial in this process (Trent and Freidenberg, 2000) to influence the electorates' decisions. Lilleker (2006) defined political campaigns as "a series of events all designed to communicate to an audience and garner support from that audience."

Political campaigns are basically, competitions between competing claims by the political actors; presidents, head of states, parliament, governments, political parties and local governments to actualise their programme in governing. Aziz (2015) mentions referendums and elections campaigns under political campaigns. Election campaigns have been the most frequently used method for democratic participation throughout democratic societies for centuries. Aziz (2015) defines election campaigns that "comprise all methods and technics which is used for propaganda activities by political actors to win the elections countrywide or locally" (p. 111-113).

### 1.2.2. Objectives of Political Campaigns

The primary objective of an election campaigns is to win the election and put the victorious political party or parties into power (Aziz,2015; p. 113). Campaigns are organized to win over the audience by using a range of sophisticated techniques conducted by both commercial and political actors (Lilleker, 2004; p. 49). In this context, different communication strategies are applied in accordance with the target electorates. At that point, the campaign strategy for hesitant electorates and uninterested electorates is different from decisive voters. While the messages which are about reassuring and introducing new programmes are communicated to the decisive voters, the messages for encouraging potential voters to vote are conveyed for hesitant electorates. (Aziz, 2015; p. 113-115)

The functions of a political Campaign can be examined in four different categories. The first function of a political campaign is specified as drawing attention to an issue which is central in the party programme. Setting an agenda for an issue or the setting of a counter argument from opponents are the activities of this process. Persuasiveness forms the second function of a political campaign. The third function is to promote recognition of a candidate. As Lilleker (2006) argues; "Campaigns act as a reminder for supporters. Although it is argued that partisanship and political awareness act as mediating factors on campaign effects people still need motivating to vote" (p. 53).

### 1.2.3. Features and Principles of Political Campaigns

Modern political campaigns have their own principles which should be considered during the communication process. Lilleker (2006) presented the key features of modern political campaigns. In this regard, campaigns should be centrally planned, but they are completed locally. At that point, the use of marketing intelligence is crucial for designing, testing and redesigning the campaign. Lilleker additionally underlined the key role of media management in this process for transmitting the messages to the target and narrowcasting activities to reach individually. Lastly, it is indicated that whether it is the ruling or the opposition party, a permanent campaign should be conducted to have a constant presence. (p. 51)

Election campaigns should, then, be conducted within the framework of certain rules. Identification and evaluation OF the features of the target audience are essential for a campaign. Berlo (cited in Ruben, 2017) believes:

the message to the audience must consider aspects of communication skills, attitudes, knowledge, social and cultural systems. In the context of this similarity of behaviour, characteristics, and an introduction of the symbols of communication that are able to build shared meaning need to be considerate by communicators who seek to influence the audience (p. 314).

As Campbell et al. (1960) stated:

party identification raises a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favourable to his partisan orientation. The stronger the party bond, the more exaggerated the process of selection and perceptual distortion will be (p. 133).

A part identity and image are created in accordance with the party programme. In addition to this, methods and techniques of a campaign should be determined. In this connection, which channel will be used to reach the target group, which method will be applied and which message will be sent by using which communication channel and when it will be used should be well programmed. Another important point is, especially if the importance of media for the political campaigns is regarded, media

relations have major importance during the campaign process (Aziz, 2015; p. 134-138).

Techniques of political communication are divided into two categories: as face-face political communication and distant/instrumental political communication. In face-to face political communication, the sender and the receiver of the message stand in the same place. Messages are given verbally and feedback is usually received simultaneously. Distant political communication is done through channels in circumstances where sender and receiver cannot meet up. These channels are categorized as traditional and electronic; or individual or mass mediums. While telephone and mail are examples of individual channels; radio, television, magazines, newspaper and posters are mass medium channels (Aziz, 2015; p. 45-48).

Communication channels and specific techniques to reach a target audience are also crucial in a specific political campaign. Since reaching a target audience to influence their opinion and behaviour is imperative in a political campaign, professionals' devise tailor-made programmes for each campaign, in which communication techniques occupy a paramount place. Features of the target audience such as age, gender, educational attainment, income, occupation, living in a urban or rural area, language, ethnic identity and traditions have importance in the selection of media channels. The techniques and channels of political communication are restricted to the target audience's ability to reach and use these channels. For example, the political message which is given through e-mail or internet may not be effective in rural areas (Aziz, 2015; p. 50-21)

### 1.2.4. Political Advertising

Political advertising can generally be defined as "the preparation of efficacious messages which aim at increasing the voting rates of political parties by professional advertisers as visual, auditory and written for the media" (Aziz, 2015:130). Political advertising "refers to the purchase and use of advertising space, paid for at commercial rates, in order to transmit political messages to mass audience. Cinema, billboards, press, radio, televisions and internet are all used for this purpose." McNair, 2011; p. 87).

Sanders (2004) characterises the key features of political advertising as:

- Have dramatic impact, to ensure interest and aid recall;
- Draw on familiar themes, stories and genres to appear relevant;
- Focus on people, often real people and and not politicians or actors, rather than policy.
- Are simple, so carrying one easily understood message.  (as cited in Lilleker, 2006: 148).

Lilleker (2006), emphasizes the significance of credibility when these factors are conducted. If there is a lack of credibility in the political message, it is possible to perceive it as an ordinary commercial (p. 149).

The early practices of political advertising studies can be observed as well.  These advertisements were covered by newspapers which were owned by the private sector in the beginning. They were then developed by purchasing time and space on televisions or radios in the following years. Nowadays, political parties, advertising agencies and media instruments work in cooperation. (Aziz, 2015; p. 131)

Political advertising can be classified into five different types considering their functions, objectives and approaches:

*Partisan political advertisements;* there are three subcategories of partisan political advertisements, which are hidden, explicit and marginal. The identity of the candidate is kept confidential in hidden partisan ads in order to attract voters who voted for the candidate or party, but were not satisfied with them.  Examples of this type of advertisements can be observed more in local elections. On the contrary, the identity of the candidate is emphasized in explicit partisan advertisements. Apart from these, especially in the case of voting rates which are close, attention is drawn to a marginal issue to attract the hesitant audience.

*Political advertisements which are based on candidates;* the candidate is featured more than the party itself.

*Political advertisements towards social groups* aspire to gain voters from social groups which have specific requirements and expectations such as youth, women, students, retired, unemployed.

*Hidden political advertising* are not advertised by using political advertising codes directly; they demonstrate an issue or activity which is related to the campaign.

*Political Advertisements which have social purpose* are not within the scope of advertisement directly. They are prepared for the purpose of informing, raising awareness and motivation against a public concern issue. (Çankaya, 2015; p. 47-50)

*Negative Political advertisements,* on the other hand, "focus on the opponent; usually these are justified and open up the campaign to rebuttal and counter rebuttal" (Lilleker; 2006; p. 148).

### 1.2.4.1. Objectives of Political Advertisements

Political advertising has its own specific purposes. "Just as commercial advertisements, strategies and tactics are pursued in political communication according to envisaged target". (Çankaya,2015; p. 69). These differences in objectives have an impact on media tools as well as on messages. Therefore, this influence should also be taken into account in the political campaigning process (p. 69).

Objectives of political advertisement may differ from one political party to another or from one country to another. Nevertheless, there are common structures in any political advertisements. After developing certain strategies and tactics in line with the political campaign, the advertising process focuses on diverse issues such as the following: image making/positioning campaigns, information campaigns, campaigns for creating interest, counter-attack campaigns and campaigns towards floating voters. Image creation and positioning campaigns focus on the candidates' image perception and position in the public's mind. The campaigns which aim at presentation and placing the party or the candidate on the agenda pursue the strategy of creating an image. Apart from this, information campaigns have the aim of informing the public about proposed solutions and advertising strategies for convincing the swing voters or voters who intend to vote for different parties follow the strategies for gaining the floating voters Especially during the campaign period, many critics and accusations may be raised from opponents. A counter-attack strategy is used at that point in order to answer and confute the opponents' arguments. Lastly, it is hard to gain voters who already support the opponent parties. Moreover, floating voter have a determining role in election periods. Hence, political actors conduct a strategy to gain these votes (p.69-72).

Strategies and tactics followed in accordance with campaign targets are classified as; image making/positioning campaigns, campaigns for creating interest, information campaigns, counterattack campaigns and campaigns towards floating voters. Image creation and positioning campaigns focus on the candidates' image perception and position in the public's mind. The campaigns which aim at presentation and placing the party or the candidate on the agenda pursue the strategy of creating an image. Apart from this, information campaigns have the aim of informing the public about proposed solutions and advertising strategies for convincing the swing voters or voters who intend to vote for different parties follow the strategies for gaining floating voters (p.69-72)

Advertising is not only created for providing information, but it is also designed to convince the audience. Thus, advertising is crucial for politicians considering the basic aims of political communication. At this point, the actors of political advertising have the freedom to communicate their opinions, express their strengths and the weaknesses of their opponents by means of these advertisements. Nowadays, although social network websites are attractive platforms for politicians with the rise of the internet, paid and print media still occupy an important place in the field of political advertising (McNair, 2011; p. 86).

### 1.2.4.2. Media in Political Advertisements

Political communication practitioners aim to benefit from all developments in technology while they are preparing campaigns (Trent and Friedenberg, 2000; p. 322). A variety of media tools are employed for advertisements during political campaigns; these range from newspaper to TV, cinema, internet, billboards, magazines, CDs, DVDs and electronic communication technologies e-mails, websites and social media accounts.

However, it is necessary to use the dominant media in order to conduct a successful campaign. One of these dominant media forms used in political advertising is television. If the television is a dominant media form when the target of the campaign is considered, the usage of television is significant for an effective campaign (Trent and Friedenberg, 2000; p. 322).

Television provides an advantage to political advertisers. First of all, it attracts both visual and auditory senses. Therefore, due to these features of television,

messages are spread in a short time and these messages have more impact on viewers; and they are conveyed to larger audiences. In addition to these features, targeting the audiences is possible to some extent on television. At that point, the demographic characteristics of the audience are considered and advertisements are given to the related programs for the audience (p. 338).

Daily and weekly newspapers and weekly and monthly magazines are accepted as print media and they are used for the transmission of political messages as well (Aziz, 2015:68). Newspaper and magazine advertisements have more advantage transmitting the candidate's image since political actors have an opportunity to communicate more information in one advertisement through these types of medias. In campaigning periods, political parties give one page or half-page advertisements and they are designed to inform the public about a specific topic (Zeybek, 2016; p. 119).

Radio had an important role in both the history of political communication in Turkey and in the world. However, as television became prevalent, the importance of radio was reduced in political communication Radio broadcasting started in the beginnings of 1920s. Radio started to be used as a political communication tool during these years. During the World War II, it became Hitler's propaganda tool in Nazi Germany (Aziz, 2015; p. 71). This usage of radio is important in the history of political communication. Radio was used in 1927 as a political communication tool for the first time.

Another medium which is used actively as a political communication tool is outdoor media. Outdoor media consists of billboards and posters generally. They have limited ability to communicate messages. However, they contribute to image creation with the usage of candidates' images and they communicate the slogans and campaign themes strikingly (Zeybek, 2016; p. 119).

## 1.3. Political Communication Practices in Turkey

In Turkey, political communication in the modern sense came to the attention of researchers during the first multi-party election in 1946. When the 1950 general election ended the mono-party period (1923-1946) and under the CHP (Republican Peoples' Party), the success of the DP (Democrat Party) drew considerable interest in political communication. The DP's election strategies set an example for future

political parties until today.   In what follows, significant elections in Turkey since 1946 will be discussed briefly as they constitute the background for political communication.

### 1.3.1. Election Campaigns in Turkey from 1946 until 2015

The first general election was held in 1946 in Turkey and there were debates about the fact that these elections were highly controversial, because the ruling CHP won 396 seats as opposed to 62 seats won by the DP. The DP accused the CHP of committing electoral fraud and manipulating the system (Özbudun, 2000; p. 16). When the issue is considered in terms of communication, the radio was a propaganda tool of the government between the years 1936-40. At this point, although the state radio was open to propaganda during the election period, actually the radio was under the control of the CHP. Therefore, it can be conceived that DP did not have a sufficient opportunity for conveying its messages to the masses (Çankaya, 2015; p. 162). The landslide victory of the DP in the 1950 election (408 seats against CHP's 69 seats) (Zürcher, 2005; p. 221) was the result of various political, social and economic factors, but one of the determinant factors was the successful election campaign carried out by the DP.

The Democrat Party ran an effective political campaign against the CHP. The main strategy of the messages created for the DP campaign were shaped around criticisms of the CHP's policies and targeted the electorate from the countryside. The importance of the Ankara and İstanbul radios for this campaign was crucial for the parties as a propaganda tool. Besides the radio, the DP used posters and flyers as important advertising tools during the election period. When the 1950 election campaign activities are considered, the DP's posters with the slogans of "Enough is enough! It's the nation's turn to speak!" and "I need your support for the greatest Turkey" are considered to be the most prominent communication activities (Aziz, 2015; p. 162). The Democrat Party's landslide victory has had an impact on political environment and political communication activities in Turkey (p. 162-163) ever since. The Democrat Party's ten years in power ended in the 1960 Military Coup and democratic activities were suspended. This period was important for the constitutional amendment, closure of political parties and the prosecution of members of the parliament. If this period is evaluated in terms of the tools of political communication,

a set of regulations was adopted for the use of radio as a propaganda tool by political parties (Aziz, 2015; p. 164). These regulations brought freedom to further election campaign activities (Çankaya,2015; p. 166) in the following years.

After the 1960 military coup, a three year transition period ended in the 1963 local elections, as the first democratic election after the coup (Aziz, 2015:168) followed by the general election in 1965, in which the Justice Party (Adalet Partisi, AP) with its famous leader Süleyman Demirel came to power with a high percentage of votes (Çankaya, 2015; p. 166), the AP won 53.8% of the seats in the House of Representatives and 61% of the Senate seats[1].

In terms of political communication, the 1950 and the 1954 early election the DP's campaign included spectacular outdoor meetings, as well as the radio for propaganda. Huge banners and posters were also widely used, which made the election periods quite lively, as opposed to previous years, where one party ruled from 1923 till 1950. However, these activities should be evaluated as propaganda rather than political advertising when how they were carried out are considered since the conventional propaganda techniques were managed by the propaganda channels of political parties instead of modern advertising techniques which are conducted by advertising agencies and specialists. (Çankaya, 2015: ibid, p. 167).

The 1977 General Election campaign differed from the previous election campaigns, because TV was used as a propaganda tool. The Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) was founded in 1964 and the first TV broadcast was transmitted in 1968. From then on, TV has become one of the most effective mediums for election campaigns and a propaganda tool for the governments.

The 1977 election campaign also differed from previous election campaigns because of AP's decision to hire a professional advertising agency, Cenajans, for its communication activities (Aziz, 2015; p. 169). Cenajans produced newspaper and magazine advertisements for the AP, in addition to 5 million flyers and 20 thousand tapes (Özpolat, 2016; p. 19).

However, the CHP and its leader Bülent Ecevit who is referred to as the "Cyprus conqueror" and named as "black boy" became the first party (Çankaya, 2015; p. 171). The CHP's political campaign reflected the transformation of the party from

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[1]    http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Asia-and-Oceania/Turkey-POLITICAL-PARTIES.html#ixzz4qgRWj8kF

an elitist party to a populist party. The CHP's election campaign targeted the working class and the peasants with its effective leftist slogans which reflected the 1967 party programme in which the CHP positioned itself as left of centre. Although the CHP received 41.4 prevent of the popular vote, it fell short of an absolute majority. This period was terminated with the 1980 military coup, and all political activities in the country, including political communication activities, were banned by the military (p. 172).

The first general election was held in 1983 after the 1980 military coup, with four newly formed political parties competing for power. These parties were the Nationalist Democracy Party (MDP), True Path Party (DYP), Motherland Party (ANAP) and Populist Party (HP). The major development in terms of political communication in this election was the permission granted to political parties for paid advertisements in newspapers. Moreover, all political parties worked with advertising agencies (Aziz, 2015; p. 129).

The most prominent event of this electoral term was the campaign strategy of ANAP and its leader Turgut Özal, working with an advertising agency (Manajans). The agency planned all the communication activities of the party on its own. The strategy which was determined by the agency was built on the leadership image of Özal, and the campaign was conducted toward this strategy. The advertisement strategy of the agency focused on the image management of the party leader, even the private life of Özal was disclosed to the press. ANAP won the 1983 election, gaining 45% of the general vote cast (Çankaya, 2015; p. 180-183).

In the general election campaigns in 1987, the most significant event was the return of banned political leaders such as Süleyman Demirel, Bülent Ecevit, Necmettin Erbakan and Alparslan Türkeş, to the political arena by means of a referendum (Aziz, 2015; p. 171). The Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) also participated in this election as the bigger party among the left-oriented parties. The slogan used by the SHP caused a reaction among the other political parties and the public. This slogan was "No to being squeezed like a lemon", attracting criticism from, especially, ANAP for likening the public to a lemon (Çankaya, 2015; p. 198). These debates can be evaluated as an important issue for the political advertising activities of that period. The most important development in this election campaign in terms of communication was the permission granted in 1983 to political parties for paid advertisements on

television as well as in newspapers. It was then possible for political parties to broadcast their advertisements on TRT. Needless to say professional advertisement agencies were employed in the production process. Political parties which benefited from 'the advertising allowance time on TV' were the SHP, DYP and ANAP. General election campaigns in 1991 took place in a different media environment; in 1991 state monopoly in broadcasting ended and the first private TV commenced broadcasting. The emergence of private television channels influenced the political communication environment of this election period. Positive and negative broadcasts of political parties which depended on the media owners' political choice can be given as an example of these influences (Aziz, 2015; p. 173). Çankaya (2015) defined this period as the beginning of "media war" (p. 203).

The most significant political advertising event of this election period was the agreement made with Séguéla, the famous French advertiser, for running the ANAP's campaign. Séguéla had full authority during this campaign. (Aziz, 2015:174). This case is evidence of the increasing awareness the power of political advertising practices (Çankaya, 2015; p. 205).

Undoubtedly, one of the most significant issues which occupied the public agenda was the advertisements of the Welfare Party (RP). The advertising messages of the RP were found to be impressive by both the public and members of the RP. Slogans such as "Is it a fault to be an easterner?" and showing prostitutes in the campaign (Çankaya, 2015; p. 214) attracted attention; the RP was seen as taking a brave stance against injustices faced by the poor and the marginal minorities in society.

In the 1995 general election the SHP dissolved itself and merged with the CHP. Under the leadership of Deniz Baykal, the CHP slogan was "New left in the world, new CHP in Turkey." The decision to use the term "new" in the presentation of the CHP was a response to criticism during the Deniz Baykal-era (Uysal, 2011; p. 133). In dealing with these criticisms the CHP studied the European Social Democratic parties, which at the time were going through internal restructuring, in an attempt "to construct a democratic left in Turkey" (Uysal, 2011; p. 133-4).

The political parties had an opportunity to broadcast their advertisements on private television channels (Aziz, 1995:177); like other parties, the CHP hired professional advertisement agencies to produce advertisements related to the new image of the party to be broadcasted.

The 1995 general election was held when there was a serious economic crisis. Furthermore, the RP was perceived as a danger by the other political parties due to its political opinions and positions. Nevertheless, the RP's election campaign was considered to have been the most successful and novel to date, determined by its approach towards politics (Çarkoğlu 1995):

The main traits of this approach seem to be an emphasis on problem solving in local administrations and a formidable grassroots organisation to mobilise party supporters. Accordingly, the emerging strategy of the RP was to use their success at local elections as a stepping stone for capturing the central executive powers in the next general election through effectively responding to their constituent needs at the local administrative level (p. 89).

Another importance of this period was the election of Tansu Çiller, as the leader of the DYP, who became the first woman leader of a political party. Competition between the DYP and RP can be mentioned in this period, and at that point, the DYP emphasized secularism mostly in its advertising messages. Political disputes between two center-right parties, ANAP and DYP. were also significant examples of negative political advertising (Çankaya, 2015; p. 224-228).

The 1999 election was held in a highly complex political environment. The RP was closed and senior members of the party were arrested. Furthermore, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) Abdullah Öcalan was captured and he was brought to Turkey. These events created advantages for the rise of nationalism, especially for the DSP on the centre-left and the MHP on the far right (Çankaya:2015: 246-247). As a result, the election ended with the coalition of these two parties (p. 270).

Developments in electronic technology in the 2000s had a great impact on the campaign strategies of the political parties. As in all organisations and in social life, technological developments altered and shaped the election campaigns and propaganda techniques. Both these developments in social structure and technological developments brought a new dimension to the studies of political communication in terms of content, method and techniques (Aziz, 2015; p. 178-179).

When the pre-election period in 2002 is considered in general, the economic crisis and the disappointment with the DSP and MHP government with regard to the economic problems determined the political environment (Çankaya, 2015; p. 272).

Moreover, new political parties also appeared in this pre-election period. Undeniably, the most significant of these parties was the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) which won the all general elections in the coming years, including the 2015 general election. Other well-known parties which were established in this period were the New Turkey Party (YTP) which was led by İsmail Cem and the Young Party (GP) which was led by Cem Uzan (p. 273).

The 2002 general election can be distinguished radically from the previous elections in two senses. The first is the success of the GP; as a very young party with no political history, it gained %7,25 of the general vote cast. The GP, employing professional advertisement agencies used all media channels in its election campaign as well as a significant number of public meetings across Turkey. The GP also had its own media which was effectively used during the election period (Özpolat, 2016; p. 60-61, 81).

The 2002 general election was also distinguished from previous ones in the sense that the victorious pro-Islamic AK Party was to shape and radically alter Turkish politics in the coming years.

General Elections in 2007 and 2011 were preoccupied with issues such as presidential elections, public demonstrations against the AK Parti government and the memorandum declared by the Chief of General Staff, which was called the "electronic memorandum." The, main opposition party CHP, following the same concern, designated its campaign based on the slogan "Are you aware of the danger?" (Çankaya, 2015; p. 296-299). The CHP campaign, thus, focused on the threat, as they saw it, posed by the AK Party to the secular state.

During that period, television advertisements for all parties were banned by the Supreme Board of Radio and Television (RTÜK). Therefore, the AK Party concentrated on other channels to convey its messages. Despite all negative propaganda and strong opposition against the AK Party, the party cadre created their main idea for the second general election with a powerful slogan "do not stop, keep moving" (p.305-307).

In the 2011 General Elections, conducting an election campaign in Kurdish was allowed for the first time. This situation indicates the government's approach to policies concerning the Kurdish question. Another important event which was significant for the 2011 election was political advertising was allowed on television

and radio. The AK Party, CHP, MHP and BDP collaborated with the expert advertising agencies during the campaign period. They utilized all mediums of technology and had their advertisements broadcasted on television to reach their target audience (Aziz, 2015; p. 186-187)

So far I have summarised briefly the fifty-year history of political communication, election campaigns by the major political parties in Turkey. The strategies and methods used by the political parties throughout the years have radically changed due to social, political, economic and technological circumstances in each period. In the 21$^{st}$ century, among other things, innovations in communication technologies seems to be playing an important role in the success and failure of political party election campaigns. The following chapter will deal with the 2015 general election in detail.

The political advertising practices of political parties in general for the 2015 general election which was the following general election after 2011, will be studied in detailed in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER II


# 2015 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN TURKEY


General elections for the 25<sup>th</sup> parliament and 26<sup>th</sup> parliament terms were held in the same year in 2015. In compliance with the aim of this study, before explaining the events during the pre-electoral period on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June and the socio-political events between June and November 2015 which induced this early election, I will mention a brief history of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and People's Democratic Party (HDP). Their political histories are important for studying their approaches to these events and the reflections of these events on their campaigns.

## 2.1. Short Political History of Justice and Development Party

The party which is named the Justice and Development Party [2] in Turkish is abbreviated to AK Party[3]. Its logo is a lightbulb which includes yellow and black colours. The AK Party presented its political approach as "national will, superiority of people, reason, science, experience, democracy, fundamental rights and freedoms of an individual and morality" (AK Party Constitution: 2016:23-24). Basically, "Justice and Development Party is a political party which was established by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and defines itself as conservative democratic" (Akdoğan, 2004; p. 9).

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[2] Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi

[3] "Ak" means white in Turkish

The AK Parti was established on 14ᵗʰ August 2001. Its roots are based in the Welfare Party (RP). A group of politicians which emerged as an opposition group in the RP formed a new party which was defined as democratic, innovative and conservative by them. It was established under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül, Abdüllatif Şener, İdris Naim Şahin, Binali Yıldırım and Bülent Arınç were the other leading founding members (Aslan and Göksu, 2015; p. 31).

When the AK Party was established, there was a great economic crisis throughout the country. This crisis was an opportunity for the AK Party with regard to the preferences of voters for different political parties instead of the previous coalition parties which could not resolve the crisis as anticipated (Koç, 2011; p.4). Hence, the AK Party came to power within a short span of time after its establishment with 34,64 % of the votes. However, due to his imprisonment, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan could not be a candidate for the election in 2002. Thus, 58ᵗʰ Government was formed by Abdullah Gül and after a while the proscriptive decision about Erdoğan was removed with a constitutional amendment (Aslan and Göksu, 2015; p.32-34).

With the decision of Ak Party to renew elections in Siirt on 9ᵗʰ of March, 2013, Tayyip Erdoğan was elected as a deputy. After the resignation of Abdullah Gül from the party leadership and prime ministry, Erdoğan formed the 59ᵗʰ government on 14ᵗʰ March, 2013 (Akdoğan, 2014: 10). The AK Party was subsequently elected as the ruling party in the 2007 election with 46,58% votes and in the 2011 election with 49,82% of the votes[4]

In summary, the AK Parti managed to become the first party in all elections from 2002 to 2015. Ahmet Davutoğlu, who was the Foreign Affairs minister of the AK Party government, became the party leader after the election of Erdoğan as president. In the June 2015 General Election, the AK Party had a new leader and election preparations were carried out under the leadership of Davutoğlu (Aslan and Göksu, 2015; p. 35).

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[4] http://www.haberturk.com/secim2007

## 2.2. Short Political History of Peoples' Democratic Party

The establishment of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) was based on the Peoples' Democratic Congress on 15th October 2012. Although the HDP was formed in 2012, it was the continuation of other Kurdish political parties which had been banned in the 1990s and 2000s. These parties were the Peoples' Labor Party (HEP, 1990-1993), Democracy Party (DP, 1991-1994), Peoples' Democracy Party (HADEP,1994-2003) and Democratic Peoples' Party (DEHAP,1997-2005) and Democratic Society Party (DTP, 2005-2009) continued their political existence until they were closed by the Constitutional Court. When the DTP faced the risk of closure, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) was established on 2nd of May 2008 under the co-presidency of Selahattin Demirtaş and Gülten Kışanak. Before the 2011 General Elections, Selahattin Demirtaş was elected as the president of the BDP. The election threshold was an important problem for the BDP, thus they encouraged the public to support independent candidates who were actually supported by the BDP (Gül and Bozkanat, 2015; p. 281-282).

The HDP conducted their first meeting on 18th August 2013 after its establishment. During this process, some parliamentarians such as Ertuğrul Kürkçü, Sabahat Tuncel, Sırrı Süreyya Önder and Levent Tüzel who were members of the BDP were transferred to the HDP. At the HDP's second extraordinary Congress on 22nd June 2014, Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ were elected as co-presidents of the party (Coşkun, 2015: 14). The president of Turkey was elected by the public directly in 2014 for the first time and Selahattin Demirtaş was one of the candidates for this election. He received 9.76% of the popular vote casted and it was considered to be a great success for the HDP (Coşkun, 2015; p. 15).

Lastly, HDP participated in the General Elections in June 2015 as a political party for the first time and aimed to pass the election threshold as a party. They reached 13,1% of the votes and gained the right to enter parliament. [5]

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[5]http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/content/conn/YSKUCM/path/Contribution%20Folders/SecmenIslemleri/Secimler/2015MV/D.pdf

### 2.3. Socio-political Climate of Turkey before the 7th of 2015 General Elections

Understanding the pre-election atmosphere is important for analysing political messages correctly. Due to political messages which emerged in this atmosphere, "understanding and presenting this socio-political climate has a critical role. These messages have important clues about the sociological background which the messages are produced in" (Bekiroğlu, 2016: 46).

Before the General Election in June 2015, many socio-political events can be mentioned such as the Gezi Protests in 2013, the resolution process for the Kurdish question, debates on the presidential system, Ergenekon and Balyoz trials and Operations on 17th-25th December 2013 (Bekiroğlu 2016:46). Especially the solution process and presidential system were high on the political agenda before the general election. Political campaigns were conducted in this atmosphere and the party leaders frequently referred to these events in their campaigns. Therefore, they will be given priority in accordance with the purposes of this study.

### 2.3.1. Discussions on Presidential System

Discussions about a presidential system instead of a parliamentary system were the current issue during the campaigning process of the June Election. While the AK Party supported the presidential system, opposition parties. especially the CHP and HDP were against this system and promoted the continuation of the parliamentary system. The main argument of supporters of the presidential system was concerning the inefficacy of existing system. On the other hand, opponents claimed that the presidential system was inappropriate for the sociocultural dynamics of Turkey and might also turn it into a "one man" regime (Bekiroğlu, 2016; p. 52-53)

Discussions about the presidential system became a hotly contested topic during the whole campaign. On the one hand, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, holding various public meetings across the country, aimed to convince the electorate about the merits of the presidential system as opposed to the parliamentary system, which, he argued fell short of the needs of the country. On the other hand, the HDP came up with the slogan and claim "We won't let you become [executive] president", and organised its campaign against Erdoğan, who was the most powerful candidate for the presidency. Hence, the 2015 General Election turned into an election about approval or disapproval of the presidential system. During the debate between the two parties, the AK Party as

a strong supporter of the presidential system and HDP, as a strong opposition to the presidential system, dominated the whole election period (p. 53-54).

The distribution of seats in the Assembly depends on the voting rates. There were three parties in parliament, which were the AK Party, CHP and MHP as a result of the election in 2011. However, as stated by Adil Gür who is the head of A&G Research Company, if four party passed the election threshold and the AK Party could not reach 44% of the votes, the AK Party would not reach a sufficient number of deputies for the presidential system.[6] Therefore, whether the HDP passed the election threshold or not became the main topic of the campaign period. "The HDP appealed to the Turkish secular middle class, which was strongly disappointed by the policies of the AK Party government and opposed to the introduction of the presidential system (Grigoriadis, 2016; p. 42). Thus, as Grigoriadis states;

> the HDP and co-president Demirtaş's promise … *we shall not make you president* meaning that the HDP would never facilitate Erdoğan's plans for constitutional reform with the aim of to introduce a presidential system, became one    of the defining moments of the election campaign. (p. 41)

Therefore, it is obvious that discussions about the presidential system formed a significant part of the content of the messages of the political parties during the campaigning process in the 2015 June Election. The AK Party and HDP had a crucial role in this situation if their expectations from this election are considered. This situation can be observed in political advertising activities as well. The reflections of discussions of presidential system on political advertising activities during the June 2015 Elections will be analysed in detail in subsequent chapters.

### 2.3.2. Kurdish Question and Solution Process

The Resolution Process was another important topic on the political agenda before the June 2015 election. As in the presidential system discussions, the AK Party and HDP had a significant role in the solution process as well due to their political identities and expectations from the election. The AK Party aimed to come to power

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[6] as cited in https://www.haberler.com/adil-gur-hdp-yuzde-13-14-oy-alir-7079219-haberi/

alone and have a majority in the parliament for a constitutional amendment. On the other hand, the HDP's objective was to pass the election threshold. Hence, the AK Party formed its campaign messages by using a nationalistic discourse so as not lose voters to the MHP. The HDP aimed to influence the masses who were against Recep Tayyip Edoğan.  As a result, the resolution process was the main topic of both the debates between the AKP and HDP and the campaign messages of these two parties (Coşkun, 2015; p. 39)

Before discussing the resolution process, it is necessary to examine the issue of what is called the Kurdish Question. Ethno-politic problems are prevalent in many countries and the Kurdish question is accepted as an ethno-political issue in Turkey. After the year, 1984 which was the date when the  PKK[7] started the armed struggle, Turkey sought for a solution in two different ways. First measures were taken to ensure public order and public safety and it involved military precautions. However, this issue was also a social and political problem which was about ethnic identity. Hence, the second measure involved solving the Kurdish problem through negotiations (p. 4).

After Öcalan was arrested in 1999, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) negotiated with Öcalan on behalf of the State. After the year 2006, National Security Organization (MIT) started to negotiate with the PKK. Between the years 2009-2011, the negotiation process which was called "the Oslo negotiations[8]" was started between the Turkish government and the PKK. However, in July 2011, the process collapsed and violent conflicts occurred and they continued until the end of 2012. During these clashes, some PKK prisoners and BDP parliamentarians staged a hunger strikes in protest against the government.

After the violent clashes between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK from 2011 to 2012, hunger strikes by the BDP deputies were called off and these parliamentarians were allowed to negotiate with Abdullah Öcalan. Subsequently, the Prime Minister at the time, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, announced the process of

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[7] The Kurdistan Workers Party, is an originally Marxist-Leninist organization fighting the Turkish state in order to obtain the liberation of Kurds.  After 1999, which is the date when Abdullah Öcalan became the PKK's most prominent leader, it has abandoned the Marxist-Leninist doctrine to engage on "Democratic Confederalism" (https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/pkk/52198). PKK is accepted as a terrorist group by some countries such as Turkey and United States.

[8] http://bianet.org/bianet/bianet/140937-oslo-gorusmeleri-nedir

negotiation which was called "the resolution process" (ibid. p.5). After the local elections on 30th March of 2014, a draft law about the resolution process was accepted in parliament with the support of the HDP and CHP; named as "the law on ending terror and strengthen social integration" (p.24).

However, the process stagnated with the coming of General Elections in June 2015. Erdoğan started to use a nationalistic discourse and make statements like privileges for the PKK encourage terrorism and can be a problem for Turkish government. The reaction against these arguments by the HDP and PKK was to announce that the process had become obsolete (p. 39). The discussion of these two sides found a reflection in their political communication activities.

### 2.4. Socio-Political Climate in Turkey between 7th of June and 1st of November, 2015

The results of the General Election in June 2015 were unexpected. The AK Party gained 40,87% of the general vote cast and became the first party in parliament; but could not reach the absolute majority needed to form a government alone and carry out the constitutional amendments as desired. The second party was CHP with 24,95% of the general vote as expected, the third party was MHP with 16,29% of the votes and HDP reaching its target by passing the election threshold with the 13,2% of the vote cast.[9]

However, the process after the June Election brought about many socio-political problems. First of all, coalition negotiations yielded no result. Moreover, the ceasefire between the Turkish army and PKK collapsed due to an eruption of violence in the South East of Turkey. All these socio-political events induced a snap election, which was held on 1st of November 2015. Therefore, political communication carried out in this period was complicated by a tight time schedule, strict budget and strained political circumstances. I will discuss these socio-political events during the election period since understanding and evaluating these events is significant when the aim of this study and research questions are considered.

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[9]http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/content/conn/YSKUCM/path/Contribution%20Folders/SecmenIslemleri/Secimler/2015MV/D.pdf

### 2.4.1. Failures to Establish the Government and Disagreements between the Political Parties

After the 7th June Election in 2015, as the leader of the Ak Party, Ahmet Davutoğlu was assigned to form the new government. Although it failed to secure an absolute majority, the AK Party gained the highest percentage (40,9%) of the general vote and was the first party assigned to form a government. Ahmet Davutoğlu started negotiations with the opposition parties. Immediately after the election, the MHP announced that it was closed to any coalition with the CHP and HDP. This decision of the MHP prevented any possibility of forming a government without the AK Party, as the total vote of CHP (25%) and MHP (16,3%) was not enough to form a coalition, without HDP (13,1%). Thus, Davutoğlu's coalition talks with the CHP and MHP were stillborn and reached a political bottleneck. After the failure of the AK Party to find a coalition partner among two parties, CHP and MHP, as Ak Party did not send an invitation to HDP, political tension was increased. The political practice in the election history of Turkey has been that if the first round of negotiations fails with the biggest political party, then the second large party is given the responsibility of carrying out negotiations with the other parties. Despite this traditional practice, President Erdoğan refused to assign the responsibility to the CHP for the second round of negotiations and pointed to a snap election in November. [10]

Coalition talks or, rather their failure, received wide media coverage, and led to reaction by the public (Bekiroğlu, 2015; p. 57). The disagreement between the political parties continued when the CHP, MHP and HDP were not able to agree on a common candidate for the Speaker of the Assembly. Instead each party participated in the election with their own candidate and as a result Ismet Yılmaz, a deputy of AK Party, won the election and became the Speaker of the Assembly. The failures of these negotiations for the coalition government and the expiry of the legal process triggered the decision to hold an early election on 1st of November, 2015.

### 2.4.2. Armed Conflicts in Southeast of Turkey and Bombing Attacks

Increased political tension just before the 2015 June election, when the government suspended the resolution process doubled after the announcement of the

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[10] http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/gorev-yerine-tarih-verdi-87316.html

election results. This tension found a reflection during the coalition negotiations, when the HDP was accused of keeping close ties with the PKK and not publicly condemning PKK terrorism. Especially, with the increasing power of the HDP in the parliament, it was claimed that the PKK was also strengthened and encouraged. It was also asserted that the HDP encouraged these clashes by relinquishing the peaceful party image which had been created during the election campaigning period in June (Bekiroğlu, 2015; p. 59).

Perhaps the most significant political development of the period was the collapse of the ceasefire between the Turkish army and the PKK, after a suicide bombing in July 20, near the border of Syria, in the town of Suruç near Şanlıurfa. A suicide bomber from ISIS[11] attacked and killed 32 people, who were delivering a press statement before they were set to go to Kobani[12], a Syrian Kurdish town, to help in the restructuring of the town.

Violence continued in other major cities, but the deadliest attack was in Ankara, in October 10, by ISIS when "more than 100 people were killed after a peace rally, attended by mainly left-wing demonstrators, including many HDP supporters. [13]Both of these attacks influenced public opinion substantially and caused the rise of negative attitudes toward and arguments against the AK Party government (p. 60)

All of these brutal attacks initiated discussions and criticism against the resolution process. While the HDP assumed an accusatory attitude toward the government, the AK Party government blamed the PKK and HDP and criticized their role during this period, (p. 60). Thus, the two parties, the AK Party and the HDP, which this study focuses, on organised their campaign against the other in the run up to the election.

The events between 7th of July and 1st of November deeply shaped the campaign and communication activities prepared by the political parties for the

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[11] ISIS is an abbreviation of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant which refers to a terrorist group in that region. The group is accepted as one of the most dangerous terrorist group in the world (http://listovative.com/top-10-most-dangerous-terrorist-organizations-in-the-world/).

[12] Kobani events (known as events in 6st and 8st of October) refers to the ISIS attack in this region. These attacks affected both the agenda in Turkey and all around the world (Bekiroğlu, 2015:51)

[13] (http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34694420).

November Election. The impact of these socio-political events on the election campaign will be analysed through the political advertising activities of the AK Party and the HDP in detail in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER III

# SEMIOTICS AND SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS IN POLITICAL ADVERTISING

## 3.1.Definition of the Concept of Semiotics

Semiotic or Semiology is a concept which has still not precise definition. Chandler (2007) stated that "it is hard to describe the accurate definition for semiotic" to describe this issue. According to him, the concept can be defined as "the study of sign" in most general sense (p. 1). Modern semioticians consider signs as part of sign systems and they study how these signs are formed and represent the reality. After the 1960s, two different semiotics approaches can be mentioned. One of them is a structuralist approach which research the meaning systems in-text relations. Another approach is called as a post-structuralist approach which searches the meaning system as inter-textual relations (Atabek, 2007; p. 67).

Semiotics is one of the major methodological approach to analysis of different texts, such as the written, visual and verbal texts. Most well-known representatives of semiology are Roland Barthes, Ferdinand de Saussure, Umberto Eco, Algirdas Julien Greimas, Julia Kristeva and Christian Metz. On the other hand, methods of Barthes and Eco come into prominence in media and communication studies (Çam, 2015; p. 287). For Umberto Eco, who is one of the processor of semiology, semiology "is concerned with everything that can been taken a sign." (cited in Chandler, 2007; p. 2). In semiology, this sign can be a word, an image, sound, gesture and object. Studies are done through how meaning are made and how reality is represented (p.2).

Charles Sanders Peirce who is an American philosopher and scientist and Saussure, "are widely regarded as the co-founders of what is now known as semiotics. They established two major theoretical traditions. Saussure's term semiology is sometimes used to refer to the Saussurean tradition while the term semiotics sometimes refers to Peircean tradition" (p.5). Saussure concentrate mostly on linguistic signs, on the other hand, Peirce interested in developing a logical model based on linguistic structure instead of the linguistic signs directly. The semiology has progressed within the framework of the models that these two semioticians have formed (Atabek, 2007: 68). Semiology was built and progressed on the concepts and hypothesis of structuralist linguistics. In this direction, while Roland Barthes defined the fundamentals of semiology, he influenced by the works of Saussure which is named as "Courses in General Linguistics (1916) (Çam, 2015; p. 288).

Saussure defined the language phenomenon firstly and approached the linguistic which study the codes of natural language in semiology field as it is a wider discipline. Saussure called the structure which exists independently of an individual and systematize meanings with words as *langue*. Langue is a phenomenon which is not individual; it is a societal fact and communication between individuals established only through langue. Saussure defined the usage of an individual language which is learned with education and conveys individuals' thoughts as *parole*. Parole is a concrete application of language, in other words, langue is societal, parole is individual (Atabek, 2007; p. 69).

Saussure (1916/1998) proposed a two-part sign model by focusing on linguistic signs. According to Saussure, a sign is formed by the components which are named as signifier and signified. Signifier is an image which shaped in receiver's mind and signified is a meaning which emerged in receiver's mind (as cited in Atabek, 2007; p.69). "The relationship between the signifier and signified is referred to as signification" (Chandler, 2007; p. 15). Saussure (1916/1985) stated that this relation between signifier and signified is arbitrary (as cited in Çam, 2015; p. 295). Saussure indicated that meaning is conveyed in two different ways (as cited in Atabek, 2007; p.69). One of them is syntagmatic relation which refers to relation between elements that stand together at the same time, on the other hand the second one is associative meaning which refers to relation between elements that not stand together at the same time. On the other hand, Barthes preferred the usage of *paradigm* and *paradigmatic* or *system* and *systematic* terms instead of Saussurean terms. According to this separation,

system refers to selection between the elements which are similar to each other; systematic term figures that combining of selected elements to form a meaningful totality (Çam, 2015; p. 295-296).

According to Peircean approach to semiotics, he offered three part of model differently from Saussure. In Peircean model "to qualify as a sign, all three elements are essential. The sign is a unity of what is represented (the object) and how it is represented (representament) and how it is interpreted (the interpretant) (Chandler, 2007; p. 29). At this point, Signifier and signified which are Saussurean terms can be defined as symbol/symbolic which is "a mode in which the signified, but which is fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional", icon/iconic "a mode in which the signifier is perceived as resembling or imitating the signified (recognizably looking, sounding, feeling, testing or smelling it)" and index/indexical "a mode in which the signifier is not arbitrary, but is directly connected in some way (physically or causally) to the signified (regardless of intention)" (Chandler, 2007; p. 37)

Roland Barthes, who is another famous semiotician influenced by Saussurean model of semiology (Çam, 2015; p. 288). However, Barthes accepts that semiology is a sub-branch of linguistic as different from Saussurean perspective which accepts linguistic as a sub-branch of semiology. Barthes stated his own approach to semiology in his work of "Elements of Semiology". In addition to Sasurrean semiotics which includes lingua, parole, signifier, signified and systematic terms, he also added the terms denotation and connotation (Çam, 2015; p. 291). At that point, denotative meaning is a first order of signification which is the formation of sign by merging signifier and signified. Denotative meaning is also accepted as the first meaning of the sign that coming to mind. Connotative meaning is, on the other hand, is a second order of signification; the sign which forms the denotative meaning becomes the different sign's signifier and merge with a different signifier. This different sign becomes the connotative meaning (p. 297). According to Barthes (1979), "signs make references to their connotative meaning as well as their denotative meaning." Hjelmslev calls connotative semiotics as:

> The first system is then the plane of denotation and the second system (wider than the first). the plane of connotation. We shall therefore say that a connoted system is a    system whose plane of expression is itself constituted by signifying system: the common    cases of connotation will of course

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consist of complex systems of which language forms        the    first    system
(this is, for instance, the case with literature) (as cited in Barthes,1964;     p.
89-90).

As Lakoff and Johnson stated, "like metaphors, cultural "myths" help us to
make sense of our experiences within a culture: they express and serve to organize
shared ways of conceptualizing something within a culture" (as cited in Chandler …).
Hjelmslev explains the therm of myth in semiology as:

> In the framework of Barthesian cultural studies, myth, like connotation, can be
> seen as a higher order of signification. Louis Hjelmslev had argued that
> above the connotative level there was 'a metasemiotic' to which belonged
> geographical, historical, political, sociological, psychological and religious
> issues relating to such concepts as 'nation, . . . region, . . . the value forms
> of styles, personality… mood, etc.' (as cited in Chandler, 2007:143-144).

In order to explain the myth, Hjelmslev gives an example as:

> For instance, an image may denote 'a child' in a context which generates the
> connotation    of innocence; this forms part of what Roland Barthes would call
> a higher level (historically  modern  and  Romantic)  'myth'  of  childhood
> which functions ideologically to justify dominant assumptions about the
> status  of children in society (as cited in Chandler, 2007; p. 143-144:

This study uses the structuralist semiotic analysis methods which are led by
Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes the analysis of political party advertisement
in the following.

### 3.2.Semiotic Analysis of Advertisements and Political Advertising

Semiotic analysis is one of the approaches of textual analysis along with
rhetorical analysis, discourse analysis and content analysis (Atabek, 2007; p. 75). Text
which are prepared for political communication activities can be analyzed as well, but
semiotic analysis is used for this study as a research methodology.

Semiotic is used for analyzing for many media text such as movies and advertisements. These analysis acceptsthat the meaning is independent from its writer/producers and outside and emphasizes that the meaning of these texts is constructed inside the text. At that point, in semiotic analysis, it is aimed to reveal the relation between the signs which stands in the text and to explain the relations between these elements (Çam, 2015:305).

If the semiotic analysis of the media text is considered in terms of advertising; semiotic analysis is important to reveal the meanings and ideologies which advertisement the texts consist of. How meanings are created and how they are interpreted by individuals in media texts are significant for semiology (Batı, 2005; p. 176). Message creation function is accepted as the most important feature of mass media. On the other hand, advertising feature is crucial to transmit these messages. These advertisements are prepared as specific signification systems. By interpreting these signs, semiological studies are related to the order of meaning in advertisement texts (Batı, 2005; p. 177-178).

As discussed above, media texts vary from printed materials, to cinema, TV, radio and now new media. However, in addition to media, political parties use other communication channels such as face to face communication, flyers, posters and billboards in their political communication activities. In what follows, in my analysis of the June and November General Elections inn 2015, I will analyse political advertisements of Ak Party and HDP in billboards, newspapers and television within the framework of semiotic analysis. Since the semiotic analysis is concerned with "the signs and how meanings are organized and conveyed" (Batı 2005; p. 178), it provides a useful tool for "interpreting and understanding political posters which are important communication tools for political communication and political marketing" (Özdemir and Özer, 2016; p. 39). The semiotic analysis of the advertisement texts –on billboards, in newspapers and on TV, will be enhanced by an analysis of the political context and its interpretation by the political parties; as the advertisement texts were produced for elections campaign could only be made sense only by taking into consideration historical conditions under which political parties operate.

# CHAPTER IV

# ANALYSIS ON ELECTIONS 2015

## 4.1.Aim of the Study and Methodology

In this study, it is aimed to analyze the reflections of political parties' approaches and perceptions towards socio-political events in their political advertising activities during the election campaign periods in order to persuade potential voters. The analysis has been done by considering the political communication approaches. The study uses the semiotic analysis as a method and interprets political advertisements as a text to reveal the political parties' attitudes by considering their identities and ideologies. Within this framework, the selected samples in accordance with the purpose of this study from the advertisement activities of the Justice and Development Party and the Peoples' Democratic Party, which prepared for 7th of June and 1st of November General Elections 2015, are analyzed in detail. In general, this study aims to interpret the messages in advertisements which are prepared in order to persuade voters by using the semiotic analysis method and by considering the objectives and applications of political communication techniques.

The General Elections of June and November 2015 are chosen for this study on purpose since the election on June 7 was a planned election and the political parties prepared their campaigns accordingly. However, the election on November 1 was an exceptional election and it emerged as the ultimate consequence of the sociopolitical events which have been explained in the previous chapters. In the meantime, the political parties had become obliged to prepare their campaigns with restricted time

and budgets. It is supposed that the impact of these sociopolitical events formed the basis of the advertisements' contents intended for the election on November 1. Considering all of the facts mentioned so far, the political campaigns, which were prepared by the same political parties both on June and November elections, have been analyzed and all the relevant inferences have been compared. In this context, while these campaign activities are analyzed, it is also aimed to understand to what extent these activities meet the objectives, methods and functions of political communication. Therefore, the first research question emerged at that point as "to what extent the messages in political advertisements are influenced by socio-political events?". In order to analyze and present this situation more clearly, both the ordinary June and the snap November General Elections activities of the same political parties are analyzed and findings are compared at the end of the study.

The advertisement activities of the AK Party and the HDP are selected for analysis by considering their roles in the socio-political events which are mentioned in Chapter II and their expectations from these two elections. Hence, the second research question of the study is "are political parties' ideologies and identities related to how these events are covered in advertisements?"

Television advertisements, newspaper advertisements and billboards have been chosen for analysis by considering their advantages for political advertising which are explained in chapter I. AK Party use newspaper, outdoor and television channels effectively in the June Election. Their advertising messages for newspaper channels are categorised as New Turkey, Reforms, projects and encouraging people to vote for AK Party themed. 6 of them was about the New Turkey objective of AK Party, 17 of them were about the reforms of AK Party government, 2 of them are about the future Project of AK Party and 7 of them have the slogan which is "you have the seal, the decision is yours". They also prepared a newspaper ad which is Great Turkey themed. Outdoor activities of AK Party are classified as billboards which communicate the activities of AK Party with the slogan as "they talk, the AK Party does", explain the projects, about stability and about New Turkey Agreement. 29 of them are about the activities of AK Party government, 26 of them are about commitments and projects of the party, 3 of them are themed as "the second round is starting on the New Turkey way" and one of them is about stability. AK Party's television advertisements were broadcasted on their YouTube channel spontaneously. 33 of them are about their

activities with the slogan of "they talk, the AK Party acts", 34 of them are about the future projects of AK Party with the same slogan, 3 of them are about national unity and one of them was prepared for the celebration of the conquest of İstanbul. The most significant advertisement was "People are Coming" which was broadcast on $2^{nd}$ of June 2015 (Aslan and Göksu, 2015; p. 57). This ad is chosen for this study since its content and objective in accordance with the purpose of the study. In addition to this, the billboard with "they talk, AK Party acts" themed and the newspaper ad which is about unity and solidarity and has the "you have the seal, the decision is yours" slogan is chosen by considering their content and the context. On the other hand, HDP prepared 2 television advertisements, 4 newspaper advertisements and 3 billboards for the election in June. The television ad which is called as "election halay" is chosen for the study by considering its context and duration. The "we are" themed newspaper and billboards which show the co-presidents of the HDP separately are chosen for this study.

For the election in $1^{st}$ of November 2015, newspaper advertisements of AK Party are classified as; 3 of them are about their projects from their governance, 29 of them are about their future plans, 6 of them about national unity and one of them is appreciation themed after their success in election results. Stability is emphasized almost in all advertisements, coming the power alone objective is underlined in Project themed ads and "there is no you and me, there is Turkey" is used as a slogan in the advertisements about national unity. For the outdoor, the half of the activities are prepared as billboard, and half of them prepared as the posters. Both posters and billboards are the same visuals and slogans. 4 of them are about national unity, 17 of them communicate the promises of AK Party which have the "come to power alone" slogan, 9 of them are about the national unity again with the slogan of "there is no you and me, there is Turkey". For the television, 25 of them are about the promises of AK Party to the individuals who are from different socio-political parts of Turkey. 6 of them are about national unity which have the slogan of "there is no you and me, there is Turkey". One of them is the longest one is about the national unity again which is chosen for the analysis. For each channel, national unity themed advertisement samples are chosen. For newspaper and outdoor, the ad which has the slogan of "there is no you and me, there is Turkey" is analysed. For television, "this country is ours" television advertisement is chosen in accordance with its message. On the other hand,

due to the limited time and budget, HDP could not take advantage of all channels actively. They mostly use social media for their campaigns. Therefore, their logos and poster which were prepared for social media are analysed for this study. HDP prepared 22 social media logos, 6 posters and one television advertisements for election in November.

The campaign materials and strategies of the AK Party for June Election were published on www.akadaylar.com. For November Election, the activities of the AK Party were published on www.akadaylari.com. All materials from the AK Party campaign for June and November Election are taken from these website.[14]

The campaign materials of the HDP for June and November Elections were published on their official website www.hdp.org.tr. All materials of HDP in this study are taken from this website.

The advertisement activities which have been chosen for this study are accepted as a text. The Sasurrean model of semiotic is used throughout the analysis and signs and cultural codes in the advertisements are analyzed in accordance with the research questions of the study. Additionally, Barthes' model of semiotic which is constructed on the Saussurean semiotic model and explains the first order of the signification as denotative meaning and the second order of the signification as connotative meaning is used throughout the analysis as well. Images, slogans, colors and illustrations in advertisements are analyzed by considering the relations of signifier, signified and their denotative and connotative meanings. Advertisement materials from the AK Party and the HDP were chosen in accordance with the context of the study. Each parties' advertisement materials from the June Elections were analyzed firstly and the findings compared with each other. Materials from the November Elections were chosen secondly and findings compared again. Lastly, all finding are compared from the November and June Elections in order to analyze and discuss to what extent the advertising messages are influenced by the socio-political events and to what extent their advertising content changed between June and November 2015 in Turkey.

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[14] Both www.akadaylar.com and akadaylari.com were no longer available after the elections. Advertisement materials are also available on www.arter.com.tr which is the website of advertising agency of AK Party.

The most relevant advertisement materials of the AK Party and the HDP which demonstrate these two parties' attitudes towards specified socio-political events have been chosen. These materials are discussed in accordance with their context as well and these names are used throughout the analysis. As it mentioned in detail in Chapter II, for the June Election, the events of discussions of the presidential election, the resolution process are covered, and for the November Election, the failure to form a government, armed conflicts in Southeastern of Anatolia and bombing attacks in big cities are discussed through significations in advertisements. For the June Elections, two newspaper banners, two billboards and one television advertisement from each party are analyzed. On the other hand, for the November Elections, since the advertisement materials of the HDP were limited and they mostly concentrated on social media advertising instead of traditional media for their campaigns, the logos of the HDP which were used in the social media campaign are analyzed.

## 4.2. Analysis of Political Advertisements and the Advertisement Strategy of the Justice and Development Party for the Election in June 2015

AK Party which was established by the reformer group in Virtue Party (FP) that was formed after the closure of Welfare Party (RP) had a great success in their first election in 2002 by coming in the first (Akdoğan,2004; p.9). In this election campaign, AK Party mostly use local press rather than national channels by using its effective organizational structure. They use face-to-face communication by organizing public meetings especially in rural areas (Çankaya, 2015; p. 290). The target mostly consists of people who are conservative and live in rural areas. Erdoğan, who is the party leader, created an oppressed image, thus he gained leverage. The closure case against AK Party one-week age from the election supported this image on public opinion (p. 292).

The Justice and Development Party had an exhaustive communication strategy for the campaign period. They used both traditional and social media actively during this period. The AK Party shared its advertisement materials and communication strategies on the www.akadaylar.com website which was available during the campaign period.

The AK Party's election campaign was prepared and conducted by Arter Ajans which is owned by Erol Olçok (Aslan and Göksu, 2015; p. 35). The AK Party had

collaborated with the same advertising agency since the party was formed. This situation is significant for the continuity in communication and good knowledge of the structures and policies of the party (Özkan, 2015; p.8). Generally, a positive political advertising strategy was followed except for the advertisements with the slogan of "They talk, the AK party acts". The AK Party concentrated mostly on their activities and future plans in the advertising strategy in general.

A hand stamping a seal on a ballot paper in favor of the AK Party is seen in all visuals to encourage voters to vote for the AK Party by reminding them constantly (Aslan and Göksu, 2015; p. 36). As the AK Party stated in its advertising strategy on akadaylar.com website, the colors of blue, red and white are the campaign colors and all visuals contain these colors consistently.

The AK Party took part in this election with a new leader (p.9) who was Ahmet Davutoglu, since the previous leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected as president. Hence, Ahmet Davutoğlu is used as the leader image on visuals. The AK Party aimed to emphasize the powerful leader image by using an image of Ahmet Davutoğlu on visuals as used by many political parties in the history of political communication activities in Turkey. In addition to this, the AK Party aspired to protect and continue the powerful leader image which had been gained with the previous leader, Tayyip Erdoğan.

The AK Party built its campaign around their objective, which was called "New Turkey" or "Target 2023" and mentioned in their election bulletin[15] and manifestos[16] which were published in English. In this context, their messages emphasized mostly that if Ak Pary were to be reelected as a ruling party, activities would continue in line with the New Turkey Agreement. Accordingly, the AK Party aimed at reaching a majority to get an approved for the constitutional amendment. Therefore, the party emphasized stability and they argued that stability could be ensured only if Ak Party came to power alone. By underlining the activities of the leading politicians of the AK Party's, the party presented the success of the leadership as an indication of the outstanding performance of the party. (Özkan 2015: 9-10).

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[15] Justice and Development Party Election Bulletin, April 2015, p.17-25

[16] Political Vision of Ak Parti (Justice and Development Party), 2023, Politics Society and the World, September 2012

The AK Party prepared the billboards which included the slogan as "they talk, the AK Party acts". Each billboard covered different activities of the AK Party. This study analyses the billboard which deals with the resolution process in accordance with the aim of the study. The AK Party was aware of the power of television, therefore gave weight to television advertisements as well. The most remarkable of them was the television advertisement which is called as "people are coming" and it started to be broadcasted a week before the elections. This advertisement presented the expectations of the AK Party from this election in detail. The advertisement showed people from different regions of Turkey and with different social statuses. By using this strategy, the AK Party aims to emphasize that they did not only represent a specific part of Turkish society (Islamist, conservative), but also stood for everybody in Turkey.

### 4.2.1. Reflections of Resolution Process on Advertisements
#### 4.2.1.1. Analysis of "They talk, the AK Party acts" Billboard

The AK Party prepared billboards with this slogan to explain its activities during their leadership. One of these billboards which is analyzed in this study is depicted in figure 1. This billboard refers to the resolution process and was chosen on purpose considering the aim of this study

A mature woman is seen on the left side of the visual like a portrait and she is smiling. "The resolution process has begun; mothers have stopped crying" is written in capital letters in the middle of the billboard in blue. Under this text, "They talk, but the AK Party acts" is written in red and it is bigger and thicker than the blue text. There is a hand stamping "yes" in favor of the AK Party on a ballot paper on the right hand side. The background color on the billboard is white in accordance with the corporate colors of the AK Party.

The figure of the woman, logo, slogan and colors can be considered as signs of this visual. The headscarf, its usage and clothes are signifiers that this woman is a Muslim and from Anatolia. It can be understood that this woman is a mother and represents all mothers when it is read together with the text. When the visual is read with the text, the AK Party refers to its successful policies for the resolution process. The text that "Mothers stopped crying" signifies that armed conflicts are over. At that point, the denotative meaning of this visual can be interpreted as "Armed conflicts are

over thanks to the successful policies of the AK Party, people will not die anymore henceforth, their mothers will not cry."



Figure 1: They talk, the AK Party acts billboard

As Barthes stated, "the mother" sign merged with the "blessedness" is signified with the cultural codes. Therefore, the second order of the meaning is created and "holy Anatolian (or Muslim) mothers" myth is emerged. It is accepted that making mothers cry is believed to be a sin in Turkish culture. When this sign is read with the text, the connotative meaning of the visual can be interpreted as "the AK Party is the protector of sacred values and religion". The headscarf and usage of the word "ana" instead of "anne" which means mother in Turkish and it is a traditional usage of anne can be another signifier of this holiness.

When the slogan is interpreted; the word "They talk" signifies the arguments of the opposition parties. The denotative meaning of the sentence can be interpreted as opposition parties make statements but do not act on them. However, when the context of the resolution process is considered, "they talk" signifies the HDP's arguments

about the resolution process and the connotation of the slogan is that the HDP claims that they are working for ending the conflicts, but they actually do nothing. However, the AK Party has solved this problem and nobody will die anymore. These "people" can be interpreted as "Turkish soldiers" and called "martyrs" when the position of the AK Party with regard to the process and conservative ideology of the party are considered. The meaning is that opposition parties lie to the public can also be connoted from the slogan.

### 4.2.1.2. Analysis of "The Right Decision is Unity and Solidarity" Newspaper Advertisement

When this full-page advertisement (Figure 2) is described, the blue and red colors are used on white background again. The text "the right decision is unity and solidarity" is written on the top of the ad. The right decision is written in blue and unity and solidarity are written in red and bigger than the blue text. The text which contains the AK Party's message to its audience covers almost the whole page of the ad. The text is the explanation of the slogan and expresses the reasons why people should vote for the AK Party in detail. An image of Ahmet Davutoğlu gazes at the audience in the bottom-right corner and the AK Party logo is seen in the right bottom corner. At the end of the text, "you have the seal, this is your decision" is written in a bigger letter size than the body text.

The text is formed by the usage of contrasts. The AK Party asks questions to the audience like do you prefer "us" or "them" briefly. Ak Party does not target others directly, but the choice of words helps to understand who is "them" when it is analyzed with the context. Positive words are collocated with the A Party, on the contrary, negative words refer to the opponents. For instance, "guardianship supporters", people

Figure 2: Newspaper advertisement of AK Party about "unity"

who "cause blood to flow from the faucet" (a metaphor) and "request votes by supporting separatism" signifies the opponents. When the context about Kurdish question is considered, "flowing blood" and "supporting separatism" are evaluated as the signifiers of HDP. On the contrary, descriptions which have positive meanings are collocated with the AK Party. such as "protect the country and unity", "supporting one motherland", "stopping mother's tears" and "strengthening the democracy" and these descriptions signify the AK Party. The Last four sentences of the text are written in bold. The usage of bold color signifies the importance of this part to attract the readers' attention. The words "democracy", "brotherhood", "trust" and "stability" signify the AK Party's policies and leadership. The text says "we will strengthen our democracy and brotherhood". When the resolution process, which is also called a democratic initiative, is taken into account, the words "democracy" and "brotherhood" signify the democratic and protective attitudes of the AK Party.

Therefore, it can be interpreted that the AK Party requests to be preferred instead of "others" who damage the country; this is the first stage of the meaning. However, if the significations are considered with the context of the resolution process, it can be connoted that the HDP supports terrorism and the AK Party protects the country. The AK Party is the most democratic party, it supports democracy and the country and prevents deaths of people. The HDP, on the other hand supports terrorism and the division of Turkey, so peace could only be established only by AK Party leadership.

The slogan says "You have the seal; the decision is yours". The seal signifies the voter's decision and the slogan denotes that voters will decide which party will win the election. When all the text and significations in the text are taken into account, the "seal" signifies the decision of the voters on the arguments stated in the text. Therefore, the connotative meaning emerges as "do you prefer to act with terrorists or protect the unity of the country". The AK Party seems to be aiming at creating a conscientious pressure on voters with this slogan. In the leader photo, Ahmet Davutoğlu looks voters in the eye, smiles and wear a suit. These signifiers signify a powerful and confident leader who approves the text and is waiting for the response of the readers by voting for him.

As previously stated, the text is dominated by the nationalist discourse. Unity and power are written in bigger size letters and in red. Therefore, the usage of red on

white background signifies the Turkish flag, and supports the nationalist discourses in the text. These words were chosen specifically as part of a strategy to emphasize the Ak Party's nationalist policies and attitudes towards the resolution process.

### 4.2.2. The Objective of "New Turkey" and Its Reflections on Advertisements
#### 4.2.2.1.    New Turkey Billboard

The necessity of the presidential system is explained in detail in the AK Party's New Turkey Manifesto. Therefore, it can be said that new Turkey can be read as the AK Party's reason for the presidential system. The billboard which explains the New Turkey objective of the AK Party explicitly (Figure 3) gives the message that "the second round is starting in the New Turkey objective". The background is white as are the other visuals of the AK Party, the new Turkey way is written in white, in a smaller size than the rest of the test and highlighted with blue. "The second round" is written in red and the biggest type size.  "Is starting" is written in red, in a smaller type size than the second round. Davutoğlu's image and the party logo is seen on the right of the visual.

The AK Party aimed to give its message to the audience directly through this billboard. The usage of bi type size and capital letters can be accepted as signs in this billboard.  "The second Round" is written in the biggest size in the middle of the billboard and it signifies that second round is aimed to be underlined in this message.

At that point, the message is given through the opposition. It can be said that "new" signifies the "old" as well. While new signifies the AK Party government and their successful policies, its opposite "old" signifies the previous governments and their unsuccessful policies. This opposition can be analysed in the "second round". The second round signifies the AK Party government until the year 2023. Hence, the opposite "the first round" refers to the AK Party leadership between the years 2002 to 2015.

Figure 3: New Turkey billboard

Davutoğlu is smiling in the visual and does not wear a tie unlike the visual in the newspaper advertisement. This can be accepted as signifiers of a public's leader image and self-assuredness.

When all of these significations are considered, the billboard expresses the view to the audience that the AK Party is assertive, and has a plan for the future.

### 4.2.2.2. New Turkey Newspaper Advertisement

This newspaper ad consists of a headline which is also the slogan, body text, a leader image and the AK Party. The headline is written in a large size and in red and blue which are the corporate colours of the AK Party. The background is white and the name and title of Ahmet Davutoğlu is written at the end of the text. An image of Ahmet Davutoğlu is seen in the right-bottom corner of the ad.

The title of the ad is "our fight for democracy continues in the way of new Turkey (target). In that part, "fight for democracy" should be underlined. The usage of the word "fight" signifies the seriousness of the issue. This "fight for democracy" refers to some enemies and the victimization of the Ak Party.

The body texts explain this fight of the AK Party in detail. While the AK Party expresses its struggle for democracy, it uses words like "we overcame", "we came to power alone", "we protect people's trust" and "democracy won". These can be accepted as signifiers of the AK Party's struggle for democracy.

The antidemocratic opponents of the AK Party are mentioned indirectly in the text. For example, usage of "supporters of guardianship" signifies these opponents. If we analyse this battle for democracy in the context of the democratic initiative process, the definition of the AK Party itself as a victim and struggling connotes that that the AK Party prefers democratic solutions. On the contrary, opponents resort to the use of force –the selection of the word fight can be a signifier of this situation-, and these opponents can be interpreted as the HDP in the context of the resolution process.

### 4.2.2.3.Analysis of Television Advertisement of AK Party: "The People Are Coming"

The AK Party prepared a television advertisement which lasted 3'36''. The Party presented all its messages which were analysed in billboard and newspaper advertisements and explains its purposes and commitments in this television advertisement. The slogan of this advertisement is "the people are coming". At that point, the people signifies the people who live in Turkey. It can be said that the people are coming denotes that the people will decide the government. On the other hand, the AK Party defines itself as a party that represents everybody in Turkey (considering their ethnic identities, ideologies, occupations etc.). Therefore, the people signifies the AK Party in the second order of the signification and the people are coming indicates that Ak Party will come into power.

Figure 4: New Turkey Newspaper Advertisement

Signs from different geographic regions are used to describe people from all parts of Turkey. These signs are chosen as symbols which are specific to that region. When the visuals that consist of these signs are shown, the narrator indicates the region. The advertisement begins with an old man who plays the baglama. The baglama, the son, the old man, the old man's clothes, the decoration of the house are signifiers of Anatolia and people who live in Anatolia.



Figure 5: Signifier of Anatolian Culture

In the next sequence, the Mevlana Mausoleum and whirling dervishes are seen. Both of them are signifiers of Turkey. This Mausoleum also signifies the famous Muslim philosopher Mevlana and his opinions. When the religious side of the Mausoleum is considered, it can also signify the conservative ideology of Turkey. Narrators say "the country of high hopes, big dreams, Turkey" during this sequence.

In order to express the image that the AK Party represents everybody in Turkey, seven geographic regions are shown during the advertisement. The signifiers of the regions are; sekbans signify the Central Anatolia Region, swashbucklers signify the

Aegean Region, black and white ghutrah, Cendere Bridge from Adıyaman[17] and the traditional clothes of a woman who stands in front of the bridge signify the Southeastern Anatolia Region, dancers who dance the horon and an old woman who cuts tea leaves signify the Black Sea Region, Mount Ararat signifies the Eastern Anatolia Region, tulips, a banana plantation and Kaleiçi in Antalya signify the Mediterranean Region and the Bosphorus and the Bosphorus Bridge signify the Marmara Region.

The sequence which narrates the South-eastern Anatolia Region is important due to the fact that the resolution process is referred in that part. As was stated in previous chapters, armed conflicts are mostly reported in this region. Additionally, when the success of some HDP parliamentarians when they joined the elections as independent candidates before establishing the HDP is considered, this region is critical for the AK Party. In the sequence, people from this region release dove into the air which is accepted as an international symbol of peace. People also seem happy. Therefore, these significations of peace connote that people from South-eastern Turkey support peace and unity in accordance with the policies of the AK Party on this issue.

In the sequence where a janissary band passes through the Bosphorus; the band signifies Turkish Nationalism by referring to the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the narrator says, "one motherland", "one flag", "one state". The can be also interpreted as the AK Party will always protect the unity of Turkey and that subversives –who can be interpreted as the PKK and its supporter the HDP when the AK Party's opinions about this topic are considered- will fail.

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[17] Is a city located in the Southeastern Anatolia Region in Turkey

Figure 6: Signifiers of regions

At the end of the advertisement, people from different occupations come to parliament to take their seats as parliamentarians. All the individuals from different occupations signify people from different socio-economic status and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey can be interpreted as the signifier of democracy. When the significations are considered, this scene connotes that the AK Party is representative of everybody in Turkey from different sociopolitical status groups.

Figure 7: Janissary Band

In general, sociopolitical events which are the resolution process and discussions about democracy and the new Turkey target are reflected in this television advertisement. Especially, the AK Party challenges the HDP by emphasizing democracy throughout the ad by defining itself as representative of all ethnic identities, ideologies and protector of the peace, a peace which cannot be provided by the HDP's policies as they claim.

## 4.3. Analysis of Political Advertisements and Advertising Strategy of Peoples' Democratic Party for the Election in June 2015

The People's Labor Party (HEP) in 1990 is accepted as the beginning of legal Kurdish political movement. Democracy Party (DP) was established after the closure of HEP in 1991 and People's Democracy Party (HADEP) was formed after the closure of DP in 1994. HADEP joined the election in 1995, but they could not pass the threshold. It was closed in 1999 and the next party which support the legal Kurdish movement was Democratic Peoples' Party (DEHAP) and it repealed oneself in 2005. They collaborated with Labor Party (EMEP) and Socialist Democracy Party (SDP) in the election in 2002. However, they cannot pass the election threshold again which is a demonstrator of they could not receive the support of left-wingers; the party only

have an influence on Kurdish part. Democratic Society Party (DTP) was established after DEHAP, however they were closed in 2007. In 2007 general election, the strategy that joining the election with independent candidates was followed. The same strategy was conducted in 2011 election by Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) which is a party that established after the closure of DTP. In their campaign strategy, BDP created its communication strategy mostly on the rights of Kurdish people such as education in the mother tongue and reducing the election threshold. They have not worked to be a party of Turkey due to the possible negative reactions of Kurdish people (Çakır, 2011; p. 5-8). However, Peoples' Democratic Party changed this strategy by positioning itself as a party which supports the all individuals' rights in Turkey.

The Peoples' Democratic Party took part in a general election as a party for the first time and this election was really critical for the HDP since they had the target of passing the election threshold by reaching a minimum 10% of the votes cast. The election threshold was important for the HDP since if they could not be represented in the parliament, their role would lose importance during the resolution process (Özkan, 2015; p. 24). Hence, this target formed the basis of their political campaign strategy and they created the slogan as "We are the HDP, send us to parliament" in accordance with this aim.

The Peoples' Democratic Party conducted a negative political advertising strategy by criticising Tayyip Erdoğan through presidential system discussions. It can also be understood from this strategy that it was aimed to attract opponents of Erdoğan as well. Furthermore, the HDP underlined the concept of "equity" many times during their campaigning period. They presented the image that they supported the rights of everybody who is perceived as marginalised (p. 24).

The HDP used billboards, newspaper advertisements and television as communication tools and also used social media actively. In general, it can be said that the HDP conducted a consistent communication strategy in terms of political communication.

### 4.3.1. Reflections of "Party of Marginalised People" Image of HPD

The reason for analysing the image that the HDP represented all the marginalized people in Turkey was the HDP's target for passing the election threshold. By positioning itself as a party that supported the rights of not only those of Kurdish

identity, but also represented all groups and individuals which were marginalized by the rest of the society; the party aimed to reach large masses and increase its voting rate. As previously mentioned, this target was important to prevent the dominance of the AK Party in parliament and to prevent the acceptance of the presidential system. Additionally, representation of the HDP in parliament was important for their role and position during the resolution process.

The HDP underlined their main purpose of passing the election threshold by reaching 10% of the votes cast throughout the campaign period on every platform. The formed their slogan in accordance with this slogan as "we are the HDP, send us to parliament".

First of all, "we" in this slogan signified the HDP at the first level of meaning. However, with the HDP's positioning itself as the party of people who are marginalized, "we" signifies all these groups at the second level. Therefore, the denotative meaning of the slogan can be explained as the HDP aiming to be represented in parliament, in the connotative meaning, all ethnic identities, opinions and ideologies should be represented in parliament.

A detailed analysis of the HDP's logo is significant at that point. The HDP created its party logo in accordance with this strategy. If the logo is analyzed in more detail; it refers to a tree, the leaves are green and supported by two purple hands. The purple hands can also be seen as trunk. There are little stars among the leaves which are yellow, dark and light blue, red, black and purple.

Figure 8: Logo of HDP

Understanding the significations in this logo is important in order to understand the communication strategies of the HDP as well. As stated, the HDP positions itself as a party of "marginalized "individuals and minority groups. Purple is accepted as the color of feminism. Therefore, HDP emphasizes that they are supporters of women's rights. Furthermore, as it stated, the HDP tried to influence the opponents of Erdoğan. The tree in the logo can be read as the signification of the Gezi Park Protests[18]. Stars of different colors signify people who are marginalized.

#### 4.3.1.1. Analysis of Billboards

The HDP prepared two billboards, on one of them was an image of Selahattin Demirtaş and on the other billboard an image of Figen Yüksekdağ as party leaders. Other visuals and texts were the same for both billboards. Purple and green are the predominant colors of the billboards. The leader image is placed in the middle of the billboard. "We're go to parliament" is written in purple and two green lines which are designed as tree branch frames for this text. The party logo is placed on the right side,

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[18] Protest which was "started as a clear indication of environmental consciousness and subsequently converted into anger towards PM's pejoratife statements on secular lifestyles alongside with standing up against the pressure of majoritarianism that occasionally ruled the out civil liberties of minority groups" (Taptuk, 2013; p. 43)

the background is white and colored figures like a leaf are placed on the leader image figure and logo. Website and social media links are located in the bottom-right corner.



Figure 9: Billboards of HDP

As previously mentioned, usage of vivid colors in visuals is significant for HDP's communication campaign. This color usage signifies that HDP represents different groups in society. When color usage is read with the text of "we're going to

parliament", the connotative meaning of the billboard emerged as HDP is the representatives of not only Kurdish identity, but also all identities especially those marginalized from society, and they will be represented in parliament, and it should happen if the HDP passes the election threshold.

The majority of green and tree figures signifies the Gezi Protests as mentioned and by doing this, HDP aimed to influence the masses which were against Erdoğan policies.

The billboards do not give the messages about the resolution process or discussions about presidential systems; but when the codes are analyzed in detail, references to the Gezi protest can be read as opposition to Erdoğan's insistence on a presidential system. Moreover, efforts of the HDP towards becoming a national party can be interpreted as HDP will resolve the process amicably.

### 4.3.1.2. Analysis of Newspaper Advertisements

Newspaper ads were similar to the billboards. The same template and text were used for both of the ads and one of them had Yüksekdağ's photo and another one had Demirtaş's photo in the middle of them. The corporate colors of the HDP dominated in these posters as well. The Background was purple which is the major corporate color of the HDP. The text which is located in the bottom gives the HDP's message directly to the readers.

The text explains why HDP aimed to be represented in parliament. At that point, the HDP uses "we are" for themselves, and this word is uses through the text. On the other hand, "we are" signifies the people who are marginalized by society and aimed to be represented by the HDP in a second order of the meaning. Moreover, the text likens the HDP to a tree, and this usage is a metaphor of unification and the unification power of the HDP. In the sentence "Gather under the same roof of…", "roof" can also accepted as a metaphor for the integrative role of the HDP. Hence, the text connotes that if HDP passes the election threshold, everybody, especially those

Figure 10: Newspaper advertisement of HDP with Selahattin Demirtaş

Figure 11: Newspaper advertisement of HDP with Figen Yüksekdağ

who judged by the rest of society due to their ideology, ethnic identity etc. will be represented in the Turkish Assembly at last.

The image of the leaders is dominant in the poster and if the usage of the biggest size letters for the leader's name is read together with this size; the size of the letters and the leaders' image are signification of the importance of leader's image for the HDP and conveying this image to the audience.

Color choice is another important signification which is used for the same purpose as the billboards previously analyzed. As stated, the background is purple and it is the corporate color of the HDP. Purple signifies feminism and women's rights, and signification of the HDP's image as they represent all groups of people who experience unfair conditions in society. A green branch with an illustration of a leaf is used under the leaders' image which can be signification of Gezi Park protests just like the billboards. By both signifying women's rights[19] and the Gezi Park protests, the HDP tried to influence people who were against Erdoğan and indicated its attitudes toward the presidential system when the relation between presidentship and Erdoğan is considered.

### 4.3.1.3. Analysis of Television Advertisement

The HDP's Halay advertisement film which is in Turkish and Kurdish is generally energetic and dynamic. This dynamism through the ad can be interpreted as the signification of youth, energy, and the hardworking, hopeful and assertive image of the HDP. The ad lasts 2'53''and people who dance the halay[20] are seen dancing in the advertisement to the accompaniment of the HDP election song.

The unifying power of Turkey discourse can be seen in the HDP advertisements as Ak Party used it in its ad. At that point, choosing the halay is important to signify this unification when considering the application of the halay dance. The halay also signifies Anatolia, thus dancing the halay connotes the unification of people from all

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[19] Some of Tayyip Erdoğan's statements about women have drawn reactions by Erdoğan opponents.For an example statement;
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/24/turkeys-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-women-not-equal-men

[20] *Halay* comes from the Word *alay* which means many people, unity, union, cooperation.It also means continuity of human group."
(http://web.itu.edu.tr/aksind/Personal/tfd.html)

over Anatolia. Individuals who dance the halay represent these people from different parts of Turkey. Their clothes and accessories are signifiers of what region they represent. For example, yellow, red and green are the colors of the Kurdish flag and the old woman with a rope tied to her hand which includes these colors signifies that region (Figure 12).



Figure 12: Representation of Kurdish Identity

As observed in the AK Party's advertisement, another sign which represents individuals from different identities and social classes to demonstrate the unification image of HDP can be seen. At that point, the unification of opposites is used in accordance with this purpose. The togetherness of women with and without a headscarf, old and young people, individuals from the east and west of Turkey – as

can be interpreted by their clothes- can be given as an example of this. Furthermore, as the AK Party did, the HDP places importance on the representation of people from the Southwest of Turkey. People from that region are shown many times throughout the ad. Women's dresses and their way of waving a handkerchief during the dance can be interpreted as signs of the Southeastern Anatolia region (Figure 13).



Figure13: Signifiers of unification objective of HDP

Therefore, in denotative meaning, showing people who are from different regions and socioeconomic classes dancing the halay and hugging each other demonstrates that the HDP is a party which represent individuals from all walks of life. On the other hand, at the connotative level, they indicate that the HDP is not only a party of one ethnic identity, but also supports all individuals' rights in Turkey. Additionally, these images connote that the HDP is not a party that supports terrorism and violence, but one which supports the maintenance of peace and reconciliation.

The HDP uses their colorful party images in their television advertisements as well. Their corporate colors can be seen throughout the advertisement (Figure 14). They can be interpreted as the signification of individuals from all social statuses and support the advertisement message.



Figure 14: Signification of colours

The leaders of the HDP, Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, joined the dance toward the middle of the advertisement (Figure 15). It signifies equity and the leader of all people image.



Figure 15: Leaders in halay

A song which is half Turkish and half Kurdish is heard throughout the ad. The chorus of the song is the same as the slogan "we are the HDP, we're going to parliament" and supports the message of the advertisements. As stated, half of the song is Kurdish and it signifies that the HDP treats each identity equally. At that point, the HDP presented its stance for the resolution process. Moreover, the Kurdish lyrics signify that they are the political party which supports the rights of people with a Kurdish identity. If the peace emphasis through the ad is considered together with use of the Kurdish language, it can be connoted that the HDP follows a peaceful path, contrary to the claims of the AK Party in its advertisements as analyzed previously.

In general, the HDP conducted a dynamic advertising strategy during the campaigning period. Generally, the HDP's communication strategy consisted of messages about passing the election threshold and images supporting rights of all individuals, especially people who are marginalized by the rest of the society. Peace and equal rights are emphasized many times and it can be read as indicating the HDP's position and attitudes towards the resolution process. Furthermore, signs which refer to the Gezi Park Protest can be interpreted as an emphasis on opposition to Erdoğan, and essentially their stance against the presidential system.

## 4.4. Analysis of Political Advertisements of Justice and Development Party for the Election in November 2015

### 4.4.1. General Advertising Strategy

The AK Party, which could not accomplish its objective for the June Election, built its campaign strategy on the target of becoming the ruling party again. Therefore, the AK Party emphasized coming to power alone the message of coming to power alone throughout the campaigning period. "Instead of conducting a comprehensive campaigning strategy like the strategy of the previous election, the AK Party focused mostly on current topics in its campaign messages." (Özkan, 2015; p. 14).

After the General Elections in June, influences of sociopolitical events which were mentioned in previous chapter can be observed in the AK Party's campaign. Hence, the messages about the lack of single-party government inducing instability and anxiousness in the country are conveyed throughout the political advertising activities. The importance of of the AK Party coming to power alone is emphasized in these messages (p. 14-15)

Like other political parties, the AK Party also could not run a comprehensive campaign due to the short campaigning period, the negative atmosphere in the country and limited budget (p.15). On the other hand, the AK Party endeavored to use all available channels for its campaigns which had the main message of "stability".

### 4.4.2. The Emphasize on the Integrity of Turkey "There is no you and me, there is Turkey"

#### 4.4.2.1. Analysis of Billboards

The AK Party used the strategy that they represented everybody in Turkey and the unitary power of Turkey image just as they used it in the June Elections. In order to convey this message, one of the AK Party's tactics was to create a billboard series which consisted of a map of Turkey together with individuals who are from different socioeconomic status groups. One of them is given below which is analyzed for this study. A fisherman holds a map of Turkey which is in red and "there is no you and me, there is Turkey" is written on the map in white. The background is white and the hand which stamps the seal on the AK Party logo is seen on the left side (Figure 16).

The fisherman's yellow waterproof coat and the beanie are the signifiers that this man is a fisherman. When the Black Sea Region is considered as having a reputation for its fishing industry, these signifiers can also be accepted as signifiers of the Black Sea Region. The AK Party emphasizes unity with its slogan. At that point, the words "you" and "me" are signifiers of different ethnic identities. When the context is considered, it can be said that the AK Party used more nationalist discourses in its advertisements. These nationalistic messages refer to sociopolitical events, especially armed conflicts and bomb attacks and the HDP when the perceptions of the AK Party about the role of the HDP in these events are considered. The words "you" and "me" can be accepted as signifiers of Turkish and Kurdish identities and the events in the Southeastern Region. The Turkey map with the slogan written on it is a signifier of the "single homeland" and "the integrity of Turkey". However, when it is merged with the context that the HDP helps the PKK and terrorism, it also becomes the signifier of "the failure of the HDP and the PKK" in the second order of meaning. The reason that the AK Party criticizes the HDP indirectly may be accepted as HDP's success in the June Election by passing the threshold and preventing the AK Party coming to power in parliament. When the map and slogan are considered together, the connotative

meaning of the image can be interpreted as the AK Party is the only party that provides the unification of Turkey and protects people in Turkey. The colors of the map, background and slogan which are red and yellow signify the colors of the Turkish in accordance with the nationalistic discourses of AK Party and support the AK Party's nationalist approach to conflicts.



Figure 16: "There is no you and me, there is Turkey" billboard

Another example from the "there is no you and me, there is Turkey" billboard series is given above (Figure 17), emphasizing the unification and single homeland issues. In this advertisement, individuals from various sociopolitical status groups and regions of Tukey come together in the Turkish map image which is located in the middle of the billboard. The background is white and the hand and AK Party logo are located in the bottom left of the visual. Each individual represents different socioeconomic status group and different ideologies and beliefs. Their ages, clothes

and accessories can be the signifiers of this representation. For example, the earphone which the young man who is placed in the left bottom of the visual has is a signifier of youth and modernity since this accessory is generally used by young people and is a technological device. The traditional clothes of the old man who is located in the top right-hand corner signifies rural areas, and the headscarf is a signifier of Islamic beliefs.

In these advertisements, the AK party integrates the opposition as it did in the June election. The integration of opposition around the Turkish map image, the colors of the visuals and the map itself denotes that the AK Party is a party for everybody in Turkey and when it is interpreted deeply, it connotes that the AK Party is the only unification power in Turkey, the HDP does not integrate people as they claim; on the contrary, they are separatist and the only way to be protected against terrorism is to elect the AK Party as a ruling party again.



Figure 17: Unification power of the AK Party billboard

### 4.4.2.2. Analysis of Newspaper Advertisements

The newspaper ad which has been chosen for analysis below (Figure 18) is dominated by red and white colors in accordance with the nationalist discourse of the AK Party. The slogan "there is no you and me, there is Turkey" is written in white on a red background with the biggest letters. The text is written on the slogan in a smaller letter size. The AK Party preferred a shorter text when it is compared with the text which was in the ad from the June election. The image of Davutoğlu is in the bottom right and the hand which stamps the seal on the AK Party logos in the bottom left of the ad.

The written text is about the unity and territorial integrity of Turkey. The text says that we have one flag and one homeland. The words flag and homeland can be read as the signification of one homeland which is emphasized by the AK Party. The repetition of the word "bir"[21] four times signifies the importance of national unity. The large type size of the slogan aims to draw the reader's attention by and signifies the importance of the message in the slogan. The white text on the red background signifies the Turkish flag considering the same strategy as used in the billboards which connotes the Turkish nationalism and unification.

### 4.4.3. Coming to Power Alone

As mentioned, the AK Party's main purpose from this election was coming to power alone. The AK Party demonstrated this aim explicitly in its messages. They use the slogan "coming to power alone" in accordance with this purpose. One of the examples from a newspaper advertisement which demonstrates this aim is given below (Figure 19). In this banner, both coming to power alone and national unification are emphasized. As in other AK Party newspaper ads, this ad includes the slogan, body text and leader image. The slogan is written on the top of the body text and the leader's image is located in the bottom right corner. The hand that stamps the seal on the AK Party logo is in the bottom left corner. The slogan is written in the biggest letter size and in red, the body text is written in blue and the background is white. Therefore, red, blue and white, which are the AK Party's corporate colours come together. A nationalist discourse dominates in this advertisement again.

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[21] Means "one" in Turkish

The slogan is written in the biggest size and framed. This letter size and frame signifies the importance of the slogan and the main message of the ad is in this slogan. The body text underlines national unification and many references to the events between the June and November period can be seen. For example, the text says "the day is a unification day, the day is a peace day" and "the day" refers to the days in which the events, especially armed conflicts, occurred. By emphasizing the necessity of unification and the peace of nowadays, the message connotes armed conflicts and bomb attacks. Furthermore, it promotes the AK Party's warning to the public that if stability is not achieved, these conflicts will increase and this stability is possible and this stability can only be provided by an AK Party government. The words "togetherness", "democracy", "peace" and "stability" are the other signifiers of the unification and one homeland emphasis of the AK Party and other connotations that the AK Party is a protector of the county against the PKK and its supporters the HDP.

Figure 18: There is no you and me, there is Turkey newspaper advertisement
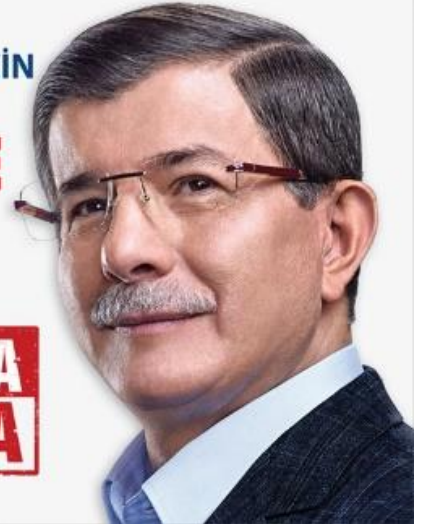
Figure 19: Coming to power alone newspaper advertisement

### 4.4.4. Analysis of Television Advertisement

The main message of this advertisement is about national unification like the messages on billboards and newspaper advertisements which were analyzed previously. The advertisement takes place in a place like library and exhibition area, an orchestra plays a song about the country. People listen to the orchestra and look at the portraits and pictures on the wall at the same time. The song's chorus says "this country is ours". This message directly refers to the events between two elections.

This advertisement has less vitality when compared with the television ad which was prepared for the June Elections. This slowness and the emotional aura of the ad is the signification of the sociopolitical events between June and November. If it is explained in more detail, the Ak Party assumes a more serious attitude to evoke the armed conflicts, bomb attacks, instability and polemics in this period.



Figure 20: Orchestra as a sign of unification

The bookshelves, books and portraits on the wall are the signifiers that this place is a place like library and exhibition area. Instrument choices are the first signification of the unification message of this advertisement. Each instrument pertains to a different culture. When its structure is considered, the orchestra signifies the whole country, and each instrument is a signifier of the different cultures in the country. For example, while the kemanche signifies the Black Sea Region, the guitar, which is a more western instrument, signifies the west part of Turkey.

People in the orchestra can be accepted as the signification of different identities and beliefs. As was done in other advertisements of the AK Party, clothes and accessories are used as signifiers of these different identities. For example, the headscarf can be accepted as the signifier of the Islamic belief, on the other hand, a woman with high heels can be the signifiers of western culture. At that point, the woman with the headscarf plays the guitar. As stated, this woman is a signification of Islam and Middle-Eastern culture when the development of Islamic belief is considered. However, this woman plays the guitar which is a more western instrument. Hence, this unification of opposites can be accepted as a signifier of national unification when the main message of the advertisement is considered (Figure 20).

Various views from Anatolia are shown throughout the advertisement. These views also support the unification of Turkey message. Moreover, pictures of elderly people are used in order to signify the emotional aura of the advertisement when the cultural context is considered. Elderly people, especially women when the maternal aspect is considered, are seen as blessed (Figure 21). A picture of a child is also used as a signification of the future of the country.

Consequently, the AK Party emphasized that peace can only be established by the AK Party coming to power. By using emotional and nationalistic codes, the advertisement aimed to affect people who were under the influence of the sociopolitical events between the June and November Elections.

Figure 21: Pictures on the wall

## 4.5. Analysis of Political Advertisements of Peoples' Democratic Party in November 2015 Elections

### 4.5.1. General Advertising Strategy

The advertising campaign of the HDP for the November Election was built on the message of "insist on the HDP, insist on peace". Hence, the HDP underlined that they support all their messages in the November Election as well. The target of the political advertising activities can be considered as the same target of the June Election which consisted of youth, women, people from different ethnic identities and all marginalized people.

Due to the limited time for the campaigning period and limited budget, the HDP could not use all channels as actively as they were used in the June Elections. The HDP conducted its advertising activities mostly through its social media channels.

### 4.5.2. Colors of the HDP

The HDP uses different colors in its visuals like they were used in the election campaign in June for the signification of people from different groups and identities. In order to analyze the aim of the usage of different colors, the banners of the HDP (Figure 22) have been chosen for analysis. The topics which were emphasized during the campaign in the June Election i.e. democracy, equality, peace, freedom, justice and labor rights are emphasized again with the message of "insist on". It can be interpreted as the HDP not accepting the accusations of the AK Party and maintaining its commitment to their arguments. Each poster covers different topics and in different colors. These colors signify the wide variety of HDP's target as in the advertising strategy in June Election. For example, the topic of equality is covered by a poster which has a purple background. Therefore, it connotes that the HDP supports women's rights and the equality of women and men.



Figure 22: Social Media Posters of the HDP

The HDP prepared logos to use in its social media channels by considering the same strategy with banners. These banners are in different colors and cover different topics. The colors are related to the topic which the logo covers. For example, the logo which has the message of equality is written in purple and signifies the equality of women and men. Additionally, the logo which is written "insist on colorful" is written

on a colorful background. This colorfulness signifies the LGBT[22] groups and gay rights which are accepted as a marginalized group of people by many people in Turkey[23]. Therefore, it can be connoted that the HDP continues to support the messages which were given in the advertisements in the June Elections in spite of all the accusations.



Figure 23: Social media logos of the HDP

### 4.5.3. Analysis of Television Advertisement

The HDP uses its "insist on" discourse in this television advertisement. This advertisement is less dynamic and energetic than the TV advertisement for the June Elections, like the AK Party advertisements. This situation is also related to the events between the June and November Elections. People from different socioeconomic classes, beliefs and identities are seen in this advertisement as well.

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[22] "LGBT is shorthand for lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender" (http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/).

[23] http://lgbti.org/turkiyede-escinsellik/

The HDP indicates frequently that they support peace. In the advertisement, two men and two women show their hands respectively and "peace" is written on their hands. One of them is written in Kurdish on a woman's hand who is also a Kurd. The woman's clothes and tattoo are the signifiers that this woman is a Kurd and the writing of peace in Kurdish with Turkish signifies that HDP supports the rights of Kurdish identity and the seeking of peaceful solutions. Moreover, it can be connoted that Kurds are equal with other people who live in Turkey and they also support the peace rather than terrorism, contrary to accusations.



Figure 24: Signification of integrity of oppositions

Another merging of opposites which demonstrates the HDP's reaction to accusations about terrorism is the discourse of "insist on dialogue". While this statement is heard in the advertisement, a couple and one turbaned and one woman without a headscarf are seen together in sequence. Therefore, it denotes that the HDP supports dialogues between opposite opinions to achieve a solution. When the context is considered, this scene in the advertisement connotes that the HDP seeks unarmed solutions, contrary to the AK Party's claims (Figure 24). Another merging of opposites which connotes this issue is, two women are seen while laughing, and right

afterwards two women are seen laughing again. The first two women are from urban areas and other women are from a rural area, most likely from the Southeastern region as can be interpreted from their clothes and accessories. At the same time, the narrator says "insist on laughing" while the two women from the Southeastern region are shown and says, "insist on ululation" while the two women from urban areas are shown. Ululation is a cultural practice in Southeastern Turkey, so again the merging of opposites strategy is used to demonstrate the HDP's opinion about the resolution process.

Another remarkable point in the HDP advertisement is that a coal miner is shown as can be understood from his helmet and his face which is black with coal dust. This miner is a signifier and signifies the Soma mining accident. By reminding people of old events, the HDP aimed to draw attention to negative events during the AK Party's period of government while Ak Party mostly emphasized the events between the two election periods. It can be accepted that HDP followed a strategy to designed to provoke anti-Erdoğan sentiments and therefore, underline their opinions about presidential system. (Figure 25).

In summary, the HDP used the integration of opposites strategy to demonstrate that they support peaceful solutions and negotiations instead of armed conflict, as claimed by nationalist-conservative groups and especially by the AK Party.

## 4.6. Comparison of Analysis of Ak Party's Political Advertisements in June and November Elections

The A Party conducted its campaign with the advantage of having been the ruling party for three political terms before the June Elections. The Ak Party emphasized mostly future plans and projects in its advertisements for this election. Especially the main target of the AK Party which was called the "New Turkey Agreement" or "Target 2023" that included a constitutional amendment for the presidential system was underlined constantly in the AK Party's ads.

Figure 25: Signification of Soma accident

On the other hand, the AK Party could not reach its goal of being the ruling party and reaching enough parliamentarians for the amendment. If it is considered in the framework of political communication, reaching the target at the end of the campaign period would have proven the success of these political campaigning strategies. Therefore, it can be said that the AK Party could not influence the voters as effectively as they had aimed. Hence, for the early elections in November, the AK Party changed its strategy and used a more nationalist discourse in its advertisements. The sociopolitical events between the June and November Elections which also induced the election in November created the basis for the advertising strategy and messages of the AK Party. At that point, the AK Party covered the armed conflict, bomb attack issues and coalition government endeavors in its advertisement messages and communicated the necessity of stability to the audience.

The AK Party created a party image which was more confident and assertive than in the June Election. On the other hand, they approached the voters more cautiously due to the election results in June. The AK Party warned voters constantly

about the danger of terrorism and instability and presented their party as the only solution.

Therefore, it can be said that the reflections of sociopolitical events, especially armed conflicts and coalition government problems can be observed in the AK Party's November advertising strategy. This situation can be analyzed better if it is compared with the planned election in June 2015.

The AK Party reached its target and became the ruling party in government for the fourth time. Therefore, when considered in political communication terms, the AK Party succeeded in influencing the voters which they had lost in the June Elections again with this communication strategy.

## 4.7. Comparison of Analysis of HDP's Political Advertisements of June and November Elections

The HDP used the same strategy in these two campaigning periods. The HDP was able to reach its target of passing the election threshold. Therefore, it can be interpreted that HDP conducted a successful political campaigning period in June. Hence, they continued their same strategy in the November Election by adding the discourse of "insist on".

Although the HDP conducted the same strategy and mostly referred to the old negative events during the AK Party's government, the effects of sociopolitical events can be observed with the HDP as well. Especially for armed conflicts, HDP emphasized that they supported peace and rejected all accusations that they supported terrorism. In order to pass the threshold again, HDP tried to influence mostly other ethnic and marginalized groups in order to pass the election threshold again.

The HDP reached its target and passed the election threshold in spite of a decline in their votes. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the HDP conducted a relatively successful election campaign.

## 4.8. Comparison of the Campaigns of AK Party and HDP for the Elections in June and November 2015

The AK Party and the HDP conducted comprehensive political advertising during the June Election period. When the features and principles of political communication are considered, all media channels were used effectively and feedback

from the audience was taken into consideration. Slogans and messages were prepared in this way. On the other hand, for the November Elections, both the AK Party and the HDP were unable to run a campaign as efficient and comprehensive as their campaigns in the June election. The reasons for this situation can be given as limited time and budget and confused agenda in Turkey.

Although the AK Party had an efficient campaign period, they unable to reach their expectations in the election. The basis of the messages of the AK Party were created by the new Turkey agreement and reforms which were carried out by the AK Party. It can be said that a more confident AK Party image can be observed in their advertising messages. The AK Party also positioned itself as a party that would unify everybody around the country from different belief, ideologies and identities. However, even if they came in the first place in the election results, they could not reach the number of seats which was necessary to accomplish the new Turkey agreement.

Another political party which had a crucial role in both the June and November Elections was the HDP. They joined the election in June for the first time as a party and it can be said that they were able to influence the audience if the election results are considered. The HDP also used all the communication channels effectively and communicated their messages and objectives efficiently. The HDP worked toward the creation of an image that they did not only represent the Kurdish identity, but also protected the rights of all ethnic identities and ideologies especially individuals and groups which were marginalized by the rest of the society. The most important reason that the HDP enlarged its target audience was their goal to pass the election threshold. Hence, the HDP also asserted the necessity of passing the election threshold to prevent the presidency of Tayyip Erdoğan through their advertising activities. This strategy was followed in order to gain the target audience who opposed the policies of Erdoğan. An energetic, dynamic and confident party image can be observed throughout the campaigns like the image which was created by the AK Party.

Hence, the election results were; the AK Party came first party by reaching 40,87% of the votes cast and the HDP became the fourth party and passed the election threshold by reaching 13,12% of the votes cast.  When the expectations of the parties

from this election are considered, the HDP can be accepted as the winner of this election by conveying its messages to the right audience[24].

Sociopolitical events like armed conflicts, bombing attacks and failures to establish a government during the post-election period paved the way for the early election in November. Both the AK Party and the HDP had a crucial role in these events, thus they were selected for this study. It can be said that both the AK Party and the HDP reflected these events in their communication messages in accordance with their ideologies and expectations. The AK Party emphasized the necessity of stability and used a more nationalist and pessimistic discourse which presented itself as the only way out as a solution.

The reflections of these events in the HDP's advertising messages were not observed as explicitly as in the AK Party's messages, but the HDP responded to all of the accusations through signs in its advertisement activities. The HDP did not change its communication strategy in the November Election taking the success of this strategy in the first campaigning period into consideration. In addition to this, the HDP made references to the old negative sociopolitical events which occurred during the AK Party government.

Both parties represented themselves as a unification power for the country in advertisements for both the June and November Elections. Both advertisements were more lively in the June Election and quieter in November Election as a consequence of negative events. On the other hand, it can be said that while the AK Party used more nationalist images in the November Election campaign, the HDP emphasized the concepts of freedom, peace and equality as they had done in their June Election campaigns. Therefore, the party's identities were important in determining how they covered the same issues in their political messages.

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[24]http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/content/conn/YSKUCM/path/Contribution%20Folders/SecmenIslemleri/Secimler/2015MV/D.pdf

# CHAPTER V

## CONCLUSION

Political Advertising is a significant concept and application in political communication. Political parties perceive the importance of the political advertising from day to day. Hence, they give importance on their political campaigns and especially political advertising activities more by taking advantage of the communication technology of that period. When we evaluate the political campaigns carried out in Turkey from past to present, the reflections of the socio-political events of that period can be remarked. Political parties discuss these events in accordance with the party ideology and expectations in political advertising activities.

General elections in 2015 are important when parties' expectations are considered. Justice and Development Party has been the ruling party for three terms and aimed to protect its power in the parliament. On the other hand, new political party is emerged as a strong opponent of Ak Party which is Peoples' Democratic Party. The first election in June is also important for HDP since they will join an election for the first time as a political party instead of presenting independent candidates. The main objective of HDP from this election was passing the election threshold, and if HDP succeeds it, Ak Party could not reach the sufficient parliamentarian number in assembly for constitutional amendment for presidential system. Therefore, both HDP and Ak Party are the key parties of this election.

Ak Party and HDP has totally different ideologies. Hence, both two parties' communication messages are shaped in accordance with their party identities. This

situation can be observed in their political advertising activities which were prepared for the elections in June and November.

The most important criterion of political advertisements is associated with the election results. In this content, HDP was the party which achieved its gal by passing the election threshold. However, some negative sociopolitical events such as failures in the government formation process, rising armed conflicts especially in the Southeastern Anatolia Region and presidential system discussions brought the renewal of the general elections on the agenda. Hence, the general elections for establishing the 25th Parliament of Turkey was renewed about 5 months later on 1st of the November 2015 and 26th Parliament of Turkey was formed according to this election results.

As it was mentioned, election in November was an early election and political parties had limited time and budget for an effective campaigning period. As is also understood from the results of analysis, the sociopolitical events in the period between two elections influence of the political communication messages of Ak Party and HDP. The questions which were asked before the analysis as "to what extent the messages in political advertisements are influenced by the socio-political events?" and are political parties' ideologies and identities related to how these events are covered in advertisements?" were aimed to be answered through the semiotic analysis on selected advertisements of Ak Party and HDP.

The reflections of socio-political events can be observed directly or indirectly on political advertising activities as can be seen from the analysis results. Their ideologies have also importance on how these messages are covered in advertisements. The conservative and nationalist messages of AK Party and HDP's emphasis on equality, freedom and justice can be considered as an example of this situation.

Therefore, parties' approaches to negative events which affect an important part of the public and their solutions suggestions for these issues are paid attention by the public as can be deduced from the election results in November elections. Furthermore, the reflections of political parties' identities and ideologies on advertisements are also significant to not lose loyal votes of that party. This argument is supported by the election results in November which Ak Party camo to power alone again and HDP passed the threshold.

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