City Research Online

City, University of London Institutional Repository

City, University of London

Department of Journalism

AKP and CHP Political Communication Strategies during the 2019 Istanbul Elections: Capturing the Urban Votes

Submitted by: Mina Tever

10 Northampton Square

London EC1V 0HB

November 2023

Supervisors: Dr. Zahera Harb and Dr. Glenda Cooper

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of :
Journalism PhD

Table of Contents

Abstract

This doctoral thesis examines the main features and differences between the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) and the Republican People's Party's (CHP) political communication strategies during the 2019 Istanbul local election campaigns. Drawing on the Americanisation of political campaigns, the role of personalisation in campaign communication and the use of populism in both campaigns, the research also undertakes a comprehensive literature review of the political background of the AKP and the CHP. The research aims to demonstrate the transformative potential of effective political communication in challenging electoral authoritarianism. It investigates how the AKP, the incumbent, was defeated in 2019 Istanbul local elections, where the opposition party, the CHP, effectively used inverted populism and a candidate-centred communication strategy. To systematically address the research questions, the study carried out interviews with elites, consisting of key figures from politics, academia, and think tanks. In addition to this, the thesis employed textual analysis to examine not only the content but also the structure and functionality of text elements used in both campaigns. To cover the entire election periods comprehensively, a qualitative content analysis of rally speeches was conducted. The findings demonstrate that the two candidates used significantly different communication strategies and that choosing a catch-all candidate who can effectively utilise a positive and inclusive communication strategy, while addressing the diverse needs and concerns of the electorate through a candidate-centred campaign, may prove more effective than opting for a candidate with extensive experience but who adopts a populist approach through a party- leader centred campaign.

Acknowledgments

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisor Dr. Zahera Harb, for her continous support throughout my research journey. Her encouragement and extensive knowledge have been invaluable. I would also like thank my second supervisor Dr. Glenda Cooper for her exceptional guidance and assistance.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my family and my husband for their unwavering support, boundless love, constant encouragement, and continuous motivation. I dedicate this thesis to my beloved grandfather and grandmother, whose memory and wisdom have guided me throughout this journey. Though they are no longer with us, their presence remains a source of inspiration in my life.

AKP and CHP Political Communication Strategies during 2019 Istanbul Elections: Capturing the Urban Votes

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Across different regions, ranging from East and Southeast Europe to Latin America and Southeast Asia, citizens have seen the erosion of liberal rights and freedoms, as well as the diminishing independence of various public and private institutions, under the leadership of elected populist figures. Considering these circumstances, the 2019 local elections in Turkey marked a significant moment in Turkish political history and political communication literature due to its outcome. These elections ended the long-standing reign in Istanbul of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Istanbul, a party that had been in power since 2002.

Since 2002, Turkey has experienced a period of strong populist rule (Aytaç and Öniş, 2004) under the AKP, with its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan being widely recognised as one of the prominent figures of 21st-century populism (ibid). This era has also seen the emergence of "competitive authoritarian" characteristics in Turkey, including extensive government control over the media, numerous violations of civil liberties, and a compromised electoral playing field (Demiralp and Balta, 2019). However, despite these challenges, the Turkish electorate demonstrated a significant shift during the local elections held in March 2019. The opposition, Republican People's Party (CHP), achieved notable victories in metropolitan areas, challenging the dominance of the AKP. Of particular significance was the triumph of Ekrem Imamoğlu, the CHP's candidate for Istanbul mayor. Imamoğlu's win was remarkable considering the numerous obstacles he faced, including manipulation of election results, and ultimately the cancellation and subsequent rerun of the elections (Özkan, 2022).

This thesis aims to examine the political communication strategies employed by the AKP and the CHP and their candidates Binali Yıldırım and Ekrem Imamoğlu, by highlighting the key features, and the differences between their campaigns. By delving into the communication strategies of these two parties, this study aims to analyse the specific communication techniques that contributed to Imamoğlu's success and the campaign strategy that led to the defeat of Yıldırım. Through a comprehensive analysis, this research explores the communicational factors that influenced the outcome of the election and the role of political communication in shaping electoral outcomes. The study aims to demonstrate that crafting the right communication strategy with the right candidate and presenting it through a persuasive and accessible communication framework can effectively mobilise citizens, galvanise support, and counteract the grip of electoral authoritarianism. It also highlights the importance of appealing to voters' aspirations, concerns, and values, while also cultivating a sense of trust, transparency, and accountability.

The study goes beyond a mere examination of the individual campaigns and aims to identify the distinctive features of political communication employed by both parties. By comparing and contrasting their communication approaches, it aims to provide insights into the dynamics of political communication in Turkey and the role it plays in influencing electoral outcomes. By conducting interviews with 12 professionals, textual analysis of 60 ads, and the qualitative content analysis of 120 speeches from both candidates, this study aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the main features and differences between AKP and CHP's political communication strategies during the 2019 Istanbul local election campaigns?

- **RQ1.1** What were the political communication techniques that had been used by the AKP and CHP candidates during the local election campaigning?

- **RQ1.2** What characterised CHP political ads discourse from that of AKP during the Istanbul local election?

- **RQ1.3** What role did populism play during the Istanbul local election?

1.1 Contextualising the Research

To gain a deeper understanding, it is imperative to delve into the two prominent opposition parties that have played significant roles in shaping Turkey's political discourse. The Republican People's Party (CHP) was founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the leader of the Turkish War of Independence and the founder of the Republic of Turkey, in 1923 (CHP, 2023). In 1927, CHP embraced four core principles: "Republicanism," "People," "Nationalism," and "Secularism." Over time, two more principles, "Statism" and "Revolutionism," were incorporated, making a total of six principles that shape the party's ideology. These six arrows, depicted in the party's emblem, symbolise the fundamental values of the CHP (CHP, 2023). Since then, the CHP has progressed through various phases, and it was seen as the beginning of a new era when Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu took over the leadership of the party in 2010. However, except for the 2019 local elections, CHP under the leadership of Kılıçdaroğlu has faced defeat in all elections against the AKP (ibid).

The politicians who established the AKP were initially part of the Islamist party known as the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, RP). The RP achieved its first significant success in the 1994 local elections, winning the largest cities in Turkey, including Ankara and Istanbul. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is now the President of Turkey, became the mayor of Istanbul under the RP banner (Koyuncu, 2014). In the 1995 general elections, led by Erbakan, the RP secured 21 per cent of the votes and formed the government, which made Erbakan the first Islamist Prime Minister of Turkey (ibid). However, the secular establishment was taken by surprise, and in 1997, the military staged a coup and pressured Erbakan to resign as Prime Minister. It was after this military intervention that the story of the

establishment of the AKP began (Baykan, 2018). Presenting themselves as conservative democrats, the AKP achieved their first major success in the 2002 general elections (ibid). Since then, except for the 2019 local elections, they have emerged as the winners in every election.

Taking into account the electoral and thus, political communication successes of the AKP until the 2019 local elections and failures of the CHP, this research investigates the communicative factors behind the AKP's loss and the CHP's victory in Istanbul in 2019. The reason for studying local elections and specifically the 2019 Istanbul election, is that it was an important turning point in Turkish politics as the main opposition party CHP managed to win the majority of the votes in various parts of the country including Istanbul, the country's largest city where the AKP ruled for the last 25 years. However, the AKP contested the vote in Istanbul, and Turkey's election board subsequently decided to nullify the election results and order a rerun. Yet, on 23rd June 2019, CHP's candidate, Ekrem Imamoğlu, was again elected mayor of Istanbul and this time with more than 54 per cent of the vote against 45 per cent for his opponent AKP's candidate Binali Yıldırım.

In order to approach the research questions systematically, the study will use the theory of Americanisation of political campaigns aligned with the role of personalisation in campaign communication, the role of using positive and negative campaigning and the use of populism in both campaigns. These concepts will construct a theoretical base for the research for understanding the extent to which these features influenced both campaigns. The research will additionally undertake a comprehensive literature review of the political background of the AKP and the CHP, examining their ideological foundations, political perspectives, and the values they espouse throughout their political campaigns. This investigation of their political backgrounds will provide a crucial context for interpreting the significance of their political advertisements, slogans, and discourses. In other words, understanding the historical and ideological underpinnings of the AKP and the CHP is important in order to understand the nuanced meanings embedded within their political communication strategies. Drawing from the 2019 local elections in Istanbul, this research aims to demonstrate the transformative potential of effective political communication in challenging electoral authoritarianism and by crafting compelling messages, selecting suitable candidates, engaging with voters in a meaningful and inclusive manner, it is possible to overcome electoral authoritarianism and find the way for a more democratic and participatory political landscape.

1.2 Research Contributions

Political communication techniques employed by the CHP in recent Turkish election cycles have received limited scholarly attention. Additionally, there is a scarcity of literature examining the political communication strategies of both the AKP and the CHP during recent local election periods. This research gap underscores the need for a comprehensive analysis of Turkish political parties' communication strategies in light of evolving political and social dynamics. This thesis aims to address this research gap by examining the primary features and distinctions of the political communication

strategies employed by the AKP and the CHP during the local elections in Istanbul on March 31st and June 23rd, 2019. Furthermore, this study contributes to the field of political communication by emphasising the significance of candidate-centred campaigns in Turkish politics, contrasting them with party-leader centred campaigns that primarily revolve around the party leader rather than individual candidates. Moreover, this research explores the potential effectiveness of campaign communication strategies utilising inverted populism and emotional appeals to address the needs of diverse voter groups and envision a more positive future. Such strategies serve as powerful tools in countering the polarising rhetoric of populist regimes. Additionally, this study contributes to the growing literature on counter-populist strategies by using 2019 Istanbul local elections as a case study. By analysing the political communication techniques employed by the AKP and the CHP during the local elections in Istanbul, this research emphasises the importance of solution-based campaigns rather than relying solely on populist rhetoric. Ultimately, this research aims to offer valuable insights into how democratic movements worldwide can effectively challenge and defeat populist regimes through the adoption of positive, inclusive, and impactful communication strategies. Lastly, leveraging my involvement as a political consultant for CHP candidates in the region of Antalya and the Kadıköy district of Istanbul during the 2019 local elections, it is imperative to underscore that this professional background had no bearing on the outcomes of my research. I acknowledge the significance of upholding objectivity and integrity by keeping personal experiences distinct from the research process.

1.3 Structure of the Research

This thesis compromises nine chapters.

Chapter One provides an overview of the research and its contributions to the field of political communication. It delves into the contextual background of the research, exploring the socio-political landscape in which the study is situated.

Chapter Two explains the theoretical framework for the research and reviews the relevant literature. It focuses on the definition of political communication (McNair, 2003), Americanisation of political communication and personalisation (Negrine, 2008), These concepts will be useful to answer RQ.1.1 and RQ.1.2. The definition of populism (Mudde, 2017) and a detailed explanation of populist leader and populist political communication (Canovan, 1981), the role of inverted populism as a counter strategy (Demiralp and Balta, 2019) will play an important role in answering RQ.1.3.

Chapter Three provides a literature review of the AKP and the CHP, as well as presenting their ideological roots, political identity and values. In this section, there will be particular emphasis placed on two political parties that represent different political viewpoints. That background analysis will help to better understand and interpret their discourses and campaign messages.

Chapter Four summarises the methodology applied in this research. It details the research design, explaining qualitative research methods that are developed to answer research questions. As part of the qualitative research methods semi-structured interview with elites (RQ1.1), textual analysis of the campaign ads (RQ1.2) and qualitative content analysis for the rally speeches (RQ1.3) will be used to demonstrate the main features and differences of both campaigns during the 2019 Istanbul local elections.

Chapter Five of this research study presents findings derived from 12 semi-structured interviews conducted with elite individuals. The sample for this study comprised individuals actively involved in both campaigns, including individuals with expertise in political communication and populism within academia, as well as senior executives from prominent polling firms. The objective of this chapter is to gain insights into the disparities between the campaigns of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Republican People's Party (CHP) by addressing key points such as the prominent communicative differences and similarities between the two campaigns as revealed through the questions posed, the presence or absence of the phenomenon of Americanisation in the campaigns, and the utilisation of populism as a communication strategy.

Chapter Six is devoted to the analysis of campaign advertisements through textual analysis, focusing on 60 selected ads. The primary aim of this analysis is to identify the differences in the campaign themes and, in other words, explore the distinguishing features of the discourse employed in CHP ads compared to AKP ads. By employing textual analysis techniques, this chapter aims to uncover the underlying messaging strategies and communication styles utilised by each party.

Chapter Seven employs qualitative content analysis to examine 120 rally speeches delivered by both candidates. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the use of populism by the candidates, assessing the rhetorical devices, thematic elements, and communication strategies employed. Through an in-depth analysis of the speeches, the chapter seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of how populism is utilised as a persuasive tool within the political context and whether populism is an effective strategy to consolidate voters. It also examines the impact of an alternative discourse to populism on election outcomes.

Chapter Eight highlights the findings from the qualitative data and discuss the main features and differences of the both campaigns by integrating the theoretical framework and the literature on the political backgrounds of the AKP and CHP. By bringing together research data, presentend literature and theories, this chapter focuses on where the campaigns share similar characteristics and where they differ from each other.

Finally, Chapter Nine frames the outcomes of this doctoral thesis by reviewing and discussing the findings of the communication strategies of both campaigns. Furthermore, it briefly looks at the research limitations, and as the first comprehensive doctoral study examining the campaign communication of the AKP and the CHP during the 2019 Istanbul local elections, this research not only

provides valuable insights into their communication strategies but also paves the way for future studies in this area.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the study presents an analytical framework and aims to map studies and theoretical underpinnings to address the research objectives. It will outline the concepts of political communication, Americanisation, personalisation, campaign strategies and populism. The first section will analyse the concept of Americanisation, exploring how elements of American political communication have influenced and shaped the strategies of political parties worldwide. Subsections within this section will establish a foundation for examining the ways in which the AKP and CHP employed personalisation methods, and examining the impact of the use of personalisation on their campaigns. Another concept that will be explored under campaign communication is the use of negative and positive campaign strategies. This concept addresses the different approaches taken by political campaigners when it comes to shaping their messages and influencing voters. The analysis of these campaign strategies aims to show their effectiveness, impact on voter perceptions, and overall implications for the electoral process. By examining the use of negative and positive campaigns, the research aims to present their role in shaping electoral outcomes in the 2019 Istanbul local elections. The third and final section will revolve around populism and inverted populism. Populism focuses on the polarisation by using the discourse of "us versus them" in political communication. In contrast, inverted populism aims to unify people without making "us versus them" comparison. The analysis of characteristics of populist communication will be crucial, while simultaneously investigating how the AKP and CHP employed populism in their campaign communication, examining the commuication strategies used to connect with voters.

By employing these key concepts this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive framework on the political communication strategies employed by the AKP and CHP during the 2019 Istanbul local elections. The exploration of these topics will give insights into the main features and differences of campaign techniques between the two parties and will set out political communication approaches to engaging with the electorate.

2.2 Political Communication

Political communication is the form of communication undertaken by politicians or other political actors to achieve a specific objective (McNair, 2003). Political communication is more than communication between the political leader and the citizens. According to Graber (1981), political communication can be defined as a political language, not only in a rhetorical way, but can be considered as body language and political acts such as boycotts and protests. Political communication does not mean only verbal or written statements; it includes non-verbal visual means such as dress, logo, and hairstyle. All these elements build a political "identity" or "image" which are important components of the subject's political communication (McNair, 2003).

Political communication is constructed by words and symbols (Perloff, 2013). Ball (2011: 42) mentions that political communication can be viewed as "the practice of using language to move people to think and act in ways that they might not otherwise think and act" and political party leaders use the power of language to change the attitudes and thoughts of citizens. Political communication involves the delivery of symbolic meanings, the communication of emotional words that can change citizens' voting behaviour (Perloff, 2013). One must not forget that words and symbols convey different meanings to different groups and political messages could have different meanings for a different group of people. Thus, political communication involves messages to influence, such as presidential speeches, campaign debates, and public campaigns designed to affect the attitudes of voters on topics from building permits to abortion (Perloff, 2013). Political communication can be analysed with three components: political organisations, media and citizens (McNair, 2003). Political parties, public organisations or pressure groups can be categorised under political organisations. Those political organisations have strong relationships with the media since their political advertisements and public relations need to be delivered to the media outlet and from the media outlet to the public. Yet, political communication can also be a bottom-up process, starting from citizens, such as opinion polls, blogs or citizen journalism, and can be analysed by the political organisations (ibid). Thus, between these three components of political communication, the media can be situated as a bridge between the political organisations and the citizens (McNair, 2003).

One of the popular developments in political communication is the strategic communications techniques used by political parties. This stage of political communication includes a coordinated plan, which sets out party objectives and identifies target voters (Norris et al., 1999). Most importantly, it establishes the most common issues in society, illustrates key themes and images, and lays out the framework in which campaign communications operate (Norris et al., 1999). In this model of political communication, there is usually growing information and awareness of a problem, rising public concern about these issues and, finally, persuasion of voters to shift party preferences (ibid). For example, Tony Blair's 1997 general election success was seen as a result of a radical re-branding of the image of New Labour (Stacey, 2023). The foundation of New Labour can be traced back to the mid-1980s and was

carried forward under the leadership of Neil Kinnock, John Smith, and Tony Blair. This transformative endeavour encompassed three key elements: modernising the party organisation by redirecting internal power dynamics towards the central leadership and grassroots members while bypassing traditional activist structures; revising conventional party policies by moving away from socialist ideologies and embracing a centrist "third way" approach that appealed to the broader spectrum of British politics (ibid); and strategically utilising communication techniques to project the distinctive image of New Labour (ibid). In that sense, Tony Blair's New Labour campaign in the 1997 general election had been influenced by US political campaigning, which also made it an Americanised campaign (ibid). Strategic communication techniques will be referenced in this research when comparing the political communication techniques used by the AKP and the CHP during the 2019 Istanbul local elections.

2.3 Americanisation of Political Communication

This section will analyse the term Americanisation which has been accepted as the modern way of campaigning in liberal democracies (Negrine, 2008). Prior to engaging in a comprehensive analysis of the Americanisation of political communication, it is essential to provide a concise overview of the origins and development of the term Americanisation in the realm of political communications.

The origins of political public relations can be traced back to a pivotal moment in history, namely World War I (McNair, 2003). During this period, US President Woodrow Wilson established the Committee on Public Information with the aim of effectively managing public opinion surrounding the war (ibid). This marked a significant turning point in the evolution of political public relations, which was soon followed by the establishment of dedicated public relations offices to address party political issues (ibid). Initially, it was the Democratic Party in the US that took the lead, forming their own office in 1928, followed by the Republicans in 1932 (ibid). The success and impact of these early endeavours led to a rapid proliferation of political public relations consultants, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century. For many political communication analysts, the modern era of political public relations begins with the Nixon–Kennedy presidential debates of September 1960 (Vancil and Pendell, 2009). After the debate, the development of televised debates in non-US contexts began to be interpreted as the dissemination of a US political genre characterised by a focus on leaders and the media (Anstead, 2016). Additionally, the expertise of the United States is shared in the realm of televised debates, as evidenced by the American Commission on Presidential Debates. This organisation, responsible for organising US debates since 1988, dedicates a significant amount of time to advising other countries on best practices in debate organisation (Minow and LaMay, 2008). Thus, the spread of televised debates can be perceived as an illustration of the phenomenon of Americanisation, where American practices and expertise are disseminated and adopted in other contexts (Anstead, 2016).

In the realm of communication, the significant influence of the United States on political campaigns has led to the emergence of the theory of Americanisation in the field of political communication. This

phenomenon has garnered considerable attention within academic literature. Negrine (2008) asserts that the American style of political communication has become the modern and more professional mode of campaigning among democratic countries. Swanson and Mancini (1996) emphasise the global fascination with U.S. campaigns and techniques, highlighting the significant influence of American election campaign tools. The terms "spin doctor" and "image consultant," which are commonly encountered today, have indeed originated from the United States and continue to find extensive usage in the realm of political communication and campaign consultancy (Butler and Ranney, 1992). These terms have gained considerable prominence within the American political landscape, underscoring the significance attributed to strategic communication and the management of public perception in contemporary political campaigns and public relations endeavours (ibid).

The theory of Americanisation has been widely discussed in contemporary academic literature on political communication, particularly in relation to its influence on modern campaigning practices in democratic countries (Negrine, 1996; Norris and Kalb, 1997). Americanisation encompasses various aspects, and one preferred term used by Mancini and Swanson (1996) is the "scientificisation" of political campaigns. This refers to the growing reliance on professionals in fields such as public opinion research and publicity, with a focus on employing scientific methodologies and techniques (De la Torre & Conaghan, 2009; Mancini, 1999; Negrine & Lilleker, 2002). Additionally, Mancini and Swanson (1996) view Americanisation as the exportation of Americanised campaign techniques, which are then adapted to suit the specific contexts of different countries. According to Swanson (1996), the global understanding of Americanisation revolves around three main aspects: imitation, the desire to implement new technologies and practices believed to be effective, and the influence of American consultants marketing their expertise in other countries. Negrine and Stanyer (2007) argue that the Americanisation of political communication necessitates technical expertise and professional advisers, leading to a growing detachment of political parties from citizens. This process involves the development of autonomous communication structures and the personalisation of politics, where elections are increasingly centred around individual candidates and their portrayal as approachable figures, often involving the active inclusion of their family members in the campaign process (Scammell, 2007). The fundamental elements of the Americanisation process can be outlined as follows: (A) the emphasis on personalising political campaigns; (B) the adoption of a scientific approach and the increasing prominence of political consultants; (C) the pervasive influence of media dynamics; (D) the prioritisation of candidate-centred campaigns accompanied by personalised organisational structures (Sampugnaro and Montemagno, 2021). Furthermore, in recent years, the phenomenon of digitalisation has emerged as a significant and distinct component of the Americanisation process in political communication (ibid). For instance, Barack Obama's 2012 campaign provides a significant example of the impact of digitalisation as the final stage of Americanisation (ibid). During his campaign, Obama's team effectively utilised digital media platforms, which facilitated the emergence of "Fast Politics" (Bimber, 2014). This resulted in several

outcomes, including the proliferation of 24-hour news coverage, a substantial volume of user-generated content initiated through digital media platforms by voters, increased fragmentation of information, and the instantaneous transmission of messages (ibid).

It is important to note that the adoption of American-style campaigning is influenced by various contextual factors (Farrell, 1996; Swanson & Mancini, 1996), including the electoral system and party competition structure, regulatory frameworks, media structures, technological advancements, and the unique strengths and characteristics of national political cultures. Tunstall (1977) argues that while countries may adopt certain elements of the American campaigning model, it does not imply that the American model seamlessly fits into or significantly influences other political systems. This perspective suggests that Americanisation, instead of facilitating the understanding of changes and peculiarities in political campaigns, tends to homogenise the differences among countries, thereby limiting its explanatory power (Sampugnarp and Montemagno, 2021). In essence, the borrowing of certain aspects does not necessarily lead to a complete alignment or profound impact on other political systems. The fundamental elements of Americanisation will serve as a lens through which we can assess whether specific American campaign elements have permeated the Turkish political landscape or if they have failed to induce a complete transformation or homogenisation of political communication during the 2019 Istanbul local elections.

2.3.1 Personalisation

The personalisation of political communication is an additional aspect of Americanisation (Negrine et al., 2007) which is closely related to candidate-centred politics. Rahat and Sheafer (2007:65) define it as "a process in which the political weight of the individual actor in the political process increases over time, while the centrality of the political party declines". In other words, it is a shift from political to personal characteristics and from the politician's public life in the office to their private life (Aelst, Shaefer and Stanyer, 2012). Personal traits of political leaders play a crucial role in the political life of contemporary democracies (Poguntke and Webb, 2005), but the rise of personalised politics is related to several international developments in contemporary democracies. One of them is the increased role the media plays in the political process. This concept is known as the mediatisation of politics (Couldry and Hepp, 2013), which simply means that politicians have to meet demands not only to share their public image but also their personal sides and private lives with voters through media tools (Enli and Skogerbo, 2013). This concept mostly becomes more evident and visible during the campaign period (Swanson and Mancini, 1996). A good example for personalisation could be Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential election campaign. Obama's campaign strategically utilised various media tools to not only promote his public image but also to share aspects of his personal life with voters. For instance, through social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, Obama provided glimpses into his personal life, such as sharing photos of his family, offering insights into his daily routines, and showcasing his interests outside of politics (Serazio, 2014). Additionally, his campaign used videos and televised appearances

to present a more relatable and personable image of the candidate, highlighting his background, values, and aspirations. By embracing media tools and engaging in a mediated form of communication, Obama's campaign mediated his persona and connected with voters on both political and personal levels, exemplifying personalisation in contemporary campaigns (ibid).

The theoretical concept of political personalisation highlights the emphasis placed on individual politicians in campaign communication, often overshadowing the role of political parties and institutions (Rahat and Tamir, 2007). This shift towards personalisation is evident in the way political actors share aspects of their personal and private lives through social media platforms (Vergeer et al., 2013). During this process, candidates strive to present themselves as relatable individuals, portraying themselves as ordinary citizens who coexist among the voters, transcending their formal political identities (ibid). By positioning themselves as political outsiders, they attempt to establish a connection with the electorate, distancing themselves from established political organisations. In the realm of personalised campaigns, candidates employ simple and straightforward slogans, avoiding complex or convoluted messages (Semino and Masci, 1996). This approach seeks to enhance the candidates' accessibility and facilitate a more direct and immediate connection with the voters.

The literature distinguishes between two types of personalisation: individualisation and privatisation, which offer different perspectives on political actors (Aelst, Shaefer, and Stanyer, 2012). Individualisation focuses on key political figures, emphasising their ideas, abilities, and political agendas (ibid). Privatisation, on the other hand, centres on the public role of politicians as private individuals. Both forms of personalisation are significant aspects of political communication, as they contribute to the increasing personal influence of candidates on voters, with the personalities of candidates assuming a more central role in media coverage (Rahat and Shaefer, 2007). Langer (2010) refers to this phenomenon as the politicisation of the private persona, wherein family, personal appearance, lifestyle, and religion become visible in the political arena through the portrayal of politicians' personal lives. This trend in political communication underscores the growing importance of personal attributes and characteristics in shaping public perceptions of political actors.

The examination of personalisation will serve as a significant component in this research, aiming to comprehend the utilisation of personalised campaigns by candidates affiliated with the CHP and the AKP. The analysis of personalisation will primarily concentrate on examining interview data and campaign advertisements of the candidates, with the objective of understanding the extent to which each candidate relied on the personalisation aspect associated with the phenomenon of Americanisation.

2.3.2 Approaches to the Concept of Americanisation

The theory of Americanisation in the analysis of political campaigns encompasses two contrasting viewpoints: diffusion theory and modernisation theory. Diffusion theory posits that Americanisation is a process of transnational diffusion, wherein American concepts, strategies, and practices of electoral campaigning are adopted and implemented in other countries (Plasser and Plasser, 2002). According to this perspective, political actors in different countries, such as Canada, Latin America, or Asia, emulate the strategies and communication styles of American political actors (ibid). Diffusion theory focuses on the micro-level entrepreneurs, consultants, or experts who export their knowledge and expertise to foreign contexts, leading to changes in campaign practices (Mancini, 1999). It views Americanisation as a consequence of the diffusion and adoption of US campaign techniques and communication strategies. On the other hand, modernisation theory presents a different argument that counters diffusion theory. It posits that the Americanisation of political campaigns arises from ongoing structural changes in a country's politics, society, and media system.

This perspective suggests that Americanisation is linked to the modernisation of media systems and the evolving relationship between voters and political parties. Changes at the macro level, such as advances in media technologies, social structures, and cultural shifts, impact the micro level of political parties and candidates. From the modernisation theory viewpoint, Americanisation is seen as a consequence of the modernisation and professionalisation processes within the framework of political campaigning. Both theories provide valuable insights into different aspects of Americanisation and help explain the complexities involved in the adoption of American campaign strategies in different political contexts.

2.3.3 Global Diffusion Models of the American Campaign and Marketing Techniques

After clarifying the approaches to the concept of Americanisation, it is crucial to analyse the diffusion of Americanised campaign techniques. There are two ways of adopting Americanised campaigning techniques; the first one is the shopping model whereby certain techniques of professional campaigning imported from the United States are modified and implemented, taking the national political context into account (Plasser and Plasser, 2002). The shopping model focuses on techniques that are easy to apply and the model does this by considering national context. This model does not go beyond country and culture specific campaign styles and philosophies and can be seen as the most well-known and widely used model of adopting selected innovations (Plasser et al., 2002 and Farrell, 2007). The second one is the adoption model where the observers or foreign political consultants tend to adopt the successful tactics of the US campaigns which are regarded as more promising than the traditional campaign approach (Plasser and Plasser, 2002). The adoption model also has an impact on the candidate's image, strategic development, target group marketing, spin control, permanent campaigning and negative advertising. This model is mostly used in Europe, Latin America and Asian election campaigns (ibid). The differences between these models are that while the shopping model focuses on

the country specific supplementation of traditional campaign practices with important features of the American style of campaigning (Hybridisation), the adoption model implements and replaces a traditional campaign style with more advanced tools, such as consultant driven campaign structures or media and message driven campaigns (Standardisation) (ibid). Lastly, the shopping model implements selected US-campaign techniques and practices, while the adoption model adopts US tactics of successful campaigning (ibid). Overall, the diffusion of Americanisation can take different forms: direct imitation of American practices, selective importation and adoption of innovations, or adaptation of American practices into existing ones. However, the role of indigenous conditions remains crucial in sustaining unique features of national systems, as these conditions serve as catalysts for initiating changes within these systems. The complexity and diversity of the diffusion process emphasise the importance of considering both the cultural and contextual factors that influence the adoption and adaptation of American campaign techniques in different countries.

To address the main research question, which focuses on the main features and differences between the two campaings, the concept of personalisation, which is considered as an important aspect of Americanisation will be analysed. This analysis will be conducted by using in-depth interviews with elites including political consultants, academics, and campaign professionals associated with the campaign teams of both the AKP and CHP parties. The research will also use textual analysis of campaign ads and qualitative content analysis to analyse the degree of personalisation, hence the extent of Americanisation in both campaigns. The obtained data will serve as a resource in assessing which candidate relied more on Americanised campaigning practices within the Turkish political context.

2.4 Fear and Hope Appeals: Negative and positive campaigning

2.4.1 Negative campaigning

Negative campaigning is commonly defined as the practice of a political actor employing criticism aimed at another political actor during a campaign (Haselmayer, 2019; Lau and Rovner, 2009; Mattes and Redlawsk, 2014). However, the term negative campaigning is often defined in broad terms, encompassing various forms of negative attacks. For example, prominent definitions in the literature describe it as "any criticism levelled by one candidate against another during a campaign" (Geer, 2006: 23) or "talking about the opponent and criticising their programs, accomplishments, qualifications, and so on" (Lau and Pomper, 2001: 805–806). The concept of negative campaigning encompasses several related concepts, such as attack advertising (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995), the attack function of campaign messages or offensive campaigns (Walter, 2014). These different conceptualisations all emphasise the inherent link between negative campaigning and criticism in political campaigns (Reiter and Matthes, 2022).

Negative campaigning likely originated with the advent of political competition and electoral campaigns. One of the earliest instances can be traced back to 64 BC, when Quintus Tullius Cicero, a spin-doctor of his time, advised his brother Marcus Tullius Cicero to incorporate "negative campaigning" in his campaign. The objective was to remind the public of the alleged wrongdoings, scandals, and corruption of their opponents (Haselmayer, 2019) and it gained momentum during the early presidential campaigns in the United States (ibid). A notable example is the 1800 presidential race between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, which marked the only instance in U.S. history where a president ran against his former vice president. Both camps engaged in strong personal attacks, often through anonymous means such as newspapers or funded pamphlets. In these attacks, Americans were warned of dire consequences, including crimes such as murder, robbery, rape, adultery, and incest, should Jefferson be elected (ibid). Similarly, Adams was portrayed as a "hideous hermaphroditical character" lacking masculine strength or feminine sensibility by his opponents (Callender 1800). Today, negative campaigning is a common practice employed by parties and candidates worldwide, utilising various strategies (Haselmayer, 2019). For example, in the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, Donald Trump's team used footage of Hillary Clinton's collapse at a campaign event to suggest a lack of "stamina" for the presidency. During the 2017 French presidential election, rumours were spread about the eventual winner, Emmanuel Macron, linking him to secret societies, Rothschild involvement, or even questioning his sexuality (ibid). Marine Le Pen and Jean-Luc Mélenchon also employed successful negative campaigns during the 2017 presidential elections, denouncing the political establishment and fuelling Euroscepticism and nativism. Similar trends can be observed with populist extremist parties across Europe and elsewhere, where negative political communication plays a significant role (ibid).

These examples demonstrate the diverse range of forms that negative campaigning can take. It can involve substantive criticism, such as disagreements between parties or candidates regarding specific policies. Additionally, it can include character assassinations, the use of pejorative language, or the spreading of rumours concerning a politician's private life (ibid).

2.4.2 Negative campaigning and the voter

In order to maximise the impact of their campaign, political parties carefully tailor their messages to specific groups of voters they aim to reach (Stuckelberger, 2021). Scholars commonly distinguish between two main target groups: core voters and swing voters. Core voters are individuals who have a strong emotional attachment to a particular party and consistently vote for that party in each election. On the other hand, swing voters are more unpredictable, as they may switch their party preference and vote for different parties in different elections (Albright, 2008; Holbrook and McClurg, 2005; Rohrschneider, 2002).

The mobilising-chasing framework proposed by Rohrschneider (2002) highlights the two primary objectives of a campaign: mobilising core voters and targeting swing voters. Mobilising core voters involves energising and mobilising party loyalists, ensuring their high turnout on election day. This is crucial as core voters serve as a reliable base of support for the party. At the same time, campaigns also strive to chase swing voters, appealing to their preferences and attempting to sway them towards their own party by highlighting policy positions, candidate qualities, or other persuasive messages (ibid). The chasing strategy involves targeting swing voters who may be undecided or open to switching their party preference. Negative campaigning can be utilised to highlight the flaws, weaknesses, or controversial aspects of opponents, with the aim of persuading swing voters to shift their allegiance to the attacking party. This strategy recognises the potential influence of negative messages in shaping voter perceptions and preferences (ibid).

Schattschneider (1960) argues that in order to garner support from both types of voters, candidates and parties need to engage in what he calls activation strategies. These strategies involve creating conflict, because, as Schattschneider (1960) contends, conflict has the dual effect of dividing and uniting people. According to Schattschneider (1960), conflicts serve to differentiate individuals and groups, but they also have the power to bring them together. The activation of core voters is a crucial objective for candidates and parties. By engaging in negative campaigning, they can effectively create a conflict line that allows core voters to identify themselves as part of an "us" versus "them" dynamic. The attacked party and its supporters represent the opposing side in this conflict. The negative campaign frames the party as the defender of its core voters' cherished beliefs, positioning itself as the safeguard against the perceived threats posed by the opponent. This portrayal strengthens the bond between the party and its core electorate, fostering a stronger identification and encouraging continued support.

2.4.3 Mobilising strategy and negative campaigning

The mobilisation strategy employed by a party relies on the principle that the more supporters and sympathisers hold a negative perception of the targeted party, the more likely they are to be convinced by an attack on that party. This perception reinforces their belief that the attacking party is aligned with their interests and encourages them to actively participate in the electoral process by voting for the attacking party (Rohrschneider, 2002). In this mobilising logic, the objective of the attacking party is to convey to the voter that voting for their party is not only a vote in favour of their own platform but also a vote against the targeted opponent. The effectiveness of this strategy is contingent upon the degree of disapproval that the supporters and sympathisers of the attacker hold towards the targeted party. A party is deemed to have a high mobilising potential when there is a substantial dislike for the targeted party among its own base. It can be anticipated that negative sentiments towards the targeted party are shared among the supporters and sympathisers of that party as well. As a result, there is a limited overlap between the voter bases of the attacking party and the opponent with a high mobilising potential. Consequently, a target with a high mobilising potential is expected to have a low chasing potential, meaning that there is less likelihood of attracting voters from the opponent's base (ibid). Overall, the mobilisation strategy relies on exploiting negative perceptions of the targeted party to galvanise support and mobilise voters. The extent to which a party can effectively mobilise its own base while minimising the appeal to the opponent's base determines the success of its mobilisation efforts.

Rohrschneider (2002) elucidates the mobilising-chasing framework by providing an in-depth analysis of its various aspects and components. As illustrated in Rohrschneider's table (2002), the mobilising-chasing framework outlines various aspects of negative campaigning which serves as a comprehensive reference for understanding the multifaceted nature of political campaigns and the role of negative campaigning within this framework.

Table 1. The mobilizing-chasing framework applied to negative campaigning in multiparty systems.

	Mobilizing	Chasing
Target group	Core voters	Swing voters
Function	Activation	Persuasion
	Increase turnout	Decrease turnout
Targeted opponents	High mobilizing potential: Small overlap of voter bases	High chasing potential: Large overlap of voter bases

Note: For the mobilizing-chasing framework see Rohrschneider (2002).

2.4.4 Positive Campaigning

The literature also recognises the significance of positive campaigning as a crucial factor in campaign effects. Positive campaigning refers to the communication of one's own accomplishments, qualifications, programs, and other positive attributes (Lau & Pomper, 2001). It relies on the use of positive emotional appeals, such as enthusiasm, pride, and hope, to engage and persuade voters (Mattes and Redlawsk, 2014; Ridout and Searles, 2011).

According to the affective intelligence theory, emotions play a vital role in individuals' political judgements and electoral decisions, particularly in situations of uncertainty and limited information (Brader et al., 2011; Marcus et al., 2011). Positive emotions conveyed through political campaigns have been found to have stimulating effects on both specific and diffuse political support (Lecheler et al., 2015; Marquart et al., 2019). Positive campaigning is predicted to have a reducing effect on political distrust (Reiter and Matthes, 2022). This proposition can be explained by the principles of affective priming theory, which posits that a positive mood activates the general node associated with positive affect, subsequently triggering the activation of positively valenced concepts (Kühne et al., 2011). In essence, when individuals are exposed to positive campaign messages, it is expected that positive emotions such as enthusiasm will be elicited (Brader, 2006). Consequently, when individuals assess the trustworthiness of politicians, positive considerations are more likely to be activated in memory, leading to a positive impact on levels of trust. Therefore, due to the priming effect of positive campaigning, wherein positive emotional appeals serve as primes for subsequent judgements, a decrease in political distrust is anticipated (Kühne et al., 2011; Brader, 2006).

2.4.5. Positive campaigning and Hope

In terms of positive campaigning, MacInnis and Chun (2007) present various conceptualisations of hope, suggesting that it can be understood as the anticipation of a desired outcome or as a response to a threat, with both interpretations highlighting its link to optimism. Poels and Dewitte (2008), on the other hand, differentiate between two types of hope: promotion hope, focusing on achieving positive outcomes, and prevention hope, aiming to avoid negative consequences. In the case of prevention hope, fear and potential loss play a role. Notably, prevention hope tends to lead to more goal-oriented behaviours, such as voting (Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer 1999; Nelissen 2017; Poels and Dewitte 2008). One of the most significant differences between hope and fear based campains is that hope appeals often lack the vividness and dramatisation found in fear appeals. This is because hope is based on intangible possibilities that are not currently present but exist only in the imagination, while fear appeals can reference things that the audience currently possesses and could potentially lose. That is

23

why when using hope appeals, it is important to provide information and symbols that transform what seems impossible into something achievable (Bar-Tal 2001; MacInnis and De Mello 2005).

By utilising hope appeals, political entities can position themselves as positive forces and claim the moral high ground (Ormrod, Henneberg, and O'Shaughnessy 2013). An illustrative example is Obama's "Yes We Can" slogan in the 2008 US Presidential election. Parties challenging the existing order often evoke hope for change, although fear is also employed as an alternative strategy (Lau and Pomper 2004).

2.4.6 Fear and Hope Appeals

There exists a belief that hope has the potential to conquer fear, evident in contexts such as disease (Hillbrand and Young 2008), conflict (Bar-Tal 2001), and climate change (Clingerman and Ehret 2013). The mechanism underlying this phenomenon is rooted in Fredrikson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. This theory posits that various emotional states are governed by distinct yet interrelated processing systems (Cacioppo and Gardner 1999), wherein an increase in one emotion leads to a decrease in the other. Accordingly, hope serves to expand an individual's range of thoughts and actions beyond what they would normally consider while fear limits this scope (Fredrickson and Levenson 1998). As outlined by Spears, Blankson, and Guzmán (2012), this framework implies that hope has the potential to counteract the impact of fear.

According to Black et al., (2023) fear and hope can be created through three mechanisms; (1) creating threats that are perceived as relevant or irrelevant, noteworthy, and anticipated, (2) employing hope as a countermeasure against fear by constructing an alternative and positive vision of the future that is feasible, aligns with goals, and holds significance for the intended audience, and, (3) crafting messages that diminish feelings of fear (or hope) by diminishing the perceptions of the critical dimensions required for their creation.

The table below shows how hope and fear messages work in political appeals.

Legend: Arrows in message appeal dimensions indicate that as these collectively increase or decrease there is a corresponding increase or decrease in audience emotional effect.
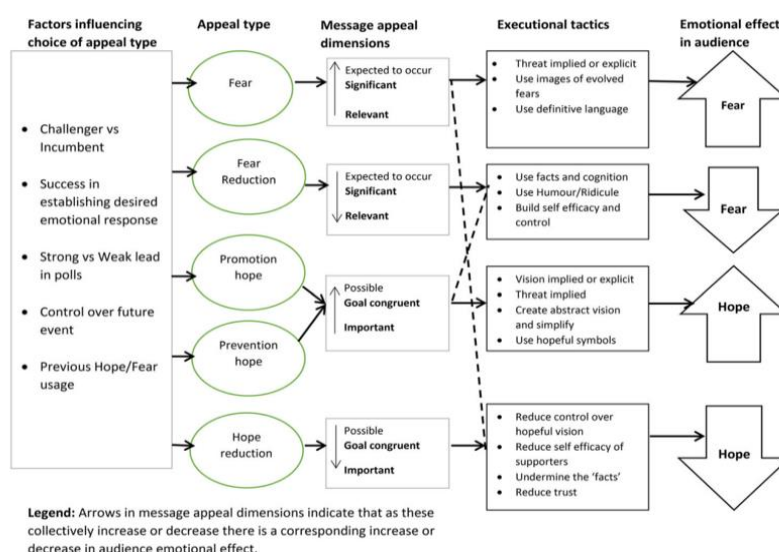
Table 2 Guideline for utilising hope and fear appeal messages
Black et al., (2023)

2.5 Populism

2.5.1 Historical Context

The first use of the term "populism" comes from the nineteenth-century political movements on both sides of the Atlantic, and these movements are seen as the origin of the phenomenon (Kaltwasar et al., 2017). The concept of ordinary citizens reclaiming institutions and wresting power from the ruling elite has been associated with the populist movement that originated in the nineteenth century. The term populism was first used in US newspapers in 1891 and 1892 by the People's Party, also known as the Populist Party (Houwen, 2011). The People's Party was a left -wing agrarian populist party at its roots and had some of the characteristics of populism, yet the populist project had failed on account of being reactionary and regressive (Kaltwasar et al., 2017). The term populism has also been used to describe the Russian movement of "going to the people" under the Narodniki (Venturi, 1960; Walicki, 1969), known as agrarian populism. It aimed to engage the egalitarian struggle on behalf of Russian peasants but was not successful (Walicki, 1969). Here, the common features of populism were what united the US and Russian populists of the nineteenth century. In both contexts, there was a direct appeal to "the people" and a powerful sense of opposition to an establishment that remained consolidated, as well as the common belief that democratic politics needed to be brought closer to the people (Kaltwassar et al., 2017).

In the 1950s in France, European populism began to appear with the emergence of Pierre Poujade, who in 1954 established a populist right-wing movement for the protection of artisans and small shopkeepers (*Union Des Défense des Commerçants et Artisans*) protesting against the French tax system. His movement is known as Poujadism in politics and it built anti-establishment sentiments in the political arena (Kaltwassar et al., 2017). Since the 1960s, populism has been used beyond the Latin American context and has taken place in different national and regional areas, and has been reflected from this period in political scholarship as well (ibid). New right populism began from the 70s onwards in opposition to traditional politics, focusing on issues such as immigration, taxes, crime and nationalism (Taggart, 2000). During the 1970s, there was an unexpected surge in the popularity of populist parties, including the Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties. This trend continued in the 1980s and 1990s with the rise of the French National Front, Italy's Northern League, the Austrian Freedom Party, and the Swiss People's Party (Verbeek and Zaslove, 2019). It became increasingly evident that populism had become a lasting force in European politics (Zaslove et al., 2021). In fact, there are now more populist parties across Europe than there were a decade or two ago. Furthermore, while populist parties initially emerged primarily on the right side of the political spectrum, they have now spread throughout the ideological spectrum (Verbeek and Zaslove, 2019).

The case of Latin America also provides a strong example for understanding the history of populism. Kaltwassar (2019) analyses the emergence of the populism in Latin America in three periods. The first period was deeply affected by the Great Depression of the 1930s. Various scholars see this period as a crisis of incorporation where large sections of the population fought to obtain political and social rights (Collier and Collier, 1991; Drake, 2009; Roberts, 2008). During that time, populist leaders used a populist rhetoric centred on "the people" rather than on the "working class" which was effective in mobilising the urban and rural poor (Angell, 1998). Prominent examples of the initial wave of populism can be observed in countries such as Argentina (Juan Perón), Brazil (Getúlio Vargas), Chile (Carlos Ibáñez del Campo), and Ecuador (José María Velasco Ibarra). These cases were marked by the rise of charismatic populist leaders who claimed to represent the genuine interests of the people, often relying less on established political parties for support (de la Torre and Arnson, 2013: 17; Roberts, 2013).

The second wave arose in contrast to the first wave of populism, and was characterised by the adoption of free-market reforms, resulting in a peculiar blend of populist rhetoric and neoliberal ideas. By positioning themselves as outsiders committed to eradicating the perceived corruption within the political establishment, neoliberal populists successfully captured the support of disillusioned voters following the restoration of democracy. (Roberts, 1995; Weyland, 1996). Latin-American populist leaders proclaimed that they aimed to govern from the position of a servant for the people, fighting against established interests (ibid). Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, is a good example of this third wave of Latin American populism. He rose to prominence as a young lieutenant when he orchestrated a failed coup in 1992, in which he denounced "the establishment" for its corruption and failure to address the real problems of "the people" (Kaltwassar, 2019).

Populism has evolved over time and across different regions, adapting to local contexts and political landscapes. It remains a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that continues to shape political dynamics around the world. Understanding its historical development provides valuable insights into contemporary populist movements and their impact on global politics (Leeuwen and Vega, 2021).

2.5.2 Definition of Populism

There is a considerable amount of literature discussing the definition of populism, where populism is presented as essentially an arguable concept (e.g., Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Weyland, 2001; Ostiguy, 2017; Moffitt and Tormney, 2014). Populism, in common usage, is a very broad term (Barber, 2019). Many scholars, for instance Ernesto Laclau (2005), define populism as a type of "political discourse", while others define populism as a "language" (Kazin, 2005), "mode of identification" (Panizza, 2005b), "political frame" (Lee, 2006), or "political style" (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007; Moffit and Tormey, 2004). According to Mudde (2017), populism is about dividing society into "us vs them," in other words creating polarisation between "the people" and "the elite" (Mudde, 2017).

Mudde (2007) analyses populism as a"thin-centred ideology that considers society into two homogenous groups"; "the pure" versus "the corrupt elite" and that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people. According to the thin-centred ideology, the essence of the people is their authenticity while the elite are corrupt because they are no longer considered to be authentic. Populism assumes that the elite derive from the same group as the people but have chosen to betray the people by adopting the special interests and inauthentic morals of the elite, contrary to or in preference to those of the people (ibid). More importantly, because the distinction in populism is based on morality rather than class or nation, millionaires like Silvio Berlusconi or Donald Trump can be seen as authentic representatives of the people, rather than leaders with a more common socio-economic status or a majority ethnic background (ibid). Wiles (1969: 166) mentions that; "populism today described as a virtue resides in the simple people who are [the] overwhelming majority and in their collective traditions". He highlights the contemporary understanding of populism as a virtue that is embodied within ordinary people, who constitute the majority, as well as in their collective traditions.

Mudde (2004) describes the rise of populism as the "populist Zeitgeist[1]" in Western Europe. According to Mudde (2004), the political spirit of our current era leans towards populism. In Populist Zeitgeist, populist actors define the people in opposition to the elite, and vice versa. They idealise the notion of the "people", often portraying it as a homogeneous entity, and emphasise the foundational principle of popular sovereignty in democratic systems (Ionescu and Gellner, 1969; Mény and Surel, 2002). However, the concept of the "people" can be interpreted differently by various individuals in different contexts (Canovan, 1981; Mudde, 2004). It may refer to the electorate, the nation, the peasantry, or the working class (Canovan, 1981; Pasquino, 2008; Taggart, 2000). Populist actors level accusations against the elite, characterising them as alienated from the people and exhibiting traits of arrogance, incompetence, and selfishness (Barr, 2009; Canovan, 2002; Laclau, 2005; Mudde, 2004; Weyland, 2001). The elite is believed to be out of touch with the concerns of ordinary citizens, focusing solely on their own interests. Anti-elitism can be directed towards the cultural elite, including intellectuals, journalists, and judges, or towards the economic elite, encompassing businesspeople and the capitalist system. However, most frequently, anti-elitism targets the political elite, portraying them as corrupt and disconnected from reality. The political elite is accused of disregarding the desires and aspirations of the general population, and implementing policies that primarily serve their own interests (Mény and Surel, 2002; Mudde, 2004).

When defining populism, Taggart (2004) argues that populist leaders create the concept of "the people" and perceive it as an imaginary and idealised community. He refers to this imaginary concept as "the heartland." The heartland represents an idealised conception of the community, reflecting a populist imagination and a virtuous and unified place where that population resides (Taggart, 2001). In this imaginary land, populists construct "the people "as an important object of their politics. Unlike other

---

[1] The term "Zeitgeist," derived from German, refers to the spirit of the time.

ideologies that derive their visions from the future, the heartland takes its impetus from the past. Taggart (2004) claims that the heartland always asserts or assumes that there was a good life before the corruptions and distortions in the past. Mudde (2004) sees heartland as an alternative term for the "the people" and imagined community. According to Canovan (1999), appealing to ordinary people is the very core of populism and the people usually consist of the silent majority of society who share common beliefs and concerns. In this context populists claim to speak for the "silent majority" of "ordinary, decent people" whose interests are generally overridden by the elites or by the corrupt politicians (Canovan, 1999). In general, populists speak in the name of the "oppressed people" and they want to liberate them by making them aware of the oppression they have been subjected to by the elites.

This research defines populism in three dimensions: (1) emphasising sovereignty of "the people"; (2) attacking the elite; and (3) ostracising others (Mudde, 2004; Bracciale and Martella, 2016).

"Emphasising sovereignty of the people" means prioritising "the people" over "the elite". The word 'people' in this discourse becomes a catch-all concept that politicians use to unite the "authentic" voters. The main aim of this communication strategy is to show closeness to the people and become the oppressed people's voice, against the powerful elite (ibid).

"Attacking the elite" is also called anti-elitism and builds on anti-establishment feelings. It refers to all the rhetoric discourses that put the distance between "us" and "them" (Bos et al., 2013). In this polarised discourse, "us" stands for the ordinary people and "them" stands for the privileged, highly educated cosmopolitan elite (Canovan, 1999). This elite and anti-establishment rhetoric usually subsumes politicians, organisations, media, economic power, etc. (Canovan, 1981; Mény and Surel, 2002; Taggart, 2000). Such appeals are useful for mass mobilisation during times of crisis.

The third dimension is about constructing a "dangerous others" discourse (Mudde, 2004). The reason for creating this discourse is to instill fear of the other and to situate a common enemy in groups of the population that are excluded from "the people" (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007).

According to Jagers and Walgrave (2005), there are three elements that shape and defines populism: (1) it always appeals to the people and justifies the people's actions by appealing again to the people, (2) it is rooted in anti-elite feelings, and (3) it considers people as a singular group without internal differences. They also argue that populism can be divided into a "thin" and "thick" concept. The thin definition as defined on the previous page, relies on the people vs the elite, while the thick definition refers to the people, anti-establishment ideas/discourses and the exclusion of certain populations from society. When political actors talk about the people and combine this with an explicit anti-establishment position, or with the exclusion of certain parts of society, one can refer to thick populism (Jagers and Walgrave, 2005). Thin populism shows closeness to the people simply by talking about the people. The implicit motto of thin populism is: "I listen to you because I talk about you" (ibid).

To conclude, populism is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon that has gained significant attention in recent years. It is characterised by its appeal to the people, anti-elite sentiments, and the perception of the people as a homogeneous group. Throughout history, populism has been manifested in different forms and contexts, reflecting varying ideologies and political landscapes. It is worth noting that there is no set of features that categorically defines movements or parties that are called populist. Put simply, there is no universally applicable set of characteristics that can be attributed to all political parties, as pointed out by Judis (2016).

2.5.3 Populism as a Political Style

Populism is considered both an ideology (Mudde, 2004) and a style of performing politics (Taggart, 2000). Moffitt and Tormey (2014) see populism as "a performative political style" whereby the leader is seen as "the performer", "the people" as the audience and crisis and media as the stage (Moffit, 2016). Based thereon, in addition to a particular discourse, a leader's performance and the particular relationship between the leader and his or her support base are considered the central elements of populism.

By using the political style, the concept will move beyond the purely communicative and rhetorical elements of populism and demonstrate also the performative and relational elements of populism as a political style. In this frame, the main point is the performances of leaders and how they influence the relationship between the populist leader and 'the people', and vice versa. Also, it allows the comparison of leaders without trying to put them into mainstream populist definitions or appropriations. While comparing leaders one might allow some elements of populism without being traditionally populist. The concept of political style helps to compare and distinguish populism from other political styles – technocratic or authoritarian among others– and allows us to question why political actors utilise different political styles at different times (Moffitt and Tormey, 2014). Populism encompasses two central elements that distinguish it from other political styles (ibid). Firstly, it hinges on the appeal to "the People" (Mudde, 2017). The usage of people is the main point that differentiates populism from other political styles. Populism situates "the people" as the true holders of sovereignty and "the elite", "the establishment", "the state" or "the system" (or other related signifiers) are usually related as the main reason of crisis, breakdown, corruption or any dysfunctionality in the given society (ibid). Such efforts often attempt to establish their exteriority from 'politics as usual'. This can take many forms, from the use of common slang to certain gestures to fashion. It can also include claims against the 'political correctness' of the system/elite, used to demonstrate that the populist 'really knows' what people are thinking. Further, it can take the form of the denial of expert knowledge, and the championing of 'common sense' against the bureaucrats, technocrats, representatives or 'guardians of our interests'.

Secondly, populism thrives during periods of crisis or threat (Taggart 2000). Populist leaders present themselves as saviours, offering rapid solutions to pressing issues. They use straightforward language to appear relatable and accessible to the public. This approach reflects a broader scepticism toward the intricate mechanisms of modern governance, often characterised by prolonged bureaucratic processes and policy deliberations (ibid). Populists prioritise swift and decisive action, contrasting that with the more deliberative and negotiation-based approach of "slow politics." (Saward, 2011) Consequently, politics under populism becomes highly instrumentalised and utilitarian, potentially diverting attention from the root causes of crises (ibid).

The concept of political style allows the comparison and differentiation of populism from other political styles, such as technocratic or authoritarian, and explore why political actors adopt different styles in different contexts. Throughout the study, the concept of "populist political style" will act as a guiding framework while conducting a comparative analysis of the populist traits exhibited by the two candidates.

2.5.4 Inverted Populism

According to Demiralp and Balta (2021), opposition parties employ specific strategies to overcome populist regimes, one of which is known as inverted populism. Inverted populism is defined as an election strategy characterised by an indirect approach adopted by the opposition candidate. Its notable feature lies in the redefinition of the concept of "the people" as originally defined by populists, utilising a more inclusive language and making promises of a fairer system (ibid).

Demiralp and Balta (2021) argue that inverted populism emerges as a response to the appeal and success of populist regimes by offering an alternative narrative that resonates with disenchanted segments of society. Rather than directly challenging the populists' claim to represent the people, inverted populism seeks to redefine the notion of "the people" by expanding its scope and addressing the concerns and aspirations of a broader range of citizens (ibid). This strategy aims to counter the exclusionary and divisive rhetoric often employed by populists, fostering a sense of unity and inclusiveness among diverse groups within society. By utilising an indirect approach, opposition candidates practising inverted populism emphasise the need for a more equitable and just system. They articulate a vision that promises greater social cohesion, improved governance, and enhanced representation for marginalised groups. In doing so, they seek to appeal to the aspirations and values shared by a wider cross-section of the population, positioning themselves as advocates for a fairer and more inclusive society.

Indeed, an important aspect of inverted populism is its transformative nature, repositioning populism from a solely negative concept. In contrast to the conventional understanding of populism as divisive and exclusionary, inverted populism is perceived as a unifying, inclusive, and strengthening force for the process of democratisation. By adopting an inverted populist approach, opposition parties aim to challenge and reshape the existing narrative surrounding populism. They seek to harness the inherent

appeal of populism while redirecting its focus towards fostering social cohesion and advancing democratic principles. In doing so, inverted populism strives to address the legitimate concerns and grievances that underlie the rise of populism, seeking to bridge societal divides rather than exacerbating them. Therefore, inverted populism represents a paradigm shift that reimagines populism as a transformative force capable of promoting social cohesion, inclusivity, and the strengthening of democratic processes. By embracing these characteristics, inverted populism offers a fresh perspective on how to address the challenges posed by populist movements, ultimately contributing to the advancement of a more democratic and inclusive society.

2.5.5 Characteristics of the Populist Leader

The literature on populism focuses more on populist parties and movements than on populist leadership (Schneiker, 2020). However, more attention needs to be paid to the latter in order to assess the populist quality of situations in which political leaders are not backed by what is considered a populist party (Weyland, 2001).

While defining populism, one of, and perhaps the most important feature, is strong leaders who are able to mobilise the voters/citizens (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017), such as Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez or Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi who represent themselves as the voice of the people (*vox populi*) through their behaviour, style and speech (ibid). Yet, there is notsuch concept as the prototypical populist leader because it depends, for the most part, on the political culture of the country in which the populist leader mobilises its voter (ibid). What they share in common is that they represent the will of common people and that they are the authentic representatives of those people who are oppressed by the elite. Another important aspect is that populist leaders benefit from polarisation and they usually tend to promote this feeling among voters with their anti-elite rhetoric (Wuthrich and Ingleby, 2020).

Populist leaders aim to achieve mass support by revealing "the enemies of the people," that is, by using polarised discourse. Yet, instead of using sharp an ideological polarisation communication style, they prefer to use intense moral dichotomy: for instance, condemning the opposition candidate or political party as "terrorist", or "foreign agent", or by disparaging any conflict or disagreement with the populist leader as "treason" by the populist leaders (ibid). As mentioned in the discussion about the definition of populism, "the thin-centered ideology" is where populist polarisation occurs between "the elite" and "the people", and it polarises voters 'perceptions of the opposition as a threat to democracy. According to Weyland (2021), nothing motivates voters more than a serious challenge (this could be a situated opposition party as a threat to "pure people") with the result that people feel lucky to have the strong, courageous leader to tackle it directly.

Another aspect of the populist leader is being represented as the "populist strongman and strongwoman" (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017). The "populist strongman" is an image of a man of action, rather than words, brave enough to take hard but quick decisions against any specialist advice. They tend to create "crisis" situations, which require bold actions and common-sense solutions (ibid). According to Muller (2016), most of the populist leaders describe themselves as "the man of the people," sharing the same characteristics as the "populist strongman". The important point is some of the leaders, such as American President Donald Trump, do not fit into this description. Donald Trump is not "one of us", he is a millionaire and could be seen as a real elite, but by his populist leadership and communication strategy he creates this "pure" connection with the voter and they interpret him as "one of them" and as their real saviour from "the elite". Muller (2016) also supports this idea of creating that special connection with voters because voters need to feel that close relationship with the politician, in order to feel that someone is taking them and their needs seriously. To make this argument clearer, Chavez's election campaign slogans could be an example; "*Chavez es Pueblo!*" (Chavez is the people) or *Tu tambien es Chavez* (You are Chavez) to show the close connection that the leader wanted to create with each voter by showing himself as "one of them" during the election period (ibid). Populist leaders aim to create direct and unmediated relations with the voter. To reach people from different backgrounds they promote a direct identification with their supporters and diffuse personal appeals that show the leader as the saviour of "the people" (Weyland, 2001). In this quasi-direct way, "the populist strongmen" reach the mass public especially through social media channels. For example, during his presidential campaign, Donald Trump used social media to communicate directly with the voter. In addition to social media, making phone calls or appearing on phone-in shows where people can ask questions to the leader, he also established proximity with voters. In addition, they are ready to make changes for these concerns without negotiating the decision through any constitutional structures (Barber, 2019). The populist leader invokes democratic values to legitimise their decisions to set the general will of the people (ibid). According to Barber (2019), populist leaders cannot be situated as dictators or tyrants as they rule without the support of the people. Populists, in contrast, rely on the support of the people to have power.

Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) define three types of populists; (1) outsiders, (2) insiders-outsiders, (3) insiders. In general, outsiders claim to have nothing in common with the political establishment and that they are the voice of the people. True outsiders have a career that is outside of the political area such as Hugo Chavez who was a low-ranked officer on the Venezuelan army. According to Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017), almost all populist leaders come from the insiders-outsiders category, which means that they have never been members of the political elite but have strong relations with them. Insider populists are the ones who come from within the heart of the political elite and have a high-ranking in mainstream politics before starting their career as a populist politician. Yet, in some cases as for example in Hungary where Viktor Orban transformed libertarian Fidesz toward conservatism first, and

subsequently right-wing populism, some populist leaders not only transform themselves but also their party into a populist party (ibid). The success of the populist leader depends on a carefully built image of *vox populi* based on the combination of outsider-status and authenticity. To prove and boost their distance from "the establishment", populist politicians continue to mobilise their mass support, their voter base by holding frequent elections and plebiscites and by constantly publishing their popularity ratings (Weyland, 2017).

Populist leaders tend to damage constitutional government but they do so in a manner that brings much of the people along with them (ibid). Guillermo O'Donnell (1998) calls this "vertical accountability" over "horizontal accountability". Populists, with their discourse, portray the latter form of accountability, which rests in the institutions and regulations that safeguard a balance of powers, as a malign obstruction that keeps people's true voice from being heard (ibid). Yet, instead they show themselves as prioritising vertical accountability that valorises participatory democracy, voting and representation and they make the public believe that there has been a failure of vertical accountability and that the opponent has lost its responsiveness (Wuthrich and Ingleby, 2020). They do this by dividing members of the state as insiders and outsiders and by attacking the constitution as it limits the power of the populist. Populist leaders prefer to attribute every wrong decision to these outsider groups and their aim is to show the opposition as an obstacle to the will of the people. In a situation like this, the opposition parties 'strategy to abolish this negative representation is crucial (ibid).

2.5.6 Populist Political Communication

There are two approaches to understand populist political communication; the first approach identifies who the populist actors are, investigating their communication strategies and styles. The second approach identifies the key characteristics of populist political communication and then investigates the use of populist political communication strategies, styles and rhetoric (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). The first approach concentrates on political actors and analyses how these actors communicate, thus drawing conclusions from a political actor-based approach. The second approach focuses on communication strategies, styles and rhetoric that are classified as populist. According to this point of view, populism is a "thin-centred" ideology determined by how political actors communicate (Stanyer, Salgado and Stromback, 2016). This approach draws a conclusion from the communication style that these actors use. The important difference is, the first approach analyses populism as an ideology, whereas the second approach analyses populism as a particular communication style (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). Hence, the first approach can be designated as actor-centred, and the second approach as communication-centred. Throughout the following research, a communication-centred approach will be used.

2.5.7 Populist Political Communication Strategies, Styles and Rhetoric

At the very heart of populist political communications are references to "the people" (Stanyer et al., 2017). There is a direct and indirect way of using the words "the people". When political actors use words such as "citizens", "we", or "ordinary people" it is a direct way of addressing "the people". When "the people" are directly defined, populists usually tend to draw a narrative that they are part of an "imagined community" or they wish to strengthen the "imagined community" that they aim to endorse (Anderson, 1991 cited Stanyer et al., 2017). In this imagined community rhetoric, political actors often intend to point to commonalities, such as sharing the same nation, race or religion. This kind of strategy tends to trigger the feeling of belonging to a homeland. Besides this feeling of belonging, in some cases "the people" are seen to share specific virtues such as honesty, religion, authenticity or hard-working. When political actors define "the people" by virtue of not being members of an out-group then one can talk about indirect references to the people. In such cases, the focus is on "them" rather than on "us", but by emphasising who "they" are, political actors send messages about who belongs to "us" or "the people" (Stanyer et al., 2017).

Another of the characteristics of populist political communication is anti-elitism, and it is a key feature of populist rhetoric (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). It can be seen simply as an attack against the political establishment, which often refers to politicians from mainstream opposition parties but can also include news media, business elites and external actors, such as the EU (ibid). In such rhetoric, elites are labelled as self-serving, corrupt and someone who puts their own interests before those of the people. In most cases, "we", the innocent and honest people, are different from "them", the untrustworthy and corrupt elites (ibid).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter constitutes the underpinning theoretical framework that will guide this research. By analysing the background of the Americanisation of political communication, the research aims to demonstrate the influence of Americanised campaign practices on the Turkish political landscape. With the information provided, this theoretical framework will play a crucial role in investigating whether American political communication strategies have indeed influenced Turkish campaigns during the 2019 Istanbul local elections. Furthermore, the exploration of the personalisation assumes significance in analysing the Americanisation of both campaigns. This aspect will offer an opportunity to investigate how political actors strategically present themselves to the public, emphasising individual qualities and connecting with voters on a personal level. The examination of personalisation as a key aspect of election success can offer valuable insights into the ways in which candidates shape their public image and build rapport with the electorate. The use of negative and positive campaign communication during the 2019 Istanbul local elections will be another important point of focus during the analysis. Understanding how each campaign employed these different approaches to frame their messages and sway public opinion can provide deeper insights into their respective communication strategies. By contrasting the use of negative and positive communication in the context of the 2019 Istanbul local elections will help to identify potential strengths and weaknesses in each approach, as well as their impact on voter attitudes and perceptions. This comparative analysis will offer valuable implications for understanding the dynamics of political communication in the specific electoral context of the 2019 Istanbul local elections. Besides, understanding the implications and outcomes of populist communication becomes particularly significant. By analysing how populist appeals resonated with the electorate during this specific electoral event offers valuable insights into the role of populism and inverted populism in shaping voter preferences and electoral outcomes. Analysing whether the populist discourse utilised by the campaigns led to electoral success will provide insights into how effective these populist communication strategies were in influencing the outcome of the 2019 Istanbul local elections. Contextualising populism within the framework of the 2019 local elections in Istanbul enhances the understanding of the distinct dynamics and outcomes of populism in this electoral context. Drawing upon these theoretical foundations, the analysis will now turn to the examination of the political communication strategies employed by the AKP and the CHP during the 2019 local elections in Istanbul. These guiding principles will be utilised for conducting in-depth interviews, textual analysis of political advertisements, and examination of rally speeches used throughout the selected campaign periods. As the research embarks on the empirical phase, it is anticipated that the insights gained from the theoretical framework will serve as a solid basis for the analysis. By dissecting and comparing the communication approaches of the AKP and the CHP, the aim is to understand the key features and differences that shaped the 2019 local elections in Istanbul.

The subsequent chapter will be succeeded by a literature review encompassing the political and ideological foundations of CHP and AKP, along with an examination of their communication strategies employed since their foundation.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review on CHP and AKP

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the existing literature concerning the CHP and AKP, along with a thorough examination of the parties' political histories, ideologies and their communication techniques. This background analysis will serve as a foundation for interpreting the political communication strategies, discourses, and campaign messages employed by both the CHP and the AKP. By understanding their historical contexts, it will present insights into the factors that have shaped their political approaches, communication and messaging strategies over time.

3.2 Foundation of CHP and Westernised Reforms under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

The Turkish Independence War and the period of reconstruction of the Turkish Republic represents an important turning point for the nation and for the establishment of the Republican People's Party (CHP). After the triumph of the Turkish Independence War against Western countries such as France, Italy and Britain, Mustafa Kemal, the leader of the Independence War and the founder of the Republic of Turkey established the CHP in 1923. In 1927, the CHP adopted four fundamental principles: "Republicanism," "Populism," "Nationalism," and "Secularism." In 1935, two additional principles, "Statism" and "Revolutionism," were added, bringing the party's principles to six in total. The six arrows, which constitute the party's emblem, symbolise these principles (CHP, 2023).

After the establishment of the CHP, secular reforms were initiated to form a new *territorial nationalism ideology* gathering Anatolian people into the programme of radical Westernisation (Grigoriadis, 2009). This new national identity aimed to unite people from every community in Anatolia in regard to their history, culture and ancestry in order to disseminate the Westernised reforms (Zürcher, 1993). Akçaoğlu (2018) sees Westernisation reforms as a symbolic revolution against the Ottoman Empire. Under the symbolic revolution, education and law became secular, polygamy was banned, Swiss civil law was modified, ulamas were banned from wearing the fez so to be seen assecular, with the boundaries of religion narrowed and the impact of religious capital reduced (Zürcher, 1993, Karpat 2010). The reforms implemented during this period had the overarching goal of constructing a Westernised collective Turkish identity. An additional significant aspect of this revolution was the assertion of science as the sole foundation of the nation, positioned in contrast to Islam (Akçaoğlu, 2018). By emphasising science as the primary source of authority and legitimacy, the intention was to distance the nation from religious influences and establish a modern, secular identity which previously caused debates and tensions within Turkish society, particularly from those who saw secular reforms as a threat to Islamic traditions and values. Ahmad (2003) uses the term "shallow rootlessness" while defining the

Westernised reforms established by the CHP. According to him (2003), this period could be defined as "shallow rootlessness" because while secular reforms aimed to modernise Turkish society and aligned it with Western norms, they have not fully taken root in the cultural and societal fabric of the nation. Thus, the rapid and sometimes forced implementation of Westernising reforms has led to a sense of disconnection and alienation from Turkey's own cultural heritage. The reforms were seen as undermining traditional values, practices, and customs, which some view as integral to Turkish identity. The Menemen [2]incident in 1930 was the first example of the "shallow rootlessness." It was an uprising by Islamists against the secularisation of Turkey by Atatürk. They saw these reforms as a danger for society and wanted sharia law, in which they gained support from the community (ibid). The statement made by the protester, "Those who wear hats are kafirs. We will bring back Sharia soon", could illustrate an example of the opposition and resistance against the secular reforms initiated by Atatürk and his party, the CHP. This statement reflects a sentiment held by some individuals who view the wearing of hats, specifically referring to the Western-style hats introduced during the reforms, as a symbol of the secularisation and Westernisation of Turkish society. The term "kafirs" used in the statement refers to non-believers or infidels, suggesting a religiously motivated critique of the reforms. The mention of bringing back Sharia, referring to Islamic law, indicates a desire to return to a more religiously influenced governance system. This sentiment aligns with the resistance against the secular reforms, as some segments of society advocate for a greater role of religion in public life and a reversal of the Westernising tendencies of the reforms. Following the Menemen Incident, where this incident was regarded as a blasphemy against the Republic and the Turkish Reform Movement led by Atatürk, the individuals responsible were brought to trial and those found guilty were sentenced to death. As a result of this incident, there was a noticeable decline in anti-reform propaganda and attacks (Mikail and Karabulut, 2017).

The Menemen Incident remains a subject of intense debate within the historical discourse of the early Republican era. Historically, the prevailing narrative has characterised the Menemen Incident as an insurrection orchestrated by reactionary, Sharia-oriented, and Caliphate-supporting factions in opposition to the Republic, Mustafa Kemal, and his progressive reforms. This interpretation has been widely propagated in official historiography, often portraying the event as a pivotal moment in a larger conspiracy rooted in Sharia law (Üstün, 1977; Kırhan, 1963). However, a divergent perspective on the Menemen Incident has emerged in more recent years, primarily from self-identified Islamist scholars. These alternative accounts present a nuanced portrayal of the incident, depicting it as a meticulously

---

[2] The Menemen Incident refers to a chain of events which occurred in Menemen, a small town north of İzmir on 23 December 1930.Islamists rebelled against the secularisation of Turkey by Atatürk and beheaded Mustafa Fehmi Kubilay a teacher who was doing his military service and two other watchmen.

scripted theatrical production authored and directed by İsmet İnönü[3] and his associates (Sıdal, 2022). According to these accounts, the purpose of this dramatic enactment was to amplify the pressure exerted by the "secular" government officials on religiously-oriented circles and to legitimise these repressive measures within the public consciousness (ibid).

3.2.1 CHP's stance towards Islam

When analysing the ethos of the CHP, a significant aspect to consider is its position regarding Islam. The relationship between Islam and society underwent significant transformations following the establishment of the New Turkish Republic in 1923 and the subsequent formation of the CHP (Tombuş, 2017). During this period, a number of reforms were implemented with the aim of diminishing the public presence of Islam. These reforms included the prohibition of men wearing the fez and the strong discouragement of women wearing headscarves in public. Additionally, the Kemalist movement replaced the Arabic-Persian script of Ottoman Turkish with the Latin alphabet, replaced the Islamic lunar calendar with the Gregorian calendar, and designated Sundays as the weekly holiday instead of Fridays. Furthermore, Sufi and Alevi lodges, seen as potential challenges to the state's authority, were banned in 1925 (Hanioğlu, 2012).

Karakas (2007) highlighted the extent to which Kemalists exerted control over Islam by establishing state oversight. In 1924, the Ministry of Sharia and Foundations was abolished, and the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) was established (DiyanetGov, 2023). From its inception, the Diyanet assumed the authority to appoint, dismiss, and train various religious figures such as imams, preachers, orators, leaders of Sufi lodges, and callers to prayer (Davison, 2003). As noted by Toprak (2005), individuals engaged in occupations related to Islam became salaried employees of the state. Under the CHP rule, the institutionalisation of Islam under state control resulted in a new framework for the relationship between religion and the state, whereby the interpretation of Islam was tightly guided by the state (Sakallıoğlu, 1997). In a significant move on April 10, 1928, the Turkish parliament made an amendment to the clause in the 1924 constitution that previously stated "the religion of the Turkish state is Islam." This amendment signalled the establishment of a new secular Turkish Republic (Lewis, 2002).

The CHP openly acknowledged the pivotal role of religion as a cohesive element within society. Recognising that Islam was widely practised by the majority of the population, they sought to utilise it as a unifying force to bring together the ethnically and linguistically diverse population of the fledgling republic (Hanioğlu, 2012). The Kemalists, however, did not endorse any form of Islam. Instead, they

---

[3] Ismet İnönü was a Turkish army officer and statesman who served as the second president of Turkey from 11 November 1938 to 22 May 1950, and its prime minister three times: from 1923 to 1924, 1925 to 1937, and 1961 to 1965. He is also acknowledged by many as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's right-hand man.

favoured a specific interpretation of Islam that was explicitly anti-clerical, Sunni (as opposed to Sufi or Alevi), Turkish (rather than Arab), progressive (rather than regressive), and rational (as opposed to superstitious) (Davison, 2003). This particular understanding of Islam was intended to reinforce, rather than undermine the Kemalist principles of Turkish nationalism and modernisation. According to Davison and Parla (2008) Kemalists actively established a modernised and nationalised version of Islam, grounded in the virtues of the pre-Ottoman Turkish national culture, rooted in the old Central Asian traditions.

The Kemalists aimed to reshape and mold Islam in line with their vision of a modernised and secular Turkish society. Their approach involved promoting Islam that aligned with their principles of nationalism and progress. By emphasising the anti-clerical, Sunni, Turkish, progressive, and rational aspects of the religion, they sought to construct Islam that would support and reinforce the Kemalist ideals (Çalışkan, 2014). The CHP, since its foundation, has perceived itself as carrying out a particular mission of protecting secularism. However, throughout this process, it has often been characterised by conservative voters, who are predominantly religious, as exclusive, elitist, and secular (ibid). Even today, the greatest fear among voters is observed to be the potential loss of the right to wear headscarves or social exclusion if they were to vote for the CHP, which presents a significant obstacle that the CHP must overcome (Aydın, 2022). After a long period, the CHP candidate, Ekrem Imamoğlu, has addressed this obstacle through his strategic campaign communication (Korkmaz, 2022). In the subsequent sections of this research, a detailed analysis will be conducted to explore the techniques employed by Imamoğlu's campaign to counter and overcome the prevalent stereotype of CHP.

3.2.2 The Evolution of The Republican People's Party

A comprehensive analysis of the electoral history of the Republican People's Party (CHP) from its foundation in 1923 to the 2019 local elections holds significant value in offering a concise and informative overview of the party's historical trajectory. The following timeline is designed to present the successive party leaders of the CHP during various epochs, examining their interactions with military coups and delineating their pivotal role as the principal opposition party in Turkish politics, particularly in response to the AKP since its ascension to power in 2002.

1) The Single Party Period (1923-1946)

During the Single Party Period from 1923 to 1946, the Republican People's Party (CHP) held a dominant position in Turkish politics, reigning as the sole ruling party. Throughout this era, the CHP spearheaded a series of cultural modernisation policies, widely recognised as the Kemalist reforms, which aimed to transform Turkey into a modern and secular nation-state (Turan, 2009). After the passing of Atatürk in 1938, Ismet İnönü assumed the leadership of the CHP, where his primary focus lay in preserving the unity and continuity of the party-state system (ibid). During its early years, the

CHP encompassed a wide spectrum of political figures, ranging from individuals with leftist inclinations to those with right-wing ideologies, and from mild Islamist elements to nationalist and even racist groups, as well as encompassing both rural landlords and urban *nouveau riche* (ibid). This diverse representation within the party reflected its function as a coalition representative of the state itself, with the first iteration of the CHP essentially embodying the state's interests and objectives.

2) The First Democratic Experiment (1946-1960)

Following the end of the Second World War, the previously established state coalition within the CHP disintegrated, leading to the emergence of the Democratic Party (DP), which was led by former CHP member Adnan Menderes. In 1950, Turkey shifted to a multi-party system and the CHP lost the election against the DP (Turan, 2009). The DP achieved resounding victories in both the 1950 and 1954 elections, signalling a shift in political power away from the CHP and marking the beginning of its decline. While initially advocating for democratisation, Menderes ultimately adopted an increasingly authoritarian approach, perpetuating the political culture inherited from the CHP (Çalışkan, 2014). As public support for Menderes and the DP waned in 1957, the army and the CHP interpreted this as an indication of the DP's diminished popularity (ibid). Seizing the opportunity to intervene, the military orchestrated a coup d'état against the DP, using the pretext of anti-democratic actions by Menderes. This coup effectively dismantled democracy, resulting in the closure of the DP and the execution of Menderes on the eve of the global events of 1968 (Hale, 1993).

3) The Transformation (1961-1973)

In the aftermath of the 1961 coup, İnönü's CHP managed to secure victory in the subsequent elections. However, during this period, global trends emphasising socialism and democracy had an impact on the CHP, leading to a shift towards a new form of republican conservatism. Simultaneously, the emergence of a new centre-right party, the Justice Party (AP), capitalised on public discontent with the militaristic and authoritarian tendencies associated with İnönü's leadership (Çalışkan, 2014). In the 1965 elections, the CHP suffered a significant defeat, losing to the AP led by Süleyman Demirel. This outcome relegated the CHP once again to the role of the main opposition party. Four years later, in the subsequent elections, İnönü faced yet another electoral defeat, further diminishing the party's standing in Turkish politics. The year 1968 marked a pivotal moment in Turkish politics as it witnessed a significant uprising driven by students, workers, and public employees calling for a socialist revolution (ibid). However, the conservative leadership of İnönü remained unresponsive to these calls, and, further, İnönü did not oppose open threats made by the military against democratic movements. This lack of opposition to the military's actions led to a crisis when the 1971 military intervention took place. During this critical period, the CHP's young general secretary, Bülent Ecevit, held a different stance to İnönü. When the army requested the CHP to nominate politicians for the new, illegitimate cabinet, Ecevit protested against İnönü's willingness to comply with the generals' demands. In response to the situation, Ecevit

chose to resign from his position, marking a significant turning point in the party's history and setting the foundation for the emergence of the second phase of the CHP (ibid). Bülent Ecevit's pivotal role in the ideological shift of the CHP played a significant role in the party's transformation into a social democratic entity dedicated to promoting a welfare economy and society (Ayata, 2002). Under Ecevit's leadership, the CHP embraced the principles of social democracy, aspiring to establish a comprehensive welfare state akin to the social democratic parties in Western Europe. This transformation marked a new interpretation of people within the CHP's framework (ibid). With this ideological realignment, the CHP shifted its focus towards advocating for the rights and well-being of the working class residing in the outskirts of major cities and the market-oriented small peasantry inhabiting the most developed agricultural regions. Additionally, the party also garnered support from the young urban professionals who were influenced by the leftist wave that had emerged in universities during the 1960s (Çalışkan, 2004). By catering to these diverse groups, the CHP successfully revamped its political agenda, resulting in a surge of support from workers, low-income segments of society, peasants, and young urban professionals. This growing support enabled the CHP to increase its vote share from 27.4 percent in 1969 to 33.3 percent in 1973 (Turan, 2002).

4) The Mass Party (1973-1981)

The CHP faced the repercussions of its leftward swing during the aftermath of the 1980 coup, orchestrated by the junta. This shift towards leftist ideologies rendered the party vulnerable to persecution by the military regime. Consequently, the CHP experienced severe repercussions, including its prohibition, the detention of numerous party members, and the dismantlement of the entire network of left-wing political organisations within the social fabric (Çalışkan, 2014). In the aftermath of the 1980 coup, Turkey saw the emergence of two prominent political forces, each representing different strands of Islamism. Necmettin Erbakan's political Islamism and Fethullah Gülen's social Islamist Hizmet movement gained prominence in the post-1980 era (ibid). Concurrently, the CHP, which had been shut down by the military regime, underwent a series of transformations and resurfaced under various names and coalitions, including SODEP, HP, SHP, and DSP. These different incarnations of the CHP eventually coalesced under the banners of SHP, DSP, and CHP, and their collective election performances reaffirmed the party's position as the primary opposition to the ruling party during the initial fifteen years following the coup (ibid).

5) The Social Democratic Populist Party and re-establishment of the CHP

In late 1985, with the aim of representing the traditions of CHP, the Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) was established. The 1990s witnessed the ascent of Necmettin Erbakan's political Islamist Welfare Party, known as the RP, which marked a pivotal turning point in Turkish politics. In response to the rise of political Islam, the military sought to counterbalance its influence by threatening Islamists with the prospect of military intervention while attempting to draw the CHP into its sphere of influence

(Çalışkan, 2014). In 1997, with the aim of closing down the RP, the military once again intervened in Turkish politics, leading to the ousting of a democratically elected government. This intervention marked the military's last attempt at a coup. Until 1992, the old CHP cadres worked within the SHP. In 1992, with the ban on pre-1980 parties abolished, Deniz Baykal and 21 followers left SHP to re-establish the CHP. Baykal hoped to have success in elections, but during 1995-1999 the CHP remained out of government because it could not even pass the national ten percent threshold. This loss created political turmoil in Turkish politics, because the religiously oriented Welfare Party, whose actions were seen against laicist republican tradition by the National Security Council and by many other parts within the government, won the election with 21.4 percent in 1995 (Özbudun, 2006).

6) November 3, 2002 General Elections: CHP Main Opposition Party

CHP's conservative and accusatory political tone failed to resonate with the voters, leading to the AKP's resounding victories in both the 2002 and 2007 elections. These successes provided Erdogan with the opportunity to form two consecutive governments, garnering increasing public support. In an attempt to counter Erdogan's popularity, Baykal resorted to aligning with the military establishment, adopting a neo-conservative stance. However, this strategy proved unsuccessful, leading to growing discontent among CHP voters with Baykal's leadership (Çalışkan, 2014). In the General Elections held on November 3, 2002, the CHP re-entered the Parliament as the main opposition party with a vote share of 19.4 percent. While all existing parties fell below the electoral threshold in response to the economic crisis, a new era began with the Justice and Development Party (AKP) coming into power. During this period, the CHP engaged in an effective struggle against the increasing influence of the conservative circle in parliament (ibid).

7) The New Era with Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu: CHP as the Vanguard Party of Democracy Struggle

On May 22, 2010, during the 33rd Ordinary Congress, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu became the 7th Chairman of the CHP with significant societal and organisational support, receiving 1189 valid votes out of the 1197 votes cast (CHP, 2023). Upon assuming the chairmanship of the CHP in 2010, Kılıçdaroglu vowed to initiate a profound shift in the party's political approach. Within the CHP, two ideological wings emerged, namely the Nationalists and the Social Democrats. The Nationalists, influenced by Baykal's legacy, engaged in negative politics, focusing on what the CHP should prevent the AKP from doing. On the other hand, the Social Democrats, rallied around Kılıçdaroglu's leadership, advocating for greater democratisation within the party. During the initial two years of Kılıçdaroglu's leadership, his primary objective was to foster unity within the party by bridging the divide between the Nationalists and the Social Democrats (Çalışkan, 2014). Concurrently, the AKP sought to exploit this internal rift, aiming to widen the gap and potentially create a split within the CHP. To preserve the party's unity and coherence, Kılıçdaroğlu adopted a more deliberate approach to transform the CHP, opting for a longer route toward change. His calls for reform bore some fruit in the first general elections in 2011, where the CHP secured 25% more seats in the parliament compared to the previous election. However, despite

this increase in seats, Kılıçdaroglu himself faced a defeat in the election against Erdogan, who secured an unequivocal victory (ibid). The electoral outcome demonstrated that while the CHP had made some progress under Kılıçdaroglu's leadership, the AKP's dominance and popularity remained intact. Under Kılıçdaroğlu's leadership, the CHP underwent further transformation, leading to what can be considered the third phase of the party's evolution. In a pragmatic move to enhance the CHP's chances in the upcoming local elections on March 30, 2014, Kılıçdaroğlu extended invitations to popular figures Mustafa Sarıgül and Mansur Yavaş to become CHP candidates for the municipalities of Istanbul and Ankara, respectively (ibid). Notably, both Mustafa Sarıgül and Mansur Yavaş were not even members of the CHP at the time. Sarıgül had previously lost his membership due to his criticisms of Baykal, which resulted in a strained relationship with the party. On the other hand, Yavaş was associated with the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) as a member. Despite these affiliations, Kılıçdaroglu pursued a pragmatic strategy by inviting these widely admired politicians to join the CHP and represent the party in the crucial local elections (ibid). The decision to bring in external figures to contest the mayoral positions in Istanbul and Ankara was indicative of Kılıçdaroğlu's willingness to broaden the party's appeal and create a more inclusive and diverse image. By enlisting popular and successful politicians, even if they were not official party members, Kılıçdaroğlu sought to increase the CHP's chances of success in two of Turkey's most prominent municipalities. Yet, CHP experienced defeats in the 2014 local elections, 2015 general elections, and 2018 general elections as the main opposition party against the AKP (CHP, 2023).

8) 2019 Local Elections

March 31, 2019, marked a historic moment due to the election success. The party secured victory in mayoral contests in five out of the six largest provinces in the country. Notably, these victories included the prestigious positions of mayors in Ankara, the capital city, and Istanbul, Turkey's major financial hub and most populous city (Uras, 2023). According to Yavuz and Özcan (2019), during the 2019 local elections, Kılıçdaroğlu transformed CHP from rigid Jacobin secularism to an Islam-friendly social democratic party. In other words, CHP reconciled Islam with secularism by ending Islam versus secularism polarisation and, by taking this move the CHP reached out to conservative, urban, Muslim-oriented middle and lower-middle classes (ibid). In the process of writing this thesis, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu is running as a candidate against Erdoğan in the presidential election scheduled for May 14, 2023.

9) The New Leader of the CHP

On November 4, 2023, the CHP elected Özgür Özel as its new leader during the party congress in Ankara, marking the end of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's 13-year leadership. The upcoming local election on March 30, 2024 will take under Özel's leadership (Gumrukcu and Altayli, 2023).

3.3 Pre -AKP period

In order to comprehend the political ideology of the AKP, it is essential to explore its historical background, including the period preceding its establishment and the chronology of its formation. This chapter will examine the pre-AKP era, as well as provide a comprehensive account of the founding history of the AKP. Understanding the antecedents and development of the party will offer valuable insights into its evolution, its ideological foundations, and the contextual factors that contributed to its emergence in the Turkish political landscape.

In the annals of the Turkish Republic, the emergence of the National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi, MNP) in 1970 marked the inception of the first political entity with clear Islamist affiliations. Led by Necmettin Erbakan, a former professor at Istanbul Technical University and an independent deputy from Konya, the MNP sought to establish a distinct Islamist political identity and was supported by religious and conservative sectors of Turkey (Çakır, 2005). The MNP, was against the Kemalist secular principles, parliamentary democracy and the EU membership of Turkey (Akçaoğlu, 2018). The main distinction of MNP from other political parties was its promise to bring *fair order* under a national ethical economy programme (ibid). However, the party's tenure was short-lived, as it was dissolved by the constitutional court order following the military intervention of 1971. Subsequently, the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi, MSP) was formed in 1973, with Erbakan at the helm, succeeding the dissolved MNP. Throughout the 1970s, the MSP maintained its presence as a medium-sized party, yet its national vote share never surpassed 12 per cent (Özbudun, 2006). MSP managed to survive between 1973-1977 but was banned during the military coup of 1980, because of its anti-secular political activities.

After the 1980 military coup, Necmettin Erbakan formed another political party called Refah Partisi (Welfare Party, RP) (Özbudun, 2006). According to Hermann (2003), the emergence of the Welfare Party (RP) marked a significant turning point in Turkish politics, as it not only expanded the electoral support for political Islam but also brought political Islam to the forefront of the country's political landscape. This momentous shift was characterised by a notable change in the RP's electoral base, with urban areas replacing the traditional rural support that had been associated with Islamist parties in the past (ibid).

3.3.1 The Welfare Party – Refah Partisi (RP)

During the 1990s, there was a high degree of fragmentation and instability in Turkish politics and it was divided into two camps; centre-right and centre-left. Yet governments formed by these parties were not successful (Kalaycıoğlu et al., 2002). There was scandalous political corruption associated with clientelistic relationships between the state and businessmen and many other incidents (ibid), and people had started to lose trust towards the political institutions of the country (Öniş, 2010). The 1990s were also symbolised by the crimes committed by the forces of the Turkish "deep state" against civilian

Kurdish people. The war waged against the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) frequently crossed the borders of legitimate action with the involvement of criminal underground organisations in the process (ibid). Paramilitary techniques deployed in coping with the PKK caused massive human rights violations during the 1990s and created a negative image of Turkey as a "state of justice" (Baykan, 2018).

During this unstable time period, a political organisation called National Vision Movement (Milli Görüş Hareketi, MGH) promising *fair order* in the nation appeared in the political arena. The-Erbakan led Welfare Party (RP) was a leading member of MGH. Political parties under MGH, represented political antagonism against the secular nation, capitalist market economy and modern social life (Akçaoğlu, 2018). Scholars hold diverse perspectives regarding the nature of the challenge posed by the Welfare Party (RP). Notably, the RP's political platform amalgamated both religious and non-religious appeals, evident in its focus on industrialisation, social justice, transparent governance, and a revival of Turkey's past glory (Özbudun, 2006). However, the party's intentions concerning the establishment of an Islamic state grounded in sharia (Islamic law) remained ambiguous, leaving room for multiple interpretations (ibid). Ruşen Çakır (1994), a prominent Turkish scholar who extensively studied the Welfare Party, Refah Partisi (RP), reached a nuanced conclusion regarding the party's stance. Çakır (1994) observed that the RP could not be solely classified as either pro-Sharia or fully democratic because it exhibited elements of both orientations, albeit in its distinctive manner. Rather than conforming to conventional categorisations, the RP seemed to embrace a unique blend of pro-Sharia and democratic principles, shaping its own distinct political identity. Regarding economic matters, the RP put forth a vision of an Islamic-inspired "just order" (*adil düzen*) that it presented as an alternative and superior path, distinct from both capitalism and socialism (Özbudun, 2006). Despite claiming it to be a "true private enterprise regime," the practical implementation of this just order would have necessitated substantial state interventions and controls. In the realm of foreign policy, the RP advocated a stance akin to third-worldism, seeking closer ties with other Islamic nations, the establishment of an Islamic common market, an Islamic NATO, an Islamic UNESCO, and even an Islamic monetary unit (ibid). Notably, the RP's foreign policy discourse often contained elements that were critical of the United States, Europe, Israel, and even displayed anti-Semitic sentiments. Additionally, the party opposed Turkey's membership to the European Union, denouncing it as a "Christian club" (ibid).

Following the military intervention of 1980, the party faced closure once again and subsequently reemerged in 1983, reorganised under the name of the Welfare Party. Despite experiencing a modest restart in the local elections of 1984, the party's electoral support saw significant growth, with its vote percentage rising to 7.2 in the 1987 national elections and further to 16.9 in 1991, particularly in alliance with the Nationalist Action Party and the Reformist Democracy Party (Dağı, 1998). The 1990s witnessed a rapid surge in the vote share of the RP. In the 1994 local elections, the party achieved significant victories, securing the mayoralties of major Turkish cities such as Istanbul and Ankara, in addition to many other provincial centres, garnering over 19 percent of the national vote (Öniş, 2006).

A remarkable milestone came in the December 1995 parliamentary elections when the party achieved its best-ever national showing, obtaining 21.4 percent of the national vote and securing 158 parliamentary seats, making it the largest party in parliament. These electoral achievements solidified the Welfare Party's prominent position in Turkish politics during that period (Dağı, 1998).

In 1996, the RP assumed power in coalition with the centre-right True Path Party, Doğru Yol Partisi (DYP) under the leadership of Erbakan. However, the RP-DYP government's policies soon encountered strong resistance from various quarters, including the military, the secular state establishment, and prominent civil society organisations (Özbudun, 2006). The tensions escalated, leading to a critical meeting of the National Security Council on 28th February 1997, during which military commanders vehemently criticised the government and demanded stringent measures against perceived religious reaction. As a consequence, the Erbakan government resigned and, subsequently, the Constitutional Court banned the RP in 1998, citing its violation of the secularist principles enshrined in the Turkish constitution. The European Court of Human Rights also upheld the Constitutional Court's decision. Following the RP's prohibition. After this decision, the Virtue Party (FP) emerged, led by Recai Kutan, a close associate of Erbakan (Özdemir, 2015). However, the FP faced a similar fate when it was shut down by the Constitutional Court in 2001, leading to a division within the Islamist ranks. In the wake of the FP's dissolution, two distinct groups emerged: the "innovationists" (*yenilikçiler*), who formed the Justice and Development Party (AKP) under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a former mayor of Istanbul, on 14th August 2001, and the "traditionalists" (*gelenekçiler*), who established the Felicity Party (SP) under the leadership of Recai Kutan, the former leader of the dissolved FP (Özbudun, 2006). This development marked a significant turning point in Turkish politics, leading to the rise of the AKP as a prominent political force in subsequent years.

In 2001, the Innovators, a faction of the former Virtue Party (FP), took a transformative step by establishing the Justice and Development Party (AKP) under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This new political entity sought to present a distinct political identity, setting it apart from its predecessors. In the 2002 general election, the AKP made a significant impact, garnering 34 percent of the votes and emerging as the victorious party. According to Yildiz (2004), the AKP successfully gained support from diverse segments of Turkish society, encompassing various strata such as the urban poor, the agricultural sector, and the emerging Anatolian entrepreneurs. This broad-based support proved instrumental in their triumph in the 2002 elections and has since solidified their position as the ruling party in Turkey. Over the years, the AKP has demonstrated its ability to build a coalition of supporters from different backgrounds, reflecting a unique blend of political ideologies and priorities that have resonated with a significant portion of the Turkish electorate

3.4 The AKP

This section of the research will undertake a comprehensive analysis of the AKP in two distinct periods, namely 2002-2007 and 2007-2011, with the aim of illuminating its ideological transformation from Muslim democrats to a trajectory characterised by electoral authoritarianism (Yılmaz and Bashirov, 2018). Through this analytical framework the notable shifts in the party's political orientation and the underlying factors that contributed to its evolving ideological stance will be analysed. Building upon this foundation, this section provides a basis for comprehending the underlying framework of the campaign strategies employed by the AKP in the 2019 Istanbul local elections. The preceding analysis of the AKP's trajectory, marked by distinct ideological shifts serves as a critical lens through which to discern the fundamental underpinnings of the party's campaign approaches.

During the 2002-2007 period, AKP can be described as utilising a political agenda under the guise of Muslim democrats, advocating pro-European policies, stabilising the economy, and providing lasting solutions to internal disturbances in Turkey. The leaders of the party claimed to have abandoned their Islamist oriented political view (MGH vision) and changed their orientation towards democracy, human rights and the European Union (Yılmaz and Bashirov, 2018) and, more importantly, declared that the AKP is a centre-right party with a conservative democrat identity (Koyuncu, 2014). By defining themselves under this political identity, the AKP, differentiated itself from the previous Islamic parties and operates as a mass party having reformist, service-based and proactive domestic and foreign policy. By making this definition for itself, AKP has widened and deepened its societal support and global legitimacy. When AKP appeared on the political scene, Turkish politics was corrupt, coups were part of daily life and there was no trust in politicians (Akdoğan cited ina Yavuz, 2006). Keyman (2010) designates this period as a "bifurcated programme of modernisation". According to this definition, the bureaucratic and military elite that has controlled Turkey's institutional modernisation insists that Turkey cannot be modern unless Turks do their best to create new institutions that are derived from the European culture and try to fit the people of Turkey into their model of nationhood (ibid). During this conflicted time, the AKP came to the power in 2002 national election and won against the actors defining themselves as the "defenders of secularism" (ibid). It can be argued that even the name of the party itself was chosen during those tumultuous times to extricate people from the chaotic environment and offer a sense of hope for the future (Yavuz, 2006). When analysing its meaning, in Turkish, AK means "clean" or "unsoiled" and the reason AK Party chose this word is to separate itself from the corrupted and distorted political system (ibid). By taking such strategical steps, AKP aimed to develop a different political identity for itself because they did not want to share a same political destiny with the RP. Meanwhile, people were in search of clear politics, honest, hard-working, thoughtful politicians and the AKP appeared as the political power that could fulfill these expectations. AKP's establishment was seen as a political movement constructed by the will of the people (Akdoğan cited in Yavuz, 2006).

After coming to power in 2002, AKP began to apply political flexibility by passing democratisation reforms and aimed at completing the Copenhagen Criteria of the European Union and strengthening democracy in Turkey (Weiss, 2016). Erdoğan announced that their priority would be economic stability, and by taking this step they left behind MGH's (National Vision Movement) stance against the capitalist market economy and EU membership (ibid). According to Akçaoğlu (2018), the political flexibility that AKP applied in socio-economic life brought success in the 2002 elections. According to Keyman's (2010) analysis, the AKP's electoral success can be attributed to its adeptness in differentiating itself from its historical roots and other political parties, which has proven to be a pivotal factor in securing electoral victories. The party's ability to present a distinct and innovative political identity resonated with the electorate, enabling it to stand out from the competition and gain substantial support. Furthermore, when considering Turkey's transformation into a modern society since its inception in 1923, AKP has demonstrated a remarkable capability in effectively responding to the country's evolving sociopolitical landscape (ibid). Through the skilful navigation of Turkey's recent transformational processes, the AKP has managed to align its policies and rhetoric with the aspirations and needs of the electorate, setting itself apart from its rivals in the political arena (ibid). By recognising and embracing the changing dynamics of Turkish society, the party has positioned itself as a party that reflects the aspirations and concerns of a significant portion of the population. Its success lies in effectively addressing the contemporary challenges faced by the nation and presenting itself as a viable agent of change and progress. In light of Keyman's (2010) observations, understanding the AKP's success requires a nuanced appreciation of its political strategies, ideological positioning, and responsiveness to Turkey's ongoing transformation. Keyman (2010) thinks that the AKP has achieved its electoral victory by responding to Turkey's recent transformation process successfully than its competitors. The AKP was not focused on applying a powerful ideological strategy, the party instead applied moderate rhetoric that put "the people and service" at the heart of its political agenda (ibid). The electoral support for the party does not only include poor and excluded sectors of society, but also, and more significantly, the new conservative middle classes, empowered and enriched by the process of Islamic resurgence (Keymand and Lorasdağı, 2010).

Following the fragmentation of Turkish Islamist factions in November 2002, the AKP achieved remarkable electoral success, garnering 34.4 percent of votes in the 2002 election, followed by 46.6 percent in the 2007 general election, 49.8 percent in 2011, 49.5 percent in the 2015 general election, and 42.6 percent in the 2015 repeat of the general election (Sabah newspaper, n.d). Akin trends in election outcomes were evident in the local elections of March 2004 and March 2009. On both occasions, the AKP secured the majority of provincial or larger city mayorships, while the CHP's gains were comparatively limited, distributed among several smaller parties with more modest representation (Özbudun, 2014). As seen from the election results, since the November 2002 elections, the AKP has gained an unprecedented dominance over Turkish politics, a feat unparalleled by any other political party in the country (Yılmaz et al., 2017).

For a significant portion of the population, the AKP represented the most promising embodiment of what Muslim Democracy could potentially evolve into and symbolise within the context of Turkey (Nasr, 2005). By embracing these important notions, the AKP succeeded in reframing its image as a democratic actor and left behind its MGH past and survived, maintaining its power (Dağı, 2008). While the AKP became the ally of the West, the CHP, once a champion of Westernisation in Turkey, moved in a nationalistic direction, begining to have an unclear attitude towards the West which it saw as a threat to Kemalist values (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008). As the AKP entered its second phase starting from 2007, its trajectory was marked by a series of endeavours. These encompassed a spectrum of concerns, including the domains of democracy, foreign policy, the economy, and societal issues such as the "democratic opening" aimed at addressing the Kurdish question. In addition to these, the AKP initiated measures like the "good-neighborhood policy," with an emphasis on fostering stability in Turkish-Armenian relations. This was complemented by actions like the removal of visa requirements to improve Turkish-Syrian relations, and the introduction of an economic reform package designed to reactivate the Turkish economy. Collectively, these initiatives served to underscore the party's strategic preparations for the 2011 national election, while concurrently upholding its extensive and diversified popular support (Keyman, 2010).

The AKP's sustained success in the general elections of 2007 and 2011, where they secured nearly 50 percent of the votes, was coupled with their triumph in consecutive local elections (Koyuncu, 2014). In line with their electoral successes, Keyman (2010) introduces the concept of "electoral hegemony," which denotes a situation where one political party's dominance in the electoral landscape becomes so overwhelming that other parties are unable to make convincing claims of electoral victory. Therefore, the supporters of these other parties gradually lose faith in the electoral prospects of their own political affiliations. This characterisation helps to contextualise the AKP's consistent electoral triumphs and the corresponding impact on the overall political dynamics in Turkey. According to Keyman (2010) there are three main reasons for the AKP's electoral hegemony: firstly, the AKP presented itself to society not as an ideology like the Welfare Party (RP), instead as a conservative democratic party of the centre-right that is concerned with the issues of the society (such as economic growth, welfare, development or transportation); secondly, the AKP was seen to be more concerned and serious comparing to its main rival CHP, in dealing with corruption that had been in the Turkish economy for decades. This mainly shows itself after the Marmara Earthquake in 1999, when the AKP mayors especially, in Istanbul and Ankara were highly effective in delivering services. In this frame, the AKP also convinced the masses that real economic growth could be achieved by eliminating the corruption that had been blocking Turkey's financial system. Thirdly, the AKP worked closely on the issue of social justice and social state benefits so that households around Turkey could obtain welfare benefits in kind and in cash. Prior to the 2019 local election, an examination of the historical records of previous general and municipal elections reveals a consistent pattern of the AKP's dominance in the electoral process, establishing a

form of electoral hegemony. Similarly to White and Herzog (2016), Yılmaz and Bashirov (2018) also think that since 2011 the AKP represents all characteristics of an electoral authoritarian regime (ibid). They define the concept with three key attributes: (1) an imbalanced field for opposition, (2) elections lacking in fairness and freedom, and (3) a systematic suppression of basic liberties. Yılmaz and Bashirov (2018) think that in electoral hegemony, opposition entities do exist, but their victory at the polls is deliberately hindered. The presence of opposition parties largely serves to legitimise the overarching authoritarian political structure, which selectively continues to suppress them. Within electoral authoritarian frameworks, regular elections for legislative and executive positions do take place, but they often favour the incumbent due to constraints on political freedoms (ibid). As a result, these elections are not genuinely 'competitive' since fundamental liberties are substantially restricted. For instance, the 2017 Constitutional Referendum period, leading to the transformation of Turkey's political system from a parliamentary structure to a presidential one. This referendum took place in a very restrictive environment where opposition groups advocating for a 'No' vote faced challenges (ibid). The AKP secured victory in the referendum by a narrow margin, with 51% voting 'Yes' compared to 49% voting 'No'. Nonetheless, both international observers and opposition groups scrutinising the election process noted significant irregularities in the vote-counting procedures. Opposition parties contended that the elections were manipulated and called for the nullification of the results, but these demands were not met (Saed, 2017). This constitutes as an illustration of elections in electoral authoritarian systems, where there is irregularities occur and ultimately electoral authoritarian succeeds their desired election outcome (ibid).

During its second period in power from 2007-2011, the AKP focused more on consolidating its authority and seeking to exert greater control over the state apparatus (Somer, 2017). During this period, the AKP initiated several political reforms with the aim of diminishing the influence of rival political institutions, notably the judiciary and the military (Yılmaz and Bashirov, 2018). Through the organisation of the 2010 Referendum, the AKP gained the opportunity to restructure the Constitutional Court and the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors, effectively bringing them under the government's control. Additionally, the AKP implemented measures to curtail the military's power by limiting their privileges (ibid). Moreover, between 2008-2011 there was series of investigations called Ergenekon and Balyoz, which placed high-ranking military generals on trial and accused them of plotting to overthrow the government (ibid). All these constitutional changes in 2010 terminated the Kemalist hegemony in the judiciary and weakened the military's control over the AKP's executive power (Taş, 2015). The second period of the AKP government also saw the undermining of independent media, which was another crucial tool to check its power. Beginning in 2009, the AKP government started to jail journalists as part of the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases and today in Turkey, there are 227 prosecuted journalists and 78% of journalists trials in 2022 were adjourned to a later date (International Press Institute, 2023) and AKP's victory in 2011 gave them another electoral power and opportunity to form a government of their own (Yılmaz and Bashirov, 2018). In contrast to the previous periods, this

time AKP was free to a great extent from the Kemalist rule and the military power. However, rather than democratising the system as they had promised in 2002, they took a sharp u-turn and began to work more on establishing a populist regime around the power of Erdoğan (ibid). Following 2011, the AKP continued to consolidate its control over various branches of the state, maintaining its governance. In the most recent instance, during the 2023 presidential elections, Erdoğan, despite reaching a second round in his political history, secured victory with 49.2% of the vote (Indyturk Newspaper, n.d). It is worth noting that the AKP's electoral dominance in this chronological sequence was only disrupted once, and this occurred during the 2019 local elections.

In conclusion, AKP's journey within Turkish politics has been marked by significant transformations and shifts in their political agenda and approach. Initially presenting itself as a Muslim democratic party with pro-EU policies and economic stabilisation goals, the AKP garnered substantial electoral support and managed to maintain electoral hegemony for a considerable period (Kaddorah, 2010). However, the second phase of their governance, from 2007 to 2011, witnessed a shift towards consolidating power and centralising authority around Erdoğan. Moreover, this period saw an increase in the imprisonment of journalists and a decline in democratic reforms that had been promised earlier (Kirişçi and Sloat, 2019). The AKP's victory in the 2011 elections solidified its electoral power, granting them greater autonomy from Kemalist rule and military influence. Yet, instead of further democratisation, the party steered towards establishing a more populist Islamist regime centred on the authority of Erdoğan (Doğan, 2022). This shift was accompanied by political reforms aimed at weakening rival institutions and curbing the influence of the judiciary and military.

3.5 AKP and Populism

As expounded upon in Chapter 2, populism entails a conceptual framework that dichotomises society into two factions: "the people" and the "elites," who are often characterised as morally corrupt or inferior (Müller, 2016). This dichotomy allows populist leaders to construct a distinct political identity by vilifying the elites (Taggart, 2004). This stratagem serves as a foundational element in shaping their political persona. Moreover, populists exhibit a proclivity for fomenting societal divisions through this classification, positioning themselves as the authentic champions of the people while simultaneously discrediting the legitimacy of the political establishment (ibid). Opposition forces are routinely delegitimised by populist leaders through designations such as the "corrupt elite," "foreign interests," or even "terrorists". Integral to the populist narrative is the image of the leader as a potent figure, symbolising the national will and possessing the ability to effortlessly resolve a myriad of issues, often portrayed akin to a "superhero" (Schneiker, 2020). This portrayal is employed to justify their dominion over the state, asserting that they are the true embodiments of the nation's collective voice (ibid).

The establishment of the Republic of Turkey in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire was marked by a series of transformative events. The aftermath of the First World War led to the loss of Turkey's empire,

monarchy, caliphate, and much of its territory, leaving only the Anatolian heartland. This sequence of events engendered profound trauma, and a sense of insecurity within the ruling elite. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk emerged with a vision of resurrecting a republic from the remnants of the empire. In the face of defeat by European powers, Atatürk and his adherents were convinced that reshaping the nation and cultivating "ideal citizens" along the lines of European civilisation would lay the groundwork for a modern, secular republic. For eight decades, Kemalism propagated a nationalist narrative that aimed at homogenising the population. This narrative pivoted on the national reconstruction of Turkey, deliberately detached from its Ottoman legacy and meticulously reconstructed based on a secular framework. However, the attempt to disassociate the Turkish population from their Ottoman origins was not successful. As a result, Kemalism struggled to achieve this detachment, marginalised, ethnic and religious minority groups did not want to fit into the Kemalist model of an ideal citizen (Yılmaz, 2021).

The sociopolitical landscape in Turkey is characterised by a distinctive dichotomy between the elite "centre" and the heterogeneous "periphery" (Kalaycığlu, 1994) While the centre comprises a relatively coherent group of individuals, the periphery consists of diverse religious, ethnic, and regional groups (ibid). The centre's values align with Turkish nationalism, centralism, a unitary state, secularism, and a mixed economy with state oversight. In contrast, the periphery (the rural areas) is associated with Islamic orthodoxy, conservatism, decentralisation, and a liberal economic outlook (ibid). This contrast shapes a distinct dynamic in Turkish politics. In this configuration, certain institutions like the Foreign Service, judiciary, and particularly the military act as representatives of the centre, safeguarding the Kemalist establishment against the rural, less-educated, and religiously inclined masses of the periphery (ibid). This sociopolitical duality evolves into what is often referred to as the Turkish version of the left-right dimension, where secularism predominantly aligns with the left, and pro-Islamism is more commonly associated with the right (Çarkoğlu, 2012; Çarkoğlu and Hinich, 2006). Historically, the right-wing political tradition has consistently critiqued the centre's intrusion into politics. However, it was the AKP that directly challenged the established elites, notably as the party rose to power and asserted its dominance in contemporary Turkish politics (Çınar and Çağkan Sayın, 2014). This confrontational stance marked a departure from earlier political traditions and underscored the AKP's efforts to redefine the political landscape by positioning itself as a genuine alternative to the entrenched centre, resonating with the periphery.

The utilisation of populism within Islamist circles can be traced back to the early 1970s (Yılmaz and Bashirov, 2018). During this period, Islamists positioned themselves as advocates for the Muslim majority population, framing them as victims of both the Kemalist secular regime and Western-oriented reforms. They highlighted instances of exclusion from bureaucratic roles and the prohibition of wearing headscarves in universities (ibid). This identity-forming phase saw the AKP's communication strategy

centring on portraying itself as the mainstream political entity within Turkish politics. The party presented itself as the genuine representative of conservative Islamic values and the marginalised segments of Turkish society, establishing these themes as prominent elements of their campaign discourse (Koyuncu, 2014). Empirical evidence, as demonstrated by Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu (2009) through their survey findings, points to a decline in the general level of societal trust, a rise in intolerance among diverse classes, identities, and groups, and a noticeable increase in social polarisation within Turkey. This phenomenon is indicative of a broader transformation in societal dynamics, possibly influenced by the strategies deployed by political actors, including the AKP, which have played a role in shaping the country's socio-political landscape.

Emerging from his affiliation with the National View (Milli Görüş) movement during the 1970s and 80s under the mentorship of Islamist figure Necmettin Erbakan, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's ideological framework and narrative have consistently incorporated populist undertones (Yılmaz, 2021). This narrative has portrayed both Erdoğan and practising Muslim Turks as the genuine and ethically elevated proprietors of Turkey, whose rightful claim had ostensibly been suppressed by the Kemalist elite (ibid). Since its foundation, AKP's populist strategy has hinged on two overarching themes: (1) representing "the oppressed people" versus "elites" and (2) religious identification (ibid). The first theme revolves around accentuating the marginalised status of the "authentic people" and serves to create the dichotomy between the elite and the ordinary citizens. Within this narrative, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's discourse adeptly crafts a sense of collective identity by juxtaposing the "us" against the oppositional forces (Ergil, 2014). While using this dichotomy he often portrays himself by capitalising his humble origins by positioning himself as "the man of the people", setting himself apart from the political and military elite (Lowen 2017 cited in Yılmaz 2021). Frequently, Erdogan employs his personal narrative from childhood - a tale of triumph over adversity, where a young boy raised in a disadvantaged neighbourhood of Istanbul has risen to become the leader of Turkey, in which role he is an inspiration to voters (Çağatay, 2017). He recounts anecdotes from his early years, like selling postcards to earn money for food or his family's struggle to afford basic items like a bicycle or shoes. Through these narratives, he portrays himself as relatable, a self-made individual who has authored his own path to success and the only one who could understand the people's problems (Türk, 2014). On the other hand while talking about the CHP, he often says "they cannot understand your problems, they are elites, jacobins" (Altaş et al., 2023). He also gains popularity among the working class through populist acts by going to have his haircut in the poor neighbourhood where he grew up, thereby suggesting the message "he is one of us". This scene also helps him to show that his acquired power has not changed him and that he is still down to earth (Kirdiş and Drhimeur, 2016). From voter perspective, some even view him as the chosen "sultan" or "caliph" for a "New" Turkey, and potentially for the wider Muslim world; while others justifiably criticise his autocratic tendencies and populist approach (Lowen, 2017).

In order to depict the CHP as elitist, the AKP frequently addresses women who have been deprived of the right to wear headscarves, using statements like "they attacked my sisters who wear headscarves." Additionally, to portray the CHP and its supporters as lacking in religious reverence, the AKP makes references like "they entered the mosque with beer" or Erdoğan discredits them, saying "they drink until they are stuffed," and he marginalises "the other," implying that they are non-religious and corrupted (Koyuncu, 2014). These tactics are designed to convey the message that if the CHP were to come into power, the privileges the AKP has extended to the religiously inclined populace would be revoked, implying also that the CHP and its supporters are detached from religious values.

The rise of the AKP in Turkey has been marked by a notable utilisation of populist strategies, shaping the country's political landscape over the years (Lewis et al., 2019). The AKP's adeptness in portraying itself as the voice of the marginalised "pure people," juxtaposed against the perceived corrupt elites, has resonated effectively with a significant portion of the Turkish population. This approach, coupled with a strategic integration of religious identity into their discourse, has allowed the AKP to position itself as the genuine representative of the religiously conservative masses. Erdogan's personal narrative of humble beginnings and his portrayal as a self-made man have further bolstered his populist image, aligning him with the people's aspirations and distancing him from the political and military establishment. This tactic has enabled the AKP to consolidate its power and maintain electoral dominance for a considerable period. Additionally, the party's framing of opposition parties as elitist and disconnected from the people, often through narratives of religious freedoms or moral values, has further contributed to their success.

3.6 AKP and Islam

According to Ayoob (2008), Islamism is a kind of instrumentalism of Islam by individuals, groups and organisations to achieve their political goals. It imagines the future from the Islamic perspective (Denoeux, 2002). Islamists use ideology instrumentally and strategically to gain votes and they tend to justify their policies by relying on Islamist values (Yılmaz and Bashirov, 2018). Akçaoğlu (2018) sees Islamism as part of conservatism and suggests that the rise of conservatism is a consequence of an ongoing structural and identity issues within the society.

Within the Turkish-Islamist framework in Turkey, the concept of victimhood in relation to the advancing secularist Western world and the Kemalist elites assumes a foundational role in shaping the hegemonic narrative (Yılmaz, 2017). This ideology revolves around the assertion of victimhood, which extends its scope to include Western powers, Jewish influences, Masonic networks, and their perceived domestic allies, particularly the Kemalist elites (ibid). These entities are portrayed as participants in a historical scheme aimed at undermining the influence of Islam and Islamist values within Turkey (ibid). In this context, the elites at the centre of power endeavour to reshape society through the imposition of new values and ways of life, often adopting an authoritarian approach. Conversely, the periphery, which

tends to rally around Islam as a unifying factor, responds to this central influence by seeking to maintain its own identity (ibid).

Starting from the multi-party system in the 1950s until the late 1990s, Turkish Islamists grew electorally (Akdoğan cited in Yavuz, 2006). The National Vision Movement (MGH) and Islamist political parties under the leadership of Erbakan were the representatives of this ideology. Islamists have presented religion -oriented identity to subcultures, they gave hope, and promised to fight against corruption and bribery in society (ibid). A significant aspect of the MGH also involved a profound desire for the early Islamic and Ottoman periods (Gontijo and Barbosa, 2020). Yıldız (2003) illustrates this by stating that the RP expressed a "nostalgia for a heroic past," perceiving Islamic and Ottoman history as a symbol of greatness. This sentiment was echoed in Erbakan's view, who famously remarked that "elections are the counting of Muslims in Turkey" (Yıldız, 2003). Sometime after this claim, Erbakan became the first Islamist Prime Minister of Turkey between 1996-1997 (ibid). However, the Kemalist ideology made a coup against Erbakan, which triggered Erbakan's resignation and the emergence of the Muslim Democrats (Yılmaz et al., 2017).

After pulling off their political relation with Welfare Party, Erdoğan called himself and his fellows "Muslim democrats" from 2001 to 2013, and abandoned the Islamic rhetoric that caused polarisation within society (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008). They turned their backs on Erbakan's confrontational, divisive, anti-Western and anti-EU Islamist rhetoric. Whilst acknowledging the importance of Islam as a personal belief, the Muslim Democrats argued that they were ready to accommodate themselves within the secular constitutional framework (Mecham, 2004 and Yılmaz, 2009). They defended democracy, human rights, pluralism, the EU process and secularism (Yılmaz et al., 2017). The AKP adopted a form of modernity that integrates tradition, framing conservative democracy on the social and cultural traditions of the Turkish people.

Although the AKP positioned itself as a centre-right conservative democratic party that aimed to forge a novel synthesis in Turkish politics, its Islamist orientation became increasingly evident during its second phase of governance, spanning from 2007 to 2011 (Eligür, 2010). This shift in AKP's political demeanour was observed in its approach to various issues (ibid). According to Mardin (2006), the AKP was not interested in ideology; they aimed to promote "everyday Islam" which includes, putting tax on alcohol or celebrating Prophet's birthday. When the AKP won the 2011 elections, religion-state relations were already far from what they ought to be in a democracy (Yılmaz et al., 2017). After consolidating its base and becoming powerful in its second period, the AKP began the launch of its Islamist project for Turkish society. In 2008, after taking the victory in the 2007 general elections, they lifted the headscarf ban for women attending universities as part of their everyday Islam mission (ibid). Erdoğan has contended that the AKP's core supporters comprise the marginalised "black Turks" within Turkey, a group often subjected to derogatory labels like "ignorant" and colloquially referred to as "drum-heads" by Kemalists and adherents of the CHP (ibid). Erdoğan has consistently underscored in his public addresses the manner in which the policies of the one-party era suppressed devout Muslims,

and how the CHP continued this stance towards Muslims, particularly during the 1990s and 2000s, by aligning itself with the military in suppressing graduates of Imam Hatip Schools[4] (ibid). Within this narrative, he portrays the CHP as a harsh entity that oppressed the everyday culture of "the people," and targeted their religious beliefs. In Erdoğan's view, the CHP signifies prohibiting the recitation of the azan in Arabic, the Quran, and religious activities and converting mosques into storage places (Parlak and Uz, 2014). Moreover, according to his perspective, the entirety of the CHP's history is characterised by cruelty and suppression of the religious people in Turkey (ibid). By incorporating Islamic themes into foreign policy discourse and promoting the concept of 'raising a religious generation,' along with the increased prevalence of Islamic symbols in public speeches by party leaders, the AKP progressively embraced a more explicit stance in defence of Islamic principles, particularly after 2013 (Lüküslü, 2016). In essence, these practices can be interpreted as an endeavour to counterbalance the impoverishing consequences of Kemalism, which entailed the removal of Islamic symbols and references from the public sphere (Duran, 2010).

The AKP aimed to redefine the Turkish national identity not only by redefining its connection with Islam but also by reclaiming values and traditions associated with the Ottoman Empire, a process that gained momentum under Erdoğan's leadership (Yavuz, 2016). This approach involves a blend of Turkish nationalism, emphasising Turkic ethnicity, with Sunni Islam. This fusion extends beyond Turkey's borders, encompassing populations across the Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East who share similar ethnic and religious backgrounds (ibid). The essence of Neo-Ottomanism lies in the reconfiguration of relations between the Turkish state and society, with the objective of constructing an imagined Ottoman-Islamic grand past attributed to the Turks. It represents a reconstructed memory of the Ottoman Empire, shaped by various cultural, literary, and cognitive influences, which collectively contribute to invoking a comprehensive perspective of Turkish national identity (Yavuz, 2016). Described as a neo-Ottoman (Turkish-Islamic) political discourse, this new political identity centers around a pluralistic and populist Islamic ideology. It seeks to address the challenges faced by a state achieving high levels of economic and political development compared to many other nominally Muslim countries (Yavuz, 1998). To understand neo-Ottomanism, it is essential to delve into the enduring influence of competing ideals and memories associated with the Ottoman Empire on the ongoing nation-state project of the Republic of Turkey. Despite the Kemalist nation-building project's efforts to suppress Ottoman heritage through various means, the remnants of this imperial legacy have continued to linger both the state and society since the empire's collapse in the last century (Ongur, 2015). AKP's adoption of neo-Ottomanism can be viewed as a deliberate effort to construct a collective memory, rekindling Ottoman nostalgia for both ideological and practical purposes (Yavuz, 2016). The incorporation of Ottoman architecture serves as a reminder of Turkey's Ottoman

---

[4] Religious schools founded by the state to educate young men to be imams and preachers.

past and is crucial in Erdoğan's discourse, where he strategically utilises Islamic identity and neo-Ottomanism (Ongur, 2015). On the 24th of March 2019, merely a week before the local election, Erdoğan strategically employed a potent symbol in his rally – the Hagia Sophia. Against the backdrop of Kemalist Westernised reforms that sought to modernise Turkey by distancing it from its Ottoman past and Islamic values, Erdoğan's stance on the Hagia Sophia holds symbolic significance (Gürsel, 2020). The Hagia Sophia's transformation from an Ottoman Mosque to a museum was a part of Atatürk's efforts to reshape Turkey into a secular and Westernised nation. Erdoğan's promise to revert the Hagia Sophia Museum into a mosque can be seen as a deliberate attempt to challenge the legacy of Kemalism and to symbolically align himself with Turkey's Ottoman heritage. By rallying his supporters around the conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque, Erdoğan aimed to connect with his voter base by projecting himself as a champion of Islamic Ottoman values. It represents a reconstructed memory of the Ottoman Empire, shaped by various cultural, literary, and cognitive influences, which collectively contribute to invoking a comprehensive perspective of Turkish national identity (Yavuz, 2016).

According to Billig (1995), political discourse plays a pivotal role not only in shaping the construction of national identity but also in its daily reproduction. In recent years, Erdoğan has strategically integrated Ottoman Turkish vocabulary into both his official speeches and everyday language (Ongur, 2015). This deliberate linguistic choice perpetuates a sub-cultural tradition that invokes the Ottoman past and, in turn, challenges the principles of the Republican reforms (ibid). For instance, Erdoğan refers his presidential complex as "Külliye" which signifies a complex during the Ottoman Empire encompassing a mosque, religious school, charitable foundation, clinic, and other buildings, has sparked debates about his neo-Ottoman policies (Çiçek, 2014). Beside, Erdoğan's initiation of "a university in every city" served as a direct catalyst, resulting in the establishment of 91 out of 169 universities after 2006 (Ongur, 2015). This marks a significant departure from the previous practice, where only one university, Osmangazi University, bore a name reminiscent of Turkey's Ottoman history. Since 2006, however, the names of 13[5] universities have incorporated Ottoman sultans, reflecting Erdoğan's emphasis on connecting with this historical era (ibid). These naming choices underscore a deliberate effort to intertwine contemporary institutions with historical Ottoman legacies. Additionally, in his speeches, Erdoğan invokes significant figures from the Ottoman Empire, such as Abdulhamid II, recognised as an "Islamist Sultan," Fatih Sultan Mehmet, the Ottoman Sultan who conquered Constantinople, and Alp Arslan, the second sultan of Seljuq[6] Turks to remind people historical heritage and reinforce a connection with the grandeur of the Ottoman era (Yavuz, 2016). This aligns with the broader efforts of the AKP, under Erdoğan's leadership, to redefine the Turkish national identity by

---

[5] Murat Hudavendigar , Orhangazi, Bezmialem , Fatih Sultan Mehmet, 29 Mayıs, Suleyman Sah, Yıldırım Beyazıt, Piri Reis, Seyh Edebali , Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Namık Kemal, Kanuni and Katip Celebi.
[6] Seljuq, ruling military family of the Oğuz (Ghuzz) Turkic tribes that invaded southwestern Asia in the 11th century and eventually founded an empire that included Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and most of Iran. Their advance marked the beginning of Turkic power in the Middle East.

reestablishing its ties with Islam and reclaiming values and traditions associated with the Ottoman Empire (Yavuz, 2016).

As mentioned earlier, since the foundation of the MGH and Welfare Party, there has been a profound interest in going back to Ottoman times. Despite initially following a democratic path in its early establishment, AKP, in the second part of its administration, embarked on a process of allegiance to the Ottoman era and constructing a national identity through the Ottoman legacy and Neo-Ottomanism has emerged as a distinctive feature of the AKP's ideology (Yavuz, 2022). Consequently, the AKP, through embracing this neo-Ottoman vision, seeks not only domestic legitimacy but also recognition in the regions that were formerly part of the Ottoman Empire—stretching from the Balkans to the Middle East and North Africa. Criticising the Kemalist secular nation-building project, the party strategically employs the Ottoman legacy, religious networks, and shared history to assert itself as a significant player in various regions (Yavuz, 2016).

In summary, AKP's inception marked a departure from traditional Islamist rhetoric, embracing a pragmatic approach that aimed to bridge the gap between secular and religious factions within Turkey. However, as the AKP consolidated its power, a transition towards more overt religious symbolism and populist rhetoric became evident (Esen and Gümüşçü, 2019). Central to the AKP's narrative is the portrayal of victimhood in the face of advancing Western secularism and Kemalist elites, which has helped construct a collective identity rooted in Islamic and Ottoman values (Yılmaz, 2017). This rhetoric resonates particularly with segments of society that have felt marginalised by Kemalist Westernisation efforts. Moreover, the AKP's campaign strategies intertwine populism and Islamism, often presenting the party as the protector of both national interests and the broader Muslim world. Furthermore, the AKP's narrative also incorporates elements of neo-Ottomanism, evoking nostalgia for the grandeur of the Ottoman Empire and emphasising Turkey's historical role as a leader in the Muslim world. These tactics aim to create a narrative of unity and belonging among conservative and religious segments of the population, positioning the AKP and Erdoğan as the embodiment of their values and aspirations.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to provide comprehensive literature review and an overview of the historical developments of AKP and CHP. It strived analyse their respective political histories and ideologies in order to construct a framework that facilitates a deeper understanding of their political communication strategies and their messages.

The first section of this chapter focused on providing a detailed account of the reforms implemented by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, as well as the ideological foundations of his party, the CHP. By examining the historical context and political history of the CHP since its

foundation in 1923, it aimed to demonstrate CHP's ideological background and its enduring political identity within the Turkish political landscape.

The second section examined the pre-AKP period to explore the political roots of the Welfare Party and the MGH *(National Vision Movement)* movement, which helps understand the AKP's political origins and ideological position since 2001. Subsequently, the chapter examined the ideological stance and historical trajectory of the AKP, along with its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, providing a comprehensive understanding of their political ideology and its evolution over time.

In conclusion, by examining the distinct political backgrounds of the CHP and AKP, this study provides a roadmap for researching the 2019 Istanbul local elections and understanding their implications. Unlike other studies, it aims to show why the CHP has been judged based on its past during the 2019 local elections, particularly its secular and elitist heritage, and it also lays the groundwork for understanding the significance of Ekrem Imamoğlu's departure from the traditional image of the CHP and its implications for the campaign. Similarly, this chapter highlighted how the AKP, initially representing a conservative democratic ideology, has evolved over time into an electoral authoritarian regime, and presented the framework of the impact of this transformation on the 2019 Istanbul local elections.

The following chapter will continue with the methodology of this research. By using qualitative research, this study will examine CHP's and AKP's communication techniques from different angles.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Political communication is a vital aspect of any democratic election, influencing voters' perceptions and choices (Chaffee, 1975). The 2019 Istanbul local elections in Turkey were highly significant as they were re-run after the initial results were contested, and the competition between the AKP and the CHP was intense. The political communication strategies adopted by these two parties during the election campaigns were critical in shaping the outcome. Therefore, this research seeks to examine the main features and differences between the AKP's and the CHP's political communication strategies during the Istanbul local election campaigns in 2019. To achieve this aim, the research employs three main research methods, namely in-depth semi-structured interviews with elites, textual analysis, and qualitative content analysis.

The first research method employed in this study is in-depth semi-structured interviews with elites. The interviews aim to understand the techniques used by the AKP and the CHP in their campaigning strategies by answering the RQ1.1 (What were the political communication techniques that had been used by the AKP and CHP candidates during the local election campaigning?). This method is suitable because it allows for a detailed examination of the political communication strategies and tactics used by the parties. The sample for this method consists of twelve participants, including five political consultants, five experts from think tanks and academia and two campaign managers. The interviews will be coded to identify the techniques used by each party to answer the main research question of this study.

The second research method used in this study is textual analysis. This method is employed to analyse the campaign advertisements used by the AKP and the CHP during the 2019 Istanbul local elections to answer the RQ1.2 (What characterised the CHP's political ads discourse from that of the AKP's during the 2019 Istanbul local election?). Specifically, the analysis seeks to identify the characteristics that differentiate the political ad discourse of the two parties. The sample for this method consists of 60 campaign ads, including billboards across Istanbul, ads from Imamoğlu's and Yıldırım's websites and Twitter accounts, and ads from the candidates' YouTube channels. The data collected from this method will be analysed to identify the differences between the political communication strategies of AKP and CHP.

The third research method employed in this study is qualitative content analysis. This method is employed to examine the role that populism played in the 2019 Istanbul local election campaigns to answer the RQ1.3 (What role did populism play during the campaigns?). The sample for this method consists of 120 speeches made by the AKP's and CHP's candidates during the election campaigns. The analysis will focus on identifying the different aspects of the use of populist political communication

strategies by the candidates during their campaigns. The data collected from this method will be analysed to identify the role of populism in each party's political communication strategy.

By using these methodologies, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis and demonstrate the main features and differences of the political communication strategies used by the AKP and the CHP during the 2019 Istanbul local elections. The use of in-depth semi-structured interviews with elites, textual analysis, and qualitative content analysis provides a rich dataset for addressing the main research question. The findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of political communication in shaping the outcome of democratic elections.

4.2 Research Approaches

Qualitative data analysis involves analysing and interpreting linguistic or visual material to uncover implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making (Flick, 2009) and it is used to understand the subjective or social meanings present in the material and what they represent. According to Bryman (2008), qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. It can be used to identify issues in a particular field or to uncover structures and processes in routines and practices (Flick, 2009). Typically, qualitative data analysis involves a combination of approaches, including an initial rough analysis of the material to provide an overview, followed by a detailed analysis that involves the elaboration of categories, hermeneutic interpretations, or identified structures (ibid). The ultimate goal of this type of analysis is often to arrive at generalisable statements by comparing various materials, texts, or cases. Qualitative research is designed to investigate questions that delve into the nuances of a phenomenon, such as the what, how, why, where, and when. By focusing on the "meaning of concept, definition, characteristics, symbol, and definition of things," qualitative research seeks to elucidate the core features and ambiance of the subject of study (Dabbs, 1982: 32; Berg, 2007: 2). Through qualitative research methods, such as interviews and observations, the aim is to gain an understanding of the "actor's perspective" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 12). Importantly, qualitative methods prioritise the meaning of the data and findings, helping to identify the underlying narrative within the data (Stokes, 2003).

Qualitative data analysis can have several objectives. Firstly, it can be used to describe a phenomenon in detail. This phenomenon can be the subjective experiences of an individual or group, and the analysis can focus on the specific features of the case and how they are interconnected. Secondly, the analysis can compare multiple cases to identify commonalities and differences and the objective may be to identify the conditions that underlie these differences (Flick, 2009). This involves searching for explanations for the observed differences. Finally, the objective may be to develop a theory of the phenomenon based on the analysis of empirical material (ibid). This research will adopt the second approach, which focuses on the commonalities and disparities within the political campaigns used by the AKP's and the CHP's candidates during the 2019 local elections.

4.2.3 Triangulation

In qualitative research, triangulation involves employing multiple techniques or sources of information to achieve a holistic comprehension of phenomena (Patton, 1999). Triangulation is considered a technique used both in quantitative and qualitative research methods to ensure validity of the findings by confirming information from multiple sources. Denzin (1970) and Patton (1999) categorised triangulation into four types: (a) method triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) data source triangulation. Data source triangulation is a methodological approach utilised in qualitative research to enhance the credibility and validity of findings by integrating multiple data sources to explore the research question in greater depth. The use of this method has a long-standing tradition in qualitative research, particularly during the data-collection phase (Flick, 2017). One recent application of data source triangulation can be found in Wertz et al.'s (2011) book, where they employed five different methods to analyse a single interview transcript to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the data. This approach enabled them to compare and contrast the findings from different analytic perspectives, including grounded theory, discourse analysis, and narrative research. This research will use data source triangulation as it includes the collection of data from different sources such as interviews, campaign ads and rally speeches and it will help to map out and compare the political communication techniques used by the AKP and the CHP during the 2019 Istanbul local elections.

4.3 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a research approach that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2008), and it focuses on meaning rather than numbers (Stokes, 2003). According to Brennen (2013), qualitative research aims to understand the diversity of meanings, ideas or contexts created in society by different mediums. Bryman (1988) describes qualitative research as an approach which analyses the social world to describe culture, human behaviour and point of view. The primary distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods lies in their respective functions: qualitative research aids in comprehending underlying messages and narratives, whereas quantitative research quantifies data and contributes to the formulation of hypotheses or theories (Berg, 2016).

According to Carnado (2020), in qualitative research, it is essential to harmonise the method with the participants, rather than expecting the participants to adapt their words or actions to the prescribed method. For instance, in a survey, all participants receive the same verbal structure with identical wording in a fixed order. They are required to fit their answers into the predefined options provided by the researcher. However, in-depth interviews differ from surveys because interview gives the interviewee the chance to discuss a range of themes that are of mutual interest.

The qualitative research method's data collection procedures are characterised by their flexibility and openness, which enables researchers to encounter unexpected phenomena and discover surprising facts.

This approach facilitates a dynamic and creative dialogue between theory and data, allowing for the development of novel insights and interpretations. Through this process of discovery and exploration, qualitative research can generate new knowledge and contribute to the advancement of the field (Carnado, 2020).

The use of qualitative analysis was preferred due to its flexibility, which allows for a deeper and more intimate engagement with participants and data. Additionally, by its nature, qualitative analysis offers a richer framework for interpreting the research field, making it the method of choice for this study.

4.3.1 The Historical Perspective

When examining the history of qualitative research, scholars often refer to Denzin and Lincoln's (2005: 14-20; 2011: 3) stage model, which consists of "eight moments of qualitative research." This model can serve as a starting point for a developmental perspective on qualitative data analysis. The traditional period, which occurred between the early twentieth century and the Second World War, aimed for a more or less objective description of social phenomena in society or other cultures, with examples such as the Chicago School in sociology or Malinowski's research in ethnography. The modernist phase, which spanned from the 1950s to the 1970s, was characterised by publications like Glaser and Strauss's (1967) textbook on how to conduct qualitative analysis with the goal of theory development. During this phase, data analysis was driven by various methods of coding for materials, frequently obtained from participant observation. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe the period up to the mid-1980s as "blurred genres", a term introduced by Geertz (1983). During this period, there were different theoretical models and methods coexisting in qualitative research, including symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, and phenomenology, among others. Researchers could choose and compare these "alternative paradigms". Data analysis focused more on interpreting phenomena, such as narratives and ethnographic descriptions, and on writing essays, instead of just coding and categorising, although the latter continued to be used as well. The fourth moment, in the mid-1980s, focused on the crisis of representation and emphasised the interpretation of data rather than identifying linear models. The evaluation of research and findings became a central topic during this time, questioning traditional criteria and exploring new standards for assessing qualitative research. The proliferation of technical devices and software for data analysis also occurred. The fifth moment (the 1990s) saw the replacement of theories with narratives, and the sixth moment involved linking issues of qualitative research to democratic policies, while the seventh moment was characterised by the establishment of new qualitative research journals. The eighth moment focused on the rise of evidence-based practice as the new criterion of relevance for social science.

4.4 In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews with Elites

According to Kvale (1998), an interview is an *inter-view*, which means an interchange of views between two people or conversing about a theme of mutual interest. Maccoby and Maccoby (1954: 449) define interviews as "a face-to-face verbal exchange, in which one person, the interviewer attempts to reveal information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons". In interviews, questions and answers follow a certain conversational path; this flow can be divided into (1) question, (2) negotiation of meaning concerning the question raised and the themes addressed, (3) concrete description from the interviewee, (4) the interviewer's interpretation of the description and (5) final. Then this cycle can start over with new questions or further questions about the same issue (Brickmann, 2008). According to Briggs in Brinkmann (2007: 566), an excellent interview should be "the larger set of practices of knowledge production that makes up the research from beginning to end".

It was only in the late 1930s that the in-depth interview started gaining recognition as an acceptable method in the social sciences (Lee, 2008). In the contemporary period, in-depth interviewing is undoubtedly the most used qualitative method (Denzin, 1989; King and Horrocks, 2012). In-depth interviewing, when done competently, is a highly effective method for obtaining data for social research (Morris, 2015). In-depth interviews can be semi-structured, which means that questions can be flexible and can change according to the interviewees' answers. Throughout the semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has topics that they want to cover which are related to their research question(s). The interviewer has an interview guide, and they aim to cover all the key topics during the interview. The semi-structured interview also gives the interviewer the space to seek clarity as to what the interviewee means and why they gave this particular answer to the questions (Morris, 2015). Compared to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews can make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee. Also, the interviewer has a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself, rather than hiding behind a pre-set interview guide. According to Adler and Adler (2001), interviews, especially when conducted in a deep and unstructured manner, persist as a potentially enjoyable avenue for interaction and exchange and they allow social scientists to delve into individuals' lives, stimulating respondents to share experiences and insights, leading to mutual enrichment. Yet, when comparing semi-structured interviews to unstructured interviews, the interviewer has a greater say in focusing the conversation on issues that he or she deems important in relation to the research project (Brinkmann, 2007). Semi-structured interviews are open-ended and more theoretically driven questions and each interview question is connected to the purpose of the research and it is the order of the interview questions that reflect the researcher's deliberate progression toward a fully in-depth exploration of the research question under study (ibid). While it is

often considered a sociological maxim that people enjoy talking about themselves or their work, researchers may encounter situations where potential respondents are reluctant to be interviewed (Adler and Adler, 2001). This reluctance is not necessarily a reflection of the social scientist's character or the chosen subject but is often influenced by understandable and analysable social patterns. There are generally two types of reluctance encountered by researchers, related to issues of access and resistance, manifesting at different stages of the data collection process (ibid). Individuals hesitant to grant access may be unresponsive or reserved when initially approached for an interview, making them challenging to locate and secure for study permission. Others may agree to an interview but then exhibit resistance in opening up or discussing specific topics, leading to a lack of forthcoming information during some or all of the interview (ibid). As societal dynamics evolve, there is a possibility that the nature of resistance may undergo changes. With growing safeguards incorporated into the research relationship and increased public education, future respondents might feel more assured that their interests are protected. In the context of this thesis, the study necessitated a careful deliberation on the trade-off between the benefits associated with acquiring comprehensive data and the impediments presented by participants displaying reluctance. Despite encountering reluctance among participants, the research successfully garnered substantial and nuanced data and the interview method proved instrumental in elucidating participants' experiences and knowledge, allowing for an understanding derived from participants valuable insights.

Elite interviewing is an established research method in social sciences and regularly employed in political research and in the broader social sciences (Huggins, 2019). Rather than involving the general public, elite interviews target actors who are in privileged positions to engage with a particular topic or area. They are usually professionals, politicians or high-level people (Huggins, 2019). They are chosen by name or position for a particular reason, rather than randomly or anonymously (Hochschild, 2009). During the elite interview, the interviewer must know as much as possible about the context, stance and past behaviour of the interviewee (Hochschild, 2009). In light of the considerations, a semi-structured interview with elites was deemed appropriate to seek clarity, encourage potential dialogues, and enhance the knowledge production for the research questions at hand. The decision to interview high-level professionals was driven by the possibility that their experiences and expertise in the political communication area would provide valuable insights into the 2019 Istanbul local election campaigns. Choosing interviewees based on specific criteria was preferred over a random selection. Therefore, semi-structured interviews with elites were selected as the method of choice to address RQ1.1(What were the political communication techniques that had been used by the AKP and CHP candidates during the local election campaigning?) and RQ1.3(What role did populism play during the Istanbul local election?).

4.4.1 Selection of Interviewees

The sample selection in this research was based on specific criteria, namely, the interviewees' professional relations with the AKP and the CHP, their expertise in the field, and their experiences throughout the campaign periods. The interviewees were selected from a pool of political consultants, communication experts, and academics specialising in political communication, election campaigns, and populism. To ensure a rigorous selection process, research was conducted to understand the interviewees' relations with the candidates, their status in the campaigns, and their knowledge about the area. The purpose of selecting elites for the interviews was to gain deeper insights into the AKP's and the CHP's political communication techniques and to better understand their thoughts and strategies in planning campaign communication. Moreover, the interviews provided real-life experiences from the campaign, which would help the research identify the differences between the two candidates and their campaigns in the 2019 Istanbul local elections, ultimately leading to a better understanding of the election results.

Before conducting the interviews, I prepared three interview guides and key themes that I wanted to cover. I prepared questions both in English and in Turkish. I paid close attention to placing the questions under the related themes and the key topics. I separated the guides into three groups: questions for the AKP's campaign team, questions for the CHP's campaign team and questions for academics who study political communication and populism. Each questionnaire has approximately 30 questions (See Appendix 1) aiming to answer to the RQ1.1 and RQ1.3.

To explore and understand the use of populist political communication during the campaigning periods, I conducted interviews with spin docs, current and former party members and academics. During the interview process, I gave importance to reach and interview Ekrem Imamoğlu's spin doctor Mr. Necati Özkan. I found his number and arranged an interviewed with him. I went to his office and our interview took almost two hours. To reach more interviewees I used Twitter and sent them a message or found their email addresses and introduced myself and my thesis. I have conducted interviews with academics who study populism and political communication, and who mainly conduct research on the AKP and the CHP campaigns. While conducting the interviews, my main focus was my research goals. I used Zoom for the interviews and tried to steer the conversations in line with my research topic. At this point, it is essential to acknowledge the contextual constraints imposed by the global Covid-19 pandemic. The decision to conduct interviews on Zoom, rather than face-to-face, was a strategic adaptation to the unprecedented circumstances. The primary concern was the health and safety of both the researcher and the participants, necessitating a shift to virtual platforms. While this format introduced certain limitations, such as potential challenges in establishing rapport, it enabled the research to proceed in compliance with health guidelines and ensured the continuity of the study amid challenging conditions. To reach a wider range of participants, I also asked if interviewees knew anyone who might be interested in taking part. This approach actually worked in some cases. Some of the people I interviewed

introduced me to their colleagues who were also involved in the field. I reached out to them via WhatsApp, which helped me expand my sample size. This, in turn, provided more data for my research questions and added depth to my study.

To understand Binali Yıldırım's campaign strategy and the AKP's ideology, I aimed to conduct interviews with their communication team, former speech writers and their social media teams. The main goal was to understand their political communication strategies, how they build it, why they chose Binali Yıldırım as a candidate and why they lost the Istanbul seat after 25 years? Was it a lack of communication strategy or did they fail to read the voters' needs? It was more difficult to reach the AKP's campaign team than CHP's campaign team. I pursued some people from the AKP but could not get any answer from them and some wanted to see my questions but then ignored my messages. I tried to reach the AKP's team via Twitter or tried to ask the previous interviewees if they could help me. In general, in comparison to the CHP's team, the AKP's team was difficult to reach and they were not that keen to answer my interview questions about the 2019 Istanbul local elections. Despite the challenges, the interview method proved effective in garnering valuable insights about both candidates and their respective campaigns.

4.5 Textual Analysis

Textual analysis is used by researchers to gather information about how other people make sense of the world. It is a way to understand how other cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are and how they fit into the world they live in (McKee, 2003). All qualitative textual analyses begin with questions of how something is made meaningful in particular ways at particular times (Pascale, 2018). While doing textual analysis, making an interpretation of texts to analyse the ways people make sense of the world around them is crucial (ibid). Textual analysis encompasses the examination of a text's content, structure, and design, considering how these elements function within a broader context, such as historical or cultural factors (Daubs, 2018). For instance, semiotic analysis delves into the linguistic and visual components of a text, like an advertisement, and interprets its meaning not solely within the confines of the text but also in relation to the socio-historical and cultural significance of those elements (ibid). In essence, when analysing a text, one should not just derive meaning from the text in isolation, but also by exploring how it engages in a dialogue with other texts (ibid). Hence, textual analysis has been found appropriate to use for analysing the campaign ads, while qualitative content analysis is more suitable to analyse the speeches to identify key words and phrases which can be categorised (coded) to identify underlying meaning.

There are many ways of studying textual analysis (Pascale, 2018) and this research will use textual analysis to analyse political and ideological codes that CHP and AKP used in their ads during the campaigning periods in Istanbul. Textual analysis will be helpful in identifying the meanings of the political ads from various media channels such as candidates' YouTube channels and billboards. In total 60 ads will be analysed using textual analysis, with the aim of answering RQ1.2 (see Appendix 2).[7]

4.5.1 Selection of the ads

While choosing the political ads, I focused on ads that used to be popular on Twitter (based on the number of their retweets), ads that had campaign-related visuals that helped me identify differences between the two candidates' political messages (i.e. ads that focus on the candidate versus ads that focus on the issues in Istanbul on the mayoral level) and ads that my interviewees recommended. The sample has political ads from various channels, some are from the billboards across Istanbul, some are from İmamoğlu's and Yıldırım's websites and Twitter accounts, and some are from the YouTube channels of the candidates. By combining different ads from different media channels, the research sample will present ads in various formats.

---

[7] There are not 60 advertisements in Appendix 2; however, you can find the most prominent and research-supported advertisements that stood out during the campaigns. They are available in the appendix.

For the first criterion (popularity), I aimed to collect the ones that used to be popular, so I decided to use candidates' Twitter accounts to find the ads that were retweeted and shared the most. In that way I could find the ads that used to be popular among the voters.

For the second criterion (visuals), I used İmamoğlu's and Yıldırım's official websites to find ads with campaign materials such as campaign slogans, visuals such as the party leader and the candidate image, and the ads in the newspapers. I believe the use of the candidate-centred campaign gives a crucial aspect to the concept of Americanisation of political communication in Turkey which is an important part of the research. For that goal, I aim to find ads that have this aspect as well.

For the third criterion (recommended by interviewees), I shared the ads sample with some of my interviewees (mostly with the political consultants) to get their recommendations. They also suggested that I use some of the ones that I had already chosen, so after receiving this feedback, I knew I was on the right track.

Overall, the selection process for political ads was designed to achieve a diverse and representative sample of political communication materials from different channels, including social media, official websites, and print media.

4.6 Qualitative Content Analysis

The history of qualitative content analysis can be traced back to its quantitative counterpart, which emerged in the first half of the twentieth century in response to a growing interest in media effects research and the need for analysing propaganda during World War II (Schreier 2012 cited in Flick, 2014). This interest led to the organisation of a conference on mass communication in Chicago in 1941, which focused on content analysis and drew the participation of leading scholars in the field. In 1952, Berelson published the first major textbook on qualitative content analysis, which further established the method as a widely used research tool. While the two methods share a historical connection, the qualitative version of content analysis has evolved to focus more on meaning-making and interpretation, rather than solely on counting and quantifying data (ibid).

Qualitative content analysis is a systematic approach to examining qualitative data. It involves categorising data based on predefined criteria to understand the underlying meaning. Unlike some other qualitative methods, this approach focuses on specific aspects of meaning that align with the overall research question, aiming to manage the amount of data being analysed (Flick, 2014). The number of categories is limited by what the researcher can effectively handle. Categories are often generalised to a higher level of abstraction, making them applicable to multiple instances of similar themes. For instance, if studying people's spiritual experiences in nature, instead of creating separate categories for

sunsets, glaciers, and calm fjords, one might create a broader category like "aesthetic experience" that encompasses all these descriptions and more (adapted from McDonald et al., 2009).

The results of qualitative content analysis can also be used as a basis for further data exploration, such as examining patterns and co-occurrences of selected categories. This involves going beyond individual codes and categories to explore the relationships between them (Gibbs, 2007; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

4.6.1 Data Preparation

Qualitative content analysis involves several steps in data preparation and analysis. It begins with deciding on a research question and selecting relevant material. The crucial factor to consider when selecting material for qualitative analysis is to ensure that it presents a comprehensive range of data sources (Schreier, 2012). The researcher then builds a coding frame, which is used to assign parts of the material to categories that relate to the research question. The main analysis is then conducted using the refined coding frame, and the findings are presented and interpreted. These steps ensure that the analysis is systematic and reduces the amount of data while still focusing on the aspects of meaning that relate to the research question. For this research, data includes 120 rally speeches [8](60 speeches from Imamoglu) and (60 speeches from Yıldırım) and will be analysed using qualitative content analysis to answer RQ1.3 (what role did populism play during both campaigns?). Speeches were analysed in their original language (Turkish) and translated into English when conducting the analysis.

4.6.2 Building the Coding Frame

The first step of the analysis starts with building a coding frame that includes the following steps: choosing material; structuring and generating categories and expanding the frame (Schreier, 2012) which will be explained one by one below.

The qualitative content analysis relies on a coding frame, which is a central component of the method (ibid). The frame comprises a minimum of one main category and two subcategories. Main categories are the key aspects of the material that researchers want to explore, while subcategories provide more detailed information about what is said in the material concerning the main categories. A coding frame is an essential tool for reducing data in a systematic and flexible way. It helps the researcher to focus on selected aspects of meaning that are relevant to the research question, and it enables comparisons and relationships to be drawn between different parts of the material (ibid). Ultimately, the coding frame

---

[8] There are not 120 speeches in Appendix 3; however, you can find the most prominent speeches that stood out during the campaigns. They are available in the appendix.

provides a structure for analysing qualitative data in a way that is manageable and allows for meaningful interpretation of the findings.

To answer the third research question, a coding frame was developed with the main category of populism and subcategories including themes such as populist political communication, inverted populism, emotion-driven campaigns, the use of religion as part of populist tool and party-leader centred campaigns.

Selection of the Speeches

A speech is the most fundamental tool to understand both an individual's and an affiliated party's ideology (Finlayson and Martin, 2008). As known, speeches can motivate voters, build relationships, push them to think about things in a different way and can affect their voting behaviour (ibid). So, speeches have the power to connect political leaders, political parties and voters (ibid).

When selecting materials for analysis, I focused on rally speeches given by the candidates in the same districts of Istanbul. I divided the speeches equally and selected speeches of the same length for analysis. In this research, as two local elections took place in Istanbul, 120 speeches will be analysed between December 2018-March 2019 and April 2019-June 2019 and they will provide qualitative data for the study. The duration of the speeches is approximately 45 minutes. The sample will mainly include speeches of the candidates from some of the Istanbul rallies in 2019. I aim to choose the ones that had been watched more than others based on candidates' YouTube channels. While choosing the ads, I also made sure that they have some populist aspects or that they are in line with the coding frame.

Structuring and Generating

Structuring and generating are the next steps in building the coding frame, where structuring refers to creating the main categories and generating to creating the subcategories for each main category. These steps can be carried out in a concept or in a data-driven way. Working in a concept-driven way means basing the categories on previous knowledge: a theory, prior research, everyday knowledge, logic, or an interview guide (Schreier, 2012)

The research employed a concept-driven methodology, utilising literature on studies of populism, articles analysing populist political communication, and case studies of global populist leaders and their communication strategies to structure the coding frame.

Once the structure of the coding frame is set, the next step is to define the categories. The names of categories should be brief but descriptive, avoiding excessive length and vague language (Schreier, 2012).

The categories employed in the research vary across candidates. To provide an overview of the coding frame, the table below displays the categories utilised in the study (also see appendix 3).

AKP	CHP
Populism	Inverted populism
Religion	Love and unity
The use of political signs as a symbol of defiance	Local solution-oriented campaign
Fear appeals	Hope appeals
Personalisation of the campaign around the leader	Personalisation of the campaign around the candidate

Table 1 Categories for the coding frame

4.7 Ethics

This research was approved by the Journalism Departmental Research Ethics Committee.

Before each interview a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and Consent Form was signed by the interviewees. The sheets inform the participants about the research content, presenting a short summary of the research, the research questions, details about why they had been invited, the possible benefits, disadvantages and risks of participation, and the procedures for safeguarding the confidentiality of the material.

The Consent Form represents an agreement between the interviewee and myself, to allow me to record, save and use all recorded material from the in-depth interviews. If my interviewees want to preserve their anonymity, I aim to use confidential coding when presenting the data. As I wanted to have a consistent style in my research, I planned to divide the interviewees into three categories -Politics, Academia and Think Tank- and to give each interviewee a code. The final version of the research will be shared with the interviewees to confirm they are happy about their anonymity. This solution will strengthen the validity of the research, as the interviewee could reflect and comment on their role in the study (Maxwell, 2013).

4.8 Conclusion

Analysing the political communication strategiesmof AKP and CHP during the 2019 Istanbul local elections is vital for understanding the election's outcome. Therefore, this research aims to explore the main features and distinctions between the AKP's and CHP's communication strategies in the 2019 Istanbul local elections. To achieve this goal, three research methods were employed. In-depth semi-structured interviews with elites were conducted to comprehend the techniques utilised by the parties in their campaign strategies. Textual analysis was used to examine campaign advertisements and identify what differentiates CHP's ads from AKP's. Qualitative content analysis was employed to study the role of populism in the campaigns, particularly in the speeches of candidates with the aim of understanding whether the use of populism was a contributing factor to election outcomes or resulted in backlash.

Qualitative data analysis, a foundational aspect of this research, delves into the explicit and implicit dimensions of meaning-making present in linguistic and visual material. This approach is suitable for exploring the subjective or social meanings within the data. It aims to uncover structures, processes, and nuances, seeking answers to the "what, how, why, where, and when" of a phenomenon. By utilising interviews, and qualitative methods, this approach prioritises understanding from the actor's perspective and captures the underlying narrative within the data. The objectives of qualitative data analysis encompass detailed description of a phenomenon, comparison of multiple cases to identify commonalities and differences, and the development of a theory based on empirical material. This research adopts the second approach, focusing on commonalities and disparities in the political campaigns of the AKP and the CHP candidates during the 2019 local elections. In conclusion, this study presents a comprehensive analysis of the political communication strategies employed by the AKP and the CHP during the 2019 Istanbul local elections. Through a combination of qualitative research methods, it provides insights into the core features and distinctions in their communication approaches. By focusing on the nuances of political communication, this research enhances our understanding of its role in shaping democratic election outcomes.

Working as a political consultant for CHP candidates in the Kadıköy district of Istanbul and the Antalya region during the 2019 local elections provided insights into how to create strategic political communication and how candidates adjusted their communication strategies during field activities, rallies, and meetings with the public. It helped to understand how messages were perceived by voters and influenced voting behaviour. In order to maintain objectivity and distance myself from the subject of my research, I followed the approaches of other researchers such as Demiralp (2019) and Doğan (2022) while investigating the political campaigns of Imamoğlu and Yıldırım. These scholars emphasised the importance of adopting a neutral and objective stance, grounded in empirical evidence,

to mitigate personal biases and enable critical analysis. By adhering to these principles, I aimed to ensure the integrity and rigor of my research findings.

The forthcoming chapter will unveil the outcomes derived from the comprehensive interviews held within Turkey. Its primary objective is to illustrate the diverse array of communication techniques employed by both the CHP and the AKP.

Chapter 5- Findings of In-Depth Interviews

5.1 Introduction

This chapter unveils the outcomes of twelve in-depth interviews conducted in Turkey, providing qualitative insights that address two of the research questions outlined in this study:

RQ1.1 What political communication techniques did CHP's and AKP's candidates use during the local election campaigning?

RQ1.3 What role did populism play during the Istanbul local election?

Through the use of interviews with elite participants, this research endeavours to capture and present the data, aiming to unveil the nuanced "meanings, experiences, and views of the participants" during the campaign period (Mays and Pope, 1995: 42-45). The primary objective of conducting these interviews is to discern and analyse the diverse techniques employed by both political campaigns, their main features and differences with particular emphasis on the utilisation of Americanisation, personalisation and populist political communication and the portrayal of populist leader traits throughout the local elections. The investigation delves into the ways in which populist political communication was harnessed to appeal to voters and sway electoral outcomes. Furthermore, the research aims to unravel the complexities of using positive populism, also known as inverted populism (Demiralp and Balta, 2021), and its potential effectiveness in securing electoral victory. By engaging in in-depth interviews with elite participants, the study endeavours to uncover the underlying motivations, ideologies, and communication strategies behind the campaigns. The insights gained from these interviews will provide valuable context and enrich the analysis of the political communication strategies adopted by the respective campaigns.

The interviewee sample comprises individuals with pertinent relationships with the political parties, substantial expertise in the field, and significant experiences during the election campaigns. The research includes a diverse set of participants, such as consultants, communication experts, and academics specialising in the domain of political communication and populism. The careful selection of interviewees ensures a well-rounded perspective on the multifaceted aspects of campaign communication and populist dynamics. The process of selecting interviewees involved thorough research into their affiliations with the candidates, roles within the campaigns, and depth of knowledge in the realm of political communication. This approach aims to encompass individuals with varying perspectives and insights, providing a comprehensive view of the communication strategies employed by both parties. Throughout this chapter, the interviewees will be denoted by specific designations for clarity. Campaign managers will be identified as (CAM), academics as (AC), and political consultants as (POA). These designations facilitate precise attribution of perspectives and allow for a coherent presentation of the findings derived from the interviews. By including interviewees with different roles, expertise, and affiliations, this research seeks to enrich the understanding of the nuances and complexities of political communication strategies utilised by the AKP and the CHP during the 2019 Istanbul local election campaign periods.

Before conducting the interview, three distinct interview guides were formulated, along with key themes to be explored during the interviews. The questions were designed in both the English and Turkish languages, catering to the preferences and comfort of the interviewees. The interview guides were systematically organised under relevant themes and key topics, tailored to address the specific areas of interest pertaining to the AKP's and the CHP's campaign strategies, as well as insights from academics specialising in political communication and populism in Turkey. Through the contributions of the interviewees, this research aims to show the multifaceted aspects of political communication and populism, further enriching the scholarly understanding of electoral communication dynamics in Turkey.

5.2 The Republican People's Party - CHP

5.2.1 Inverted populism as a political communication strategy

Imamoğlu's 2019 Istanbul election strategy could be defined by the term "inverted populism" (Demiralp and Balta, 2021). Inverted populism portrays populism in a more positive light, emphasising inclusivity and prioritising the needs of the people (ibid). In other words, it embraces the positive elements of populism, such as democratisation, while countering its negative features, often associated with authoritarian regimes practising authoritarian populism (ibid). This form of populism opposes polarisation and rejects its undemocratic aspects (ibid). AC3 (2022) thinks that Imamoğlu's campaign was rooted in this type of populist communication, which aimed to build a majority consensus, rejected divisive politics (us vs them), and prioritised the needs of the people.

When analysing the use of inverted populism, a significant aspect that emerges is the use of an indirect approach (ibid). Within the context of Imamoğlu's campaign, this indirect communication strategy assumes paramount importance, as it deftly avoided direct personal attacks on President Erdoğan while simultaneously embracing the values held by the voters he sought to represent (Demiralp and Balta, 2021; Wutrich, 2020). Throughout the election campaign, Imamoğlu tactically refrained from challenging Erdoğan's personality, his monolithic populist authority, or the religious conservatism forming the ideological foundation of the ruling AKP (ibid). Notably, in discussing his opponent Yıldırım, Imamoğlu consistently referred to him as "my opponent," avoiding direct mention of his name, or utilised terms such as "privileged minority" without explicitly defining the intended referents. Such vague statements deftly navigated away from offending any segment of voters or the AKP base (AC3, 2022). Imamoğlu consciously adopted this indirect approach, recognising the necessity for a distinctive and inclusive campaign style that would resonate with AKP supporters and steer clear of the confrontational communication style that the CHP had historically adopted in its interactions with the AKP (ibid). One prominent academic (AC1, 2021), well-versed in the intricacies of the AKP, contends that Imamoğlu sought to eschew populist communication, purposefully refraining from engaging in contentious discussions. Instead, he strategically followed a campaign strategy akin to the modest approach employed by Erdoğan during the 1994 local elections, presenting himself as an "everyman" in a manner reminiscent of Erdoğan's persona during the 2014 Istanbul local elections (AC1, 2021). A parallel perspective is shared by AC3 (2022), who terms Imamoğlu's approach as "good-natured populism." Throughout the campaign, Imamoğlu adeptly employed an indirect approach to counter Erdoğan's allegations about him and the CHP. For instance, when accused of being hostile towards religion, Imamoğlu responded by visiting mosques, reading the Quran, engaging in prayer with the people, and visiting conservative households (AC1, 2021). During these visits, symbolic gestures, such as sitting on the floor and removing his shoes before entering households, subtly conveyed cultural codes aimed at garnering attention and support from the AKP's voter base (ibid). Evidently, Imamoğlu's campaign sought to embody characteristics of an "average person," displaying modesty and projecting an image akin to that of a working-class individual, much like Erdoğan's earlier persona (Besli and Özbay, 2010).

> I cannot say he imitated Erdoğan's 1994 local election campaign because today's political spectrum also requires that kind of strategy. Erdoğan came to power with a similar strategy. These cultural codes are very important to reach middle and old-age voters. Imamoğlu used them smartly and effectively. (AC1, 2021)

Imamoğlu's calculated efforts to construct and personify such a persona were undoubtedly intended to resonate with a broad spectrum of voters and foster a sense of relatability and approachability. By adopting an indirect approach and crafting an inclusive and modest image, Imamoğlu's campaign

navigated the complex terrain of populist political communication, showcasing an understanding of how to resonate with diverse voter groups, thereby contributing to the vibrant and dynamic discourse surrounding the evolving strategies of political communication in Turkey's contemporary political landscape (Yavuz and Özcan, 2019).

The previous political consultant from AKP made the same assessment and found Imamoğlu's strategy similar to Erdoğan's strategy in 1994. For him, the key elements of this similarity were about creating hope and the use of an indirect approach.

According to (POA2, 2021), Imamoğlu's slogan "everything will be great again" created hope in people and indirectly criticised AKP governance. This communication strategy was close to the AKP's first term strategy; AKP had also used hope at that time with the slogan "Turkey without bans" (*Yasaksız Türkiye*). By using this slogan, AKP was actually criticising the restrictive approach of the CHP governance. They were indirectly implying the rights taken away from them by the CHP administration and creating a sort of hope that they would give their rights back to them (POA2, 2021).

POA1 (2021) thinks that the political spectrum was highly populist, but Imamoğlu stayed away from polarisation. In his campaign slogans, he said he represents the 16 million Istanbulites. Imamoğlu combined different strategies to combat populism, but his main goal was to present himself as the representative of Istanbul without excluding anyone. For POA1 (2021), Imamoğlu's door-to-door visits to the conservative neighbourhoods and dialogues with voters in various bazaars around Istanbul could be seen as one of them. She argues that heart-shaped logos, unifying discourse, and campaign ads were used when populism was needed. Thus, his populism was in line with what Demiralp and Balta (2021) called "inverted populism"; it was inclusive, used an indirect approach and had positive messages. We cannot say that he won by imitating Erdoğan's 1994 or 2002 campaign strategy or by using inverted populism, but we can say that these strategies had a positive impact on the election result (AC3, 2022).

5.2.2 Appealing to emotions as a driving force

Both scholars and political consultants describe Imamoğlu's campaign as emotion-centred campaign. Weber (2013) thinks that emotions are the main power behind the campaigns when describing the consequences of election results. Yet he believes the campaigns that evoke anger can serve as a mobilising force, but Demiralp (2022) argues that positive emotions like giving hope made people vote for Imamoğlu. Creating fear and anger towards the other used to be the AKP's main strategy and they tried to use it again during the 2019 Istanbul local elections but it failed to give the same result this time (AC1, 2021).

Imamoğlu's campaign extensively employed an emotion-based approach, primarily focusing on comprehending the economic challenges faced by the public and empathetically offering solutions to their daily problems. To convey this message, the slogan "Where there is Imamoğlu, there is a solution" was utilised. Subsequently, as the election advanced to the second round, the slogan "Where there is

Imamoğlu, there is hope" was employed to ensure that voters supporting Imamoğlu did not feel disheartened (CAM, 2021). Alongside these slogans, Imamoğlu's routine visits to more religious neighbourhoods of Istanbul, gatherings with the public in markets, and a campaign aimed at understanding the daily issues of the citizens resonated emotionally with the electorate. These measures created an emotional response among the voters (POA1, 2021).

Throughout the Istanbul election, the economic problems that people were facing played a crucial role (Yavuz and Özcan, 2019). POA2 (2021) states that during this phase, Imamoğlu employed an emotion-driven campaign that highlighted economic challenges and pledged to provide solutions to these issues, instilling hope in people's lives.

> He emerged as a fresh face in the political arena with the intention to unite people and offer solutions to their everyday challenges. This approach stood in contrast to the typical strategy of the CHP, which often sought votes by making criticisms about Erdoğan and highlighting the negative aspects of the AKP. Imamoğlu's campaign recognised this repetitive pattern and understood that the electorate was weary of witnessing the ongoing confrontations between the two opposition parties. People were longing for something novel, a departure from the usual discourse. Imamoğlu successfully captured the voters' attention by focusing on solutions and providing a sense of optimism, rather than engaging in direct arguments with his opponent Yıldırım or Erdoğan (POA2, 2021).

According to POA1 (2021), the main emotional factor in Imamoğlu's campaign was that he was able to consolidate voters that the AKP had polarised. By promising unity and reconciliation, he stayed away from generating fear and anger and used hope instead. As mentioned earlier, he aimed to leave the Jacobin secularism that the CHP was accustomed to carrying out ever since its foundation. The conservative Muslim middle and lower classes had concerns about the potential loss of their freedoms, Imamoğlu assured them that he would safeguard their rights and serve as a representative of 16 million residents in Istanbul (AC4, 2021). CAM (2021) also stated the importance of the emotion-based campaign. He believes that, using an emotion-focused campaign strategy is the key to ensuring rationality and was an important notion for Imamoğlu's campaign strategy. Imamoğlu aimed to make himself known and get to the people's hearts by touching their feelings. CAM (2021) says, "We should not forget that the works that touch the heart have rationality; appealing to the feelings means that you ensure rationality."

Imamoğlu's campaign unfolded in two distinct phases, both characterised by an emotion-driven approach. In the initial round, the emphasis was placed on the concept of "solution," while in the subsequent round, the focus shifted to "hope."

CAM (2021) elucidated their strategy in the following manner:

> For the first round, we used the word "solution". We said if there is İmamoğlu, then there is a solution because people needed a solution for their basic needs and problems. But later on, when Turkey's election board decided to nullify the election results and order a rerun, the campaign turned out to be a national campaign. For the second round we decided to use the "hope" that resided in our slogan and our rhetoric. Our slogan became "if there is Imamoğlu, then there is hope" and we believe that people need hope more than the polarised language. As a result, it brought Imamoğlu the highest vote in 50 years.

When questioned about the significance of incorporating "hope" into the campaign, AC1 (2021) emphasised that the primary objective was to secure another victory and counter any sense of despair, a sentiment that the AKP sought to foster. The strategic use of hope effectively resonated with voters' emotions, particularly addressing the perceived injustices of the first round of the election.

In his book on Imamoğlu's campaign, Özkan (2019) argues that emotions and a powerful story are key to winning an election. During the interview, CAM (2021) described that emotional attachment with voters as follows:

> When we started our campaign, Imamoğlu had only 10% recognition. People were curious about the candidate, and we had to manage the candidate recognition process successfully. We always believed that we had to enter people's hearts, that is the only way to get into their minds. We had to touch their feelings. We tried to understand their values and needs and set up a communication plan including these notions. Imamoğlu was a mayor in the Beylikdüzü district in Istanbul, where the population was based on AKP voters, so he was well aware of their values, and we aimed to show that we do not have any problem with the AKP voters and that we understand their needs. We aimed to give hope and solutions throughout our campaign. (CAM, 2021)

As highlighted earlier, understanding and conveying the values that matter to the people of Istanbul was a key aspect of the communication strategy. CAM (2021) emphasises that addressing these values involves connecting with people on an emotional level. This is where Imamoğlu's grassroots efforts came into play. Despite its traditional nature, door-to-door campaigning proved highly effective (CAM, 2021). Through this approach, Imamoğlu managed to establish a genuine emotional connection and deliver a message of hope even in challenging circumstances. His engagement extended to visiting bazaars and engaging in conversations about economic conditions and rising living costs with the public. These interactions, evolving into sizable gatherings (POA1, 2021), underscored the growing traction of his campaign.

During his field trips to different neighbourhoods, he showed intimacy with the opposition voters. "Our people need physical contact, and Imamoğlu accomplished it with his household and bazaar visits

around Istanbul." (POA1, 2021) His bazaar tours caught voters' attention and made him more visible than before.

One of my interviewees sees this process as a new movement in Turkish politics.

> His visits to the local markets were crucial to continue the emotion-based campaign and people's topic was about hope, they know that they will not have any financial change when they elect a new mayor but it is important to create a new movement. People tend to connect emotionally (POA3, 2022).

In terms of creating emotional connection with voters, POA1 (2021) thinks that Turkish people are emotional, and that they need a hero: "They want to see the saviour during the election period, and they want to vote for that saviour" (POA1, 2021). Apart from his fieldwork, POA1 (2021) believes that in Imamoğlu's slogans and campaign ads, Imamoğlu carried out that positivity and emotional connection that people needed. An important point not to forget is that while creating that saviour or creating that emotional attachment, Imamoğlu's campaign team stayed away from the polarised side of the populist discourse (us vs them). Instead, they focused on feelings and trying to understand how they could build a better future for Istanbul. They worked closely on the values, needs and solutions that could contribute to an emotion-based campaign (AC3, 2022).

5.2.3 Leaving the Elitist approach behind

When examining the historical and ideological structure of the Republican People's Party (CHP), as discussed in Chapter 3, it becomes evident that the party has maintained a secular and Westernised orientation since 1923. The party has been criticised for prioritising a top-down approach to secularisation, even endorsing military interventions, while neglecting the peripheral segments of society. Consequently, the religiously inclined portion of society perceived that the CHP could never represent their interests (Yavuz and Özcan, 2019). In the 2019 Istanbul local elections, Imamoğlu sought to transcend the secular Western image associated with the CHP. He presented himself as a candidate who understood the religious segment of the population, at times even participating in Friday prayers and reciting the Quran (ibid). By adopting an approach unfamiliar to the public as a CHP candidate, he endeavoured to connect with the religious community and diverge from the party's conventional image during his election campaign (ibid). AC4 (2021) sees Imamoğlu as a candidate who is not a hard-core Kemalist, he was a candidate that could recite the Quran but also was comfortable with Western and Islamic values, he was coming from a conservative family. All these images helped him to overcome the polarisation between Islam and secularism.

Another significant aspect of his campaign was his strategic employment of Atatürk's image, which was comparatively less prominent than in previous CHP campaigns. It is noteworthy that the utilisation of Atatürk's image per se is not inherently negative (POA4, 2021). However, due to varying

perspectives, particularly among conservatives, there exists a perception that his governance led to the erosion of certain rights. Furthermore, a subset of conservatives still views Kemalist values as elitist and exclusionary, possibly contributing to the nuanced approach in the utilisation of Atatürk's image during the campaign (POA1, 2021). Another point in his campaign was that he was not with Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (leader of the CHP) during the rallies, and thereby created a different strategy, refusing the intervention of any obstacle between him and the voters (CAM, 2021). According to AC4 (2021) Imamoğlu understood the dynamics of new politics, he left behind the CHP's old-school political style and used more approachable communication strategies, focusing on the needs of the people as well as showing his understanding of their concerns.

5.2.4 The heroisation process of the candidate

When I asked about the characteristics of the campaign, POA1 (2021) mentioned the importance of the heroisation of the candidate as its starting point. In Özkan's book on İmamoğlu's Istanbul campaign (2019), he argues that using emotion-based campaigns and creating a powerful story about the candidate are key elements for winning an election. Imamoğlu's campaign had both. In Imamoğlu's campaign the process of the heroisation of the candidate started with recognition of the candidate by everyone (Özkan, 2019). Imamoğlu was a little-known local politician who entered local politics in 2009 and became mayor of the middle-class Beylikdüzü district in 2014 (Yavuz and Özcan, 2019). In his case, the main goal was to make him visible in every corner of Istanbul (CAM1, 2021).

CAM1 explains how Imamoğlu's campaign worked as follows:

> When Imamoğlu was appointed as a candidate for the Istanbul local elections, people had no idea about him. The characteristics of the campaign started with the heroisation of the candidate. We wanted to control the process of making İmamoğlu known to everybody and it was an important thing because people were curious about him. Throughout this process, the most important thing was to understand the voters' values and talk about these values, respecting them. Our heroisation process started with understanding people's needs and values and showing them that the CHP, or Imamoğlu has no problem with their lifestyles or beliefs. We reached our goal, and started to see people gathering around Imamoğlu during his bazaar visits around Istanbul. He managed to enter people's hearts and then minds. (CAM1, 2021)

His opponent Yıldırım used all the resources of the state, whereas Imamoğlu had only limited resources (Yılmaz, 2019). That was why Imamoğlu's campaign team decided to conquer public spaces by following a stable communication strategy (CAM1, 2020).

We had to make him visible in the public spaces and had to show his dialogues with AKP voters as well. We published these videos instantly or opened live streaming on his social media accounts, such as Instagram, so that people could see him talking with the AKP voters. The most important thing was understanding the values and making a communication strategy that focuses on and respects these values. We used love language, aimed to appeal to people's hearts and appreciated their values. Our inclusive communication strategy worked very well in a short period, and people started to get to know and love Imamoğlu. (CAM1, 2021)

In this context, it is pertinent to consider the concept of portraying oneself as a "hero" or "saviour" of the people within the framework of populism. However, what sets Imamoğlu's approach apart is his ability to avoid excluding or demonising those who might hold different views (POA5, 2021). He presented himself as a candidate capable of addressing the populace's issues without using a divisive communication strategy.

POA3 (2021) describes the process as follows:

Imamoğlu won with a good strategy and used populism in a smarter way. You can make someone popular by putting him together with someone well known. So, his visit to the President Erdoğan made him visible, and in one day, his visibility was 70%. He also aimed to go to the districts that were mainly under the AKP's control. We wanted him to go to the bazaars because people living in those areas were in need of hope. People did not read billboard ads, they wanted to see the candidate in the field, they wanted to talk with the candidate, and Imamoğlu did that well. He showed them he is one of them, connected with them emotionally.

Therefore, the process of portraying Imamoğlu as a hero began with a deliberate departure from the distant and elitist stance that the CHP had maintained over the years. His campaign effectively projected Imamoğlu as an approachable and relatable figure, an "ordinary man" who resonated with the public's emotions and shared their values (AC1, 2021). His hands-on engagement, including fieldwork and visits to households, played a pivotal role in breaking down the traditional barrier that often exists between politicians and voters. As a result, for some segments of the population, Imamoğlu emerged as a fresh face in politics, a new embodiment of values, and perhaps even a new-found hero (CAM2, 2021).

5.2.5 Being a "catch-all" candidate

Martin (2018) characterises a catch-all candidate as an individual who draws support from a wide spectrum of voters, transcending not only social classes but also the traditional divisions between right

and left ideologies. In the context of this study, interviewees identified Imamoğlu as a catch-all candidate for a variety of reasons.

Firstly, his family-oriented image played a crucial role (POA3, 2021). This aspect resonated strongly with voters, cutting across demographic and ideological lines, and contributing to his broad appeal. A significant dimension highlighted by POA1 (2021) was the importance of conservative roots for the residents of Istanbul. Imamoğlu's unique blend of secular and conservative values, influenced by his family background, positioned him as a candidate capable of resonating with a wide spectrum of voters, including those who held more traditional and conservative perspectives (AC1, 2021). Secondly, Imamoğlu strategically employed the concept of inverted populism (Demiralp and Balta, 2021), which further enhanced his catch-all status. By embracing the positive elements of populism while eschewing its negative aspects, he managed to attract a diverse range of supporters who found his approach inclusive and solution-oriented. POA2 (2021) argues that Imamoğlu refrained from using populism to create divisions; instead, he counteracted populism's negative impacts. This nuanced approach contributed to his character as a catch-all candidate. This assertion is fortified by his ability to garner support from diverse segments, including the Kurdish population, who traditionally have voted for Erdoğan's anti-Kemalism governance, as an advocate against polarising populism (Yavuz and Özcan, 2019). Additionally, his track record as a successful mayor of the Beylikdüzü district provided concrete evidence of his ability to deliver results, transcending ideological boundaries. He was transparent and moderate and governed his district without any corruption charges (ibid). This practical demonstration of effective governance bolstered his appeal to a broad array of voters who valued competence and tangible achievements. This achievement also addressed the prior criticism directed at CHP, showcasing Imamoğlu as a candidate who not only understands people's needs but also has a demonstrated capability to address them. POA1 (2021) encapsulates this viewpoint, emphasising that Imamoğlu's accomplishments in Beylikdüzü district offer substantive support for his candidacy, thereby resonating with voters who had earlier voiced concerns about the CHP's efficacy.

In this context, POA1 (2021) articulated his perspective as follows:

> Imamoğlu's appeal rested on two critical factors. Firstly, he functioned as a catch-all candidate, capable of garnering support across a wide spectrum of voters. Secondly, his family background held significance within the Turkish context. Turkey's societal fabric places value on conservative family values. Imamoğlu's unique familial composition, with a headscarf-wearing mother and a secular wife, symbolised an ideal archetype. This portrayal allowed him to bridge the gap between both ends of the ideological spectrum, signifying an understanding of the expectations of diverse constituents that might be absent in a candidate from a purely secular upbringing. This synthesis enabled Imamoğlu to better comprehend and resonate with the aspirations of a broader cross-section of society.

Regarding to (POA4, 2021) Imamoğlu is the representative of the new. He is humble, young, charismatic, fast, and could address the young generation. By bringing a new way of doing politics, by not being involved in polarised discourses and showing himself as a part of the society, he managed to get the voters' attention (AC,3 2022).

> Imamoğlu was the right candidate for the elections. He started his campaign as almost "unknown", and he was a new name. CHP brought new discourse with their new candidate. He was a risk for CHP, but he had a good strategy and successfully controlled his political communication. In 2019, voters needed to hear something new, they wanted to see new leaders, which opened a way for İmamoğlu. (POA3, 2021)

Imamoğlu's ability to unite contrasting perspectives was accentuated by his familial background, encompassing both conservative and secular dimensions. His conservative roots were mirrored in his family ties, marked by affiliations with neo-Sufi groups, while his union with a secular wife indicated his receptiveness to diverse values (AC4, 2021). This composite identity, accompanied by his self-identification as a Kemalist, made Imamoğlu a compelling choice that resonated with Istanbul's diverse populace. In a landscape characterised by sharp divisions, Imamoğlu's candidacy introduced a fresh perspective, free from the clutches of protracted antagonism. His positioning as a candidate who transcended conventional dichotomies presented an attractive departure from the status quo, earning him a reputation as a unifying force in a divided political arena (Gümrükçü et al., 2022)

5.2.6 Traditional campaign methods and new media

In recent years, the process of digitalisation has emerged as a prominent and supplementary aspect of the broader phenomenon of Americanisation (Sampugnaro and Montemagno, 2021). Notably, researchers argue that digitalisation serves as an additional component reinforcing the concept of "Americanisation" (ibid). Within modern political campaigns, a notable shift has occurred wherein the utilisation of digital tools has become integral. Importantly, this digital transformation does not replace traditional campaign methods; rather, it coexists alongside them (ibid).

Imamoğlu's election campaign prominently relied on social media as a pivotal tool (Yılmaz, 2019). Operating with limited access to mainstream media channels in contrast to Yıldırım, he harnessed the power of social media platforms to effectively engage a wide spectrum of voters (ibid). Interestingly, the moment when Imamoğlu's campaign team realised they would win the election was when they noticed the young voters' interest in Imamoğlu's TikTok account. "When we saw the young generation supporting Imamoğlu on TikTok, we realised that we would win the election." (CAM2, 2021).

> CAM1 (2021) explains their social media strategy as follows:

AKP was dominated all the broadcast news channels and it was hard to make Imamoğlu visible under that situation. We had only one option and it was the adoption of the oldest and the newest strategy which involves using door-to-door campaigning, visiting bazaars or doing household visits and then sharing that fieldwork via social media channels such as Imamoğlu's Twitter or Instagram accounts. By doing that, voters were able to create that intimacy through social media accounts and we managed to create some kind of curiosity about Imamoğlu. We thought that if they see his videos on the field with people around him, they would want to meet him. We were editing videos on the rally bus and posting them. Efficiently managing time while utilising social media channels is important, and we employed every possible way to achieve this. By the second round, Imamoğlu had gained widespread recognition throughout Turkey. Our strategy proved to be successful.

At this point, Obama's 2012 election campaign illustrates a good example, which is also defined as the entrance in, "Fast Politics": producing 24-hour news, a large amount of content mainly composed by the voters through social media, and the fast transmission of messages from the candidate to the voters (Sampugnaro and Montemagno, 2021).

The popularity of videos featuring Imamoğlu's conversations with voters during his market visits had a particular reason behind it. This was also driven by the fact that AKP supporters were predominantly located in certain areas, and Imamoğlu's interactions with them were instantly shared with the voters. All of these dynamics contributed to generating curiosity among the electorate (POA3, 2021). For instance, during the interview with POA1 (2021), she remembered Imamoğlu's videos where he visited bazaars and talked with the AKP voters. She remembered one video where Imamoğlu talked with the AKP supporter where the voter said that she would not vote for him because she loves Erdoğan so deeply.

> I remember in that video Imamoğlu was smiling at her in a very friendly and understanding way, he did not oppose her or offend her in any way. He was humble, just tried to understand her reason for voting for Yıldırım in a very calm manner, asked questions and respected her choice. So, sharing these moments on his social media channel was crucial because these instances held the potential to sway voters, either altering their perceptions of Imamoğlu or prompting them to reconsider their preferences. This strategic use of social media effectively set him apart from previous CHP candidates, spotlighting his capacity for genuine connection. (POA1, 2021)

Undoubtedly, the landscape of electoral campaigns has been significantly reshaped by the advent of digital platforms, with social networks emerging as the new mainstream media (Zhuravskaya et al., 2020). This shift becomes even more pronounced within authoritarian regimes, where conventional

media channels often fall under the tight grip of the ruling party (Müller, 2013). Against this backdrop, the use of traditional campaign methods with the power of new media assumes strategic importance, as witnessed in this election. According to AC4 (2021), by combining established campaign strategies with innovative digital outreach, a nuanced and effective approach was crafted for Imamoğlu's campaigns.

5.2.7 Personalisation of the campaign

The fundamental opponents of Americanisation are, (1) personalisation, (2) the adoption of a scientific approach to campaigning which means the use of political consultants who leverage data-driven strategies for decision making, (3) the dominance of media logic, (4) the use of candidate-centred campaign, and (5) digitalisation (Sampugnaro and Montemagno, 2021). The campaign manager of Imamoğlu sees Americanisation as a way of making things fun by carrying the campaign to the streets of Istanbul and taking it away from the formal campaign look (CAM, 2021). According to AC1 (2021), Imamoğlu's campaign was personalised and candidate-centred which made it in line with the concept of Americanisation. "You could choose between an ideology-centred campaign or a candidate-centred campaign. We chose the second one." (CAM1, 2021) According to CAM1 (2021), their main aim was to get away from the elitists CHP outlook and create a focus on Imamoğlu rather than Kılıçdaroğlu, he also added that, their aim was to create a personalised campaign, that is why Kılıçdaroğlu did not take a place in any of his rallies. In the personalisation strategy, political actors of campaign communication share their personal and private lives through social media (Vergeer et al., 2013) (see Chapter 2). During the personalisation process, the candidates usually present themselves as regular people, citizens living among the voters, and try to make themselves relatable beyond the scope of their formal political life (Bennett, 2012). According to the interview conducted with the CAM1 (2021), Imamoğlu's campaign followed the same path in showing Imamoğlu as one of us. CAM1 (2021) stated that,

> Whilst making a candidate-centred campaign, we focused on the short videos that show Imamoğlu with his wife, kids and parents to show him as a "family figure" and then we shared them on his Twitter and Instagram accounts. The aim was to show the voters his family, daily life, and his house and to create that emotional connection by saying, "I am one of you" (CAM1, 2021).

Voters need to see that Imamoğlu is one of us; his family is similar to ours. Voters need that connection with the candidate in Turkey (POA4, 2O21). These strategies align closely with the principles of personalisation which are a component of the Americanisation of political campaigning. As noted by CAM1 (2021), what sets this approach apart is its departure from the conventional party-leader centric campaigns. Instead, the emphasis on a candidate-centred approach, marked by personalisation, proved to be an effective factor in influencing the election outcome in a favourable manner (ibid).

5.3 Justice and Development Party – AKP

5.3.1 The use of religion as a populist communication strategy

Starting in the 1950s, Islamists represented themselves as the representative of the Muslim majority in the population, oppressed both by the Kemalist secular regime and Westernised reforms (Genç, 2019). Throughout their identity-building period the AKP represented itself as "Muslim Democrats" with a modern view of Islam (ibid), but starting from the 2007, the AKP used rhetoric to present themselves as the mainstream political party in Turkish politics and the real representative of conservative Islamic values, as well as the oppressed population within Turkish society (Koyuncu, 2014). Since the establishment of the AKP, two themes have been used in their populist communication strategy: (1) victimisation of the "pure people" and (2) religiousness (see Chapter 3). For the AKP, their supporters were pure people victimised by the Kemalist secular rule carried out by the CHP and CHP supporters were corrupted in a religious manner (Ahmadov, 2008). One of the interviewees preferred to characterise AKP as a populist Islamist party (AC1, 2021). According to AC1 (2021), beyond employing a populist discourse, AKP strategically employs religion as a populist tool to secure electoral support (ibid). To illustrate this perspective, he pointed to the case of the Hagia Sophia, which serves as a vivid example of the AKP's use of religious elements in its political communication (ibid). Formerly an Ottoman Mosque, Hagia Sophia was converted into a museum by Mustafa Kemal's directive in 1935. However, a week before the local election, Erdoğan pledged to his supporters his intent to reconvert Hagia Sophia Museum into a mosque, coining it as the "Grande Hagia Sophia Mosque." From this promise, we could understand that he aimed to consolidate his conservative voter base by using religious codes (AC1, 2021). Besides, AC1 (2021) explains some critical points from their discourses below and why he preferred to call them a populist Islamist party:

> Erdoğan has claims such as "we are the 99% of the population versus them", or we are the oppressed people, and "they" live in wealth. He also uses religion as a populist tool, and people believe in that. I prefer to call AKP populist Islamist, especially after 2010 (AC1, 2021).

More importantly, the younger generation began to see his strategy and use of religion as a toll to promote his political goals, and they do not appear to be content with this (ibid). We could see their silent protest in either abstaining from voting or voting for another candidate (ibid).

When looking at Imamoğlu's campaign, the scenario is quite different from Yıldırım's campaign. Imamoğlu's campaign avoided using religion as a polarisation tool; instead, it was more of a unifying value like a reminder of our deep spiritual values (POA1, 2021).

> When we see him reading the Quran, we do not think he used religion for his political aims. It was more of a getting away from the elitist secular CHP outlook and unifying people around shared values. (AC3, 2022)

According to POA3 (2021), Imamoğlu's posts on Ramadan or seeing him fasting in different households also had some religious nuances, but it was used in a positive manner of giving hope and with the intention of ending polarisation through religion. However, it is important to note that in using this approach, Imamoğlu indirectly responded Erdoğan's claims such as "what can they understand of religion" (Sancaktepe Rally, 2019) regarding Imamoğlu's religious beliefs and knowledge (AC4, 2021).

5.3.2 The use of populism by the AKP

During the interviews, every interviewee indicated that the AKP used populist political communication by dividing society into "us vs them" in the 2019 local elections in Istanbul. On the other hand, in Imamoğlu's campaign, we could see the use of inverted populism (Demiralp and Balta, 2021), which aimed to unify people around solutions and hope.

POA1 (2021) states that the most apparent discourse was the use of "us vs them" and - sometimes it has been used as "pure people vs corrupt elite" - which is a very popular term among the populists around the world (Mudde, 2017). Populist parties use that phrase because it has all the flexibility that populists need (Taggart, 2004). Taggart (2004) thinks that the people are generally used to curse specific groups in society, to increase the antipathy towards the elites, and build a new identity, which is another crucial notion for the populists. They tend to use the phrase negatively and aim to show who they are not and whom they are against (ibid). Imamoğlu, in his campaign, also indicated himself as the representative of the 16 million, but he did this by including everyone within the society (POA2, 2021).

> Imamoğlu's campaign was about unity, coming together and finding solutions to local needs/problems. His campaign was like a reminder of our solidarity and shared values. It was against polarisation and any kind of negative feeling that comes along with it. (POA1, 2021)

According to Koyuncu (2014), since their establishment, the AKP and Erdoğan created an aspect of being victims of the elites, and tried to build up the idea of "we are the people" by using the discourse of victimisation and religiousness. Regarding the 2019 Istanbul local elections, Yıldırım and his party used that discourse and polarisation as a large part of his campaign, but this time it did not work (AC1, 2021). When looking back at AKP's political background, they first presented themselves as conservative bureaucrats, their discourse was inclusive, and they had some realistic agenda but as they

gained power day by day, they came to be distanced from that modernist approach and became an Islamist party (AC4, 2021).

POA2 (2021) also agrees with this argument.

> "When they first appeared on the political scene, they put the needs of "the people" at the heart of their campaign strategy. But after 2010 and especially after the 2015-2016 elections, that strategy has changed and replaced itself with populist Islamist traits and became the far-right party with no realistic agenda (POA2,2021).

As noted by Yılmaz and Bashirov (2018), the AKP's victory in the 2011 elections bestowed upon them, enhanced electoral strength and an opportunity to independently form a government. This marked a departure from previous periods, granting them a greater degree of freedom from both Kemalist influences and military authority (ibid). However, contrary to their initial promise of democratising the system after assuming power in 2002, the AKP took a decisive turn in their approach. This shift was accompanied by an amplified emphasis on victimisation and religious rhetoric, coupled with a judgement of individuals based upon their beliefs and way of life. Simultaneously, they portrayed their supporters as virtuous individuals pitted against a corrupt elite (ibid).

> This approach remained effective up until the 2019 local elections. However, as of that point, people seemed fatigued by the persistent "us versus them" narrative. They need fresh perspectives and ideas that could instil hope for a brighter future. Amid a deeply polarised climate and substantial economic challenges within society, the public's priority shifted towards unity rather than division. The focus turned to addressing pressing daily problems, rendering the act of marginalising others less relevant. Imamoğlu's campaign centred on the principles of togetherness and fostering positive sentiments, aligned well with these emerging needs (POA3, 2021).

According to CAM1 (2021), the adoption of a polarised discourse proved ineffective for Yıldırım and the AKP in the 2019 elections. CAM1 (2021) believes that they misjudged the societal needs, relying on a past strategy they assumed would succeed again, and this turned out to be a miscalculation. Conversely, Imamoğlu's campaign strategy accurately gauged these needs, deliberately steering clear of polarisation (AC3, 2022). In essence, his approach to populism was inclusive, resonating with the populace's desire for unity (ibid). The 2019 Istanbul elections provided a valuable lesson that populism is not universally effective and its outcomes are influenced by the prevailing societal dynamics (POA4, 2021). This exploration underscores the limitation of a one-size-fits-all approach to populism, as witnessed in the Istanbul election where it fell short.

5.3.3 Rallies – a vital campaign tool for Erdoğan

Throughout the interviews, the discussion about populism and populist political communication consistently gravitated towards Erdoğan, as opposed to Yıldırım. This trend indicated that the interviewees recognised him as the primary communicator of populist messages to the public. POA1 (2021) mentions: "He delivers a populist message to the public, and he thinks he is the only representative of the population. He is a populist leader."

During Yıldırım's campaign, Erdoğan delivered his populist message by organising rallies in every corner of Istanbul. Most of the time, he was with Yıldırım, but he even rallied on his own as if he was the candidate for the elections (POA2, 2021). Weyland (2017) mentions that mass rallies were a decisive way for populist leaders to affirm and demonstrate their support from "the people", and was a way for them to mobilise their mass support. But more importantly, he also argues that populists tend to hold rallies when confronting a political challenge (ibid). By keeping that point in mind, we could question whether Erdoğan saw Imamoğlu as a challenge to himself. POA3(2021) thinks that Imamoğlu was not a challenge for Erdoğan initially. Erdoğan saw Imamoğlu as a challenge when he started to get support from the conservative neighbourhoods during his field work, began to introduce a new soul to politics, and appeared to be different from the classic CHP politics (ibid).

> AKP's rallies used to be very popular, but Erdoğan exploited them. In the past years, people were coming to rallies to see Erdoğan, but now they see that he always makes rallies so they do not feel any excitement to go and see him. For them, it is something very usual and ordinary now. It lost its magic. (POA2,2021)

The repetitive use of populist language and communication style during these rallies did not yield the desired results in this election. (POA3, 2021). Erdoğan thought that his presence as a President alongside Yıldırım during campaign rallies would boost Yıldırım's candidacy but, in fact, this strategic approach backfired (AC3, 2021).

5.3.4 Disengagement from Societal Realities

The data from the interviews also showed that the AKP has been losing its ties with social realities. More precisely, the more they gain power, the more they become disconnected from society's needs (POA1, 2021). They used to be the authentic representative of the conservatives in Turkey and always represented themselves as the saviour from the rule of elites. They used to represent themselves as those who understood the economic problems in conservative neighbourhoods and acted as representative against any inequality (POA3, 2021).

In the 2019 Istanbul local elections, we saw a different AKP, detached from that realistic agenda and become, in some ways, almost elitist (AC1, 2021). For example, the responses they gave to the economic issues were not convincing and inclusive enough, they used their past success stories examples and stressed how much work they had put into Istanbul, but their campaign failed to go any further than that (POA3, 2021). POA2 (2021) raised an important point about the TV debate that two candidates participated in just before the election; "Yıldırım had some hard times while responding to local and economic issues whereas, Imamoğlu was confronting him with charts and specific numbers." Even that shows that their previous extensive power did not prove helpful to them in gleaning power any more. They are detached from society, its problems and reality (ibid).

> Before the elections, we used to do surveys, and try to understand the real issues in society but now I cannot see it any more. AKP used to have a realistic agenda before, but now, AKP lost their ties with the voters. They do not know their problems. (POA3, 2021).

POA1 (2021) also thinks in the same way, but she thinks that it is the reality of every populist leader around the world.

> They get so powerful that they do not care or understand any societal problem. Their power breaks their ties with reality, and they start to live in their reality where there is no problem and more importantly, they try to convince people about that imaginary world that they live in, because that is their reality now. (POA1, 2021)

According to Taşkın (2019), when the AKP first came to power, they were the periphery's representative; during that time, they managed to create hope and a soft power strategy. But now we can say that their ground has become slippery and they move away from the periphery they used to represent (Ağırdır, 2020). The best example for that claim is the 2019 Istanbul elections, where they lost control for the first time in 25 years (AC4, 2021).

5.3.5 Disorder in the AKP as a reason for the loss

During the 2019 local elections in Istanbul, Yıldırım's campaign was often criticised for being disorganised and unstructured (AC1, 2021). His campaign message was not clear and he did not follow up on any one strategy, on account of working with three different consultants at once (AC1, 2021). Moreover, according to POA4 (2021), there were some problems between the party members of the AKP and this negatively affected Yıldırım's campaign. For some, because of that struggle Yıldırım could not attain enough support from the party members. On the other hand, CHP's candidate had support from the party and the campaign was very well organised. Most interviewees think the unstructured campaign and the problems among the party members were another reason for Yıldırım's loss. The interviewees from the AKP were furious about this topic, they blamed the party, and they saw the unstability in their campaign team as the main reason for losing Istanbul. For POA4 (2021), Yıldırım

was alone throughout the campaign and he believes Yıldırım fought against the AKP during the Istanbul local elections because AKP's Istanbul organisation did not want to carry out the campaign. His views were in line with my other interviewee, who used to work closely in the AKP campaigns. He thinks that it was very easy to see the crises and feel the chaos in the AKP (POA2, 2021). For him, there was no discourse nor any mutual slogan (ibid), and Yıldırım could not get the support he hoped to get from his party. An interesting analysis came from the POA4 (2021), who thinks that Yıldırım lost because of the AKP, and Imamoğlu won by means of AKP. He thinks Imamoğlu would not have had any chance to win if Yıldırım had received some support from the AKP.

To understand the disorder in the party, I sought to understand the previous campaign strategies. One of the interviewees worked in AKP's previous campaigns. He mentioned that they used to do a "to-do list" concretely and, more importantly, listen to peoples 'needs and understand society. He described the campaign period as below:

> In the 2014-2015 elections, AKP used to have a coordination centre. It was an important period because while working on the strategy, different actors brainstorm the communication strategies, and it was more of participatory democracy within the party. We used to listen to everyone, conservative voters and their needs, and build our plan upon it. AKP used to understand the society during this period and was able to reflect their problems in its election strategy. This can be seen as a reason for the victory of in the 2014 elections (POA3, 2021).

The strategic communication began by understanding the values and needs of society and then setting up a strategy that everyone embraced until the last day of the campaign. For him, everything was being done more democratically in the party, but he cannot say the same thing for the AKP now. (POA3, 2021)

In this study, nearly all the participants, including academics, have closely examined the growing disconnect between the AKP and its constituents. This separation from the people's reality has become more pronounced over time, as evident in the context of the 2019 Istanbul local elections. According to AC1 (2021), AKP once prioritised addressing the concerns of the public, local issues, and community needs. However, there's a sense that this connection with the voters has weakened over time. This detachment from the electorate could be attributed to AKP seemingly existing within its own sphere of reality. Furthermore, AC1(2021) highlights another contributing factor to this campaign's instability, which was the simultaneous engagement of three distinct campaign teams. This fragmented approach resulted in the adoption of varying strategies at different times, eroding the campaign's coherence and preventing Yıldırım from conducting his campaign in a harmonious environment (ibid).

According to POA4 (2021), the disorder in the party also caused a lack of emotional attachment. POA3 (2021) defines AKP's campaign as being elitist because of the lack of emotional attachment. The

surprising thing for him is that the AKP used to be very good at building emotional ties with the voters (Doğan, 2020). POA2 (2021) said that, this time, the campaign focus was on their previous success stories and their future projects and for him the message of the campaign was not that clear. POA4 (2021) believes that Turkish people are very emotional and they need that emotional connection with the leader. So, focusing on previous projects was not exciting for them, and did not work well in convincing voters to vote for Yıldırım (ibid).

The previous AKP communication consultant was furious about the mess within the AKP, and he thinks that, throughout the campaign, Yıldırım did not introduce anything new, merely showcasing previous success stories as their most significant evidence for Istanbul's future, and that was not sufficient.

His observation on Yıldırım's campaign is stated below:

> What I saw in the 2019 local elections in AKP was a total mess; if you ask me, their strategy, I cannot come up with an answer. I do not remember his slogan. That was the problem. His campaign was like, "we are successful, you have already known me and my work, we have kept our promise, and we will keep our promises." They were not giving any clue of a new beginning/hope. People needed that feeling of hope in Istanbul. (POA2,2021)

5.3.6 The downside of the party-leader centred campaign

During Yıldırım's strategy, even though he was a well-known politician and the moderate face of AKP, the problem was carrying out a party-leader centred campaign (CAM, 2020). POA3 (2021) clearly described the situation "But in the end, Yıldırım could not be a candidate because Erdoğan was the candidate." And that was one of the important issues for Yıldırım's candidacy and the failure of his campaign. "Erdoğan was very dominant throughout the campaign, that is why Yıldırım could not have any slogan or discourse for his own" (POA3,2021). Another reason for Yıldırım not adding much to his campaign was the pressure he was subjected to; he needed to carry AKP's political identity and discourse during his campaign (POA1, 2021).

On the other hand, Imamoğlu's campaign was all about him, he carried out a candidate-centred campaign where we could not see any party member from CHP or any other party (CAM, 2020). As mentioned before, he was alone during the campaign and did not carry out CHP's discourse or any other political connection. By doing that, people got to know him better and he managed to create a close connection with the voters (ibid). It was part of the heroisation process of the campaign and made it more personalised rather than party-leader oriented.

The dominance of Erdoğan on the campaign, and carrying out a party-leader centred campaign had a negative effect on the campaign. Erdoğan's charismatic leadership style and his increased hegemony and boundless domination within the party (Yıldırım, 2009) showed themselves in Yıldırım's

campaign. Yıldırım's team thought it might positively impact the voters as Erdoğan is a cult politician of the AKP, however that is not how it eventuated (AC1, 2021).

POA2 (2021) states, "You cannot win an election over a leader; you need a strategy." He believes that party-leader centred campaigns do not work in Turkey because local needs and emotional attachment are crucial, and to appeal to those needs you need to have a stable strategy. He thinks that people in Istanbul wanted to see the candidate on the field, they wanted to talk with them and take photos.

He gave an example from his experience as follows:

> Our people think leaders will solve the problems. They do not believe in the governmental system. That is why they want to create a physical connection with that leader, see them, they want to talk with them. When I used to work as a campaign manager, we used to have six photographers, and we took peoples 'names after every shooting because they wanted those pictures. I remember, one time, we had sent 4.000 photographs in a day. But we could not feel that connection with the voter during the 2019 Istanbul campaign. (POA2, 2021)

The domination of Erdoğan was very obvious throughout Yıldırım's campaign and POA1 (2021) argues that "Imamoğlu was competing against Erdoğan in Istanbul." That claim was very popular among the voters in Istanbul as well. People felt that Yıldırım's campaign was dominated highly by Erdoğan, and Erdoğan was acting like a candidate instead of Yıldırım (AC5, 2021). There was also a use of a party-centred campaign strategy in Yıldırım's campaign ads. There will be more information in the next part on textual analysis of the campaign ads, but, as AC3 (2022) states,

> In the campaign ads, we saw Erdoğan standing with Yıldırım or telling how much they both love Istanbul. This might also cause some backfire from voters' point of view. [According to] voters' perspective this strategy did not work well; it rather caused some confusion. (AC3, 2022)

5.3.7 Yıldırım's political career as preventing his candidacy

When analysing Yıldırım's political and bureaucratic background, he appeared to be an ideal candidate for the AKP (POA1, 2021). He used to be the minister of transportation and the latest prime minister of Turkey, and compared to Imamoğlu his popularity rate was around 93.82%, whereas Imamoğlu had 14.40% (ibid). POA3 (2021) pointed out an interesting analysis by saying that when AKP declared Yıldırım as their candidate, even CHP did not believe that Imamoğlu would win against him.

POA3 (2021) describes Yıldırım's characteristic as follows:

> Yıldırım is a moderate face of the AKP. He is someone you can see on the street and talk to, with good energy. AKP thought they would win the election with such a strong candidate. In other words, AKP was looking at what they had in their hands, and when they saw Imamoğlu as a candidate, they thought they would definitely win the election. They thought Yıldırım had a perfect political career compared to Imamoğlu and people had trust in him. (POA3, 2021)

Despite the interview data suggesting that Yıldırım was a suitable candidate to contend against Imamoğlu, certain factors posed challenges to his candidacy. One significant issue was his extensive political career, notably his prior role as the Prime Minister of Turkey. As previously mentioned, this background might have hindered his ability to fully assume the position of a mayor during the local elections. Some perspectives indicate that his previous high-ranking political status could have made it difficult for him to readily adapt to the role of addressing localised issues (AC5, 2021). This transition from national-level responsibilities to a more localised focus appeared to present a hurdle in his campaign efforts.

For AC3 (2022), the reason for choosing Yıldırım was the lack of human resources in AKP. They had to come up with a candidate who would make a difference, and Yıldırım was the most well-known and trustworthy person in AKP (ibid). Most of the people and AKP voters know his success stories and support him and his previous works. POA1 (2021) thinks that after 25 years, AKP has reached its limit point and has little to promise, so they chose to use the discourse of "we did that, we built that" and Yıldırım was the best representative for this discourse because of his past projects around Turkey. AC1 (2021) also agrees with that statement, he also thinks that Yıldırım was the right candidate for the election but his political background deserved more than to be the candidate for the Istanbul local election. POA3 (2021) says that he did not put his heart in his campaign, almost as if did not really want to get elected. His political background and accomplishments merit more than being a candidate for an Istanbul local election. For that reason, he could not show himself as much, he could not give 100 percent of himself to his campaign.

For POA2 (2021) Yıldırım was very reputable compared to Imamoğlu, his success stories are more recognisable than his opponent. Yet, he thinks the problems and struggles within the AKP affected Yıldırım's performance and his election campaign. He thinks Imamoğlu would not have had any chance to win if Yıldırım had obtained greater support from his party (ibid). He adds that Imamoğlu received a good amount of support from his party and, in contrast to Yıldırım, they were always by his side (ibid).

The second factor that affected his campaign was the severe economic problems people faced in Istanbul. During his campaign, Yıldırım could not reverse that situation, he could not add or change

anything different on that issue. A good strategy starts with accepting the economic context and with the ability to add new discourses on that context (AC3, 2022). However, Yıldırım could not add anything new and even when he did try his message could not reach the voter. This might be on account of his unwillingness to engage further in that election or because of the party's disorder (CAM2, 2021). There were also some assertive views such as "if the economy had not been that bad, the election result could have been the other way around" (POA4, 2021).

> Apart from Yıldırım's political performance, the economy had a very big impact on voter's decisions, whereas Yıldırım's campaign was about the previous success stories and upcoming big projects for Istanbul, none of them targeted economic issues that people were facing during that time (POA5, 2021).

On the other hand, Imamoğlu's campaign was about solving local problems and convincing people of a hopeful future. He was younger than Yıldırım, and he was willing to govern Istanbul by all means. Whereas Yıldırım was older and looked tired and was not excited about his new position (POA3, 2021).

Certainly, the economic backdrop held significant importance in shaping the election's context. However, a crucial determinant that influenced the election outcome was the candidates' capacity to convince voters, even in the face of these economic challenges (AC1, 2021). Yıldırım had the potential to use his extensive political experience more effectively than Imamoğlu. Nonetheless, the use of a populist campaign strategy, emphasising past success stories rather than presenting new ones for local problems, the use of a party-leader centred campaign, and the instability within his campaign team, all impacted his campaign in a negative way.

5.4 Conclusion

When looking at the data coming from the interviews in terms of the main features and differences of both campaigns, there are four points that need to be addressed; (1) the use of inclusive discourse versus polarised discourse, (2) the use of candidate-centred campaign versus party-leader centred campaign, (3) the focus on local solutions versus previous success stories / big projects and (4) the use of an emotion-focused campaign versus project focused campaign.

Imamoğlu's employment of an inclusive discourse marked a pivotal shift, particularly evident when he embarked on redefining the concept of "the people" (Korkmaz, 2022). This marked a departure from CHP's historical tendency to define the populace within the boundaries of their secular and pro-Western framework (see Chapter 3). Despite the CHP's efforts to distance themselves from this perspective over

various periods, they remained entangled within it (POA3, 2021). However, Imamoğlu's campaign embarked on a distinct trajectory. He distanced himself from the CHP and its historical baggage while adhering to a well-crafted inclusive communication strategy. The initial facet of this strategy centred on inclusivity and the dissemination of affirmative messages (CAM1, 2021). This distinct approach set his campaign apart from AKP's strategy. AC3 (2022) posits that Imamoğlu's victory would have been unattainable if he had embraced populism. Instead, he used an inclusive approach and discourse that enabled him to sidestep CHP's elitist and secular political stance. Through this approach, he sought not only to capture the allegiance of CHP supporters but also to engage AKP voters. By doing using inverted populism, Imamoğlu's campaign succeeded in mobilising segments of the population (Demiralp and Balta, 2021). These segments, apprehensive of discrimination due to their lifestyles and beliefs, found reassurance in Imamoğlu's communication style, effectively dispelling a 25-year-long aura of mistrust surrounding both him and the CHP. Consequently, Imamoğlu's campaign orchestrated the formation of a novel collective identity, harmonising diverse groups across Istanbul (Demiralp and Balta, 2021). He secured votes by emphasising his aspiration to represent all Istanbul residents, championing shared values, and underscoring his commitment to the city's 16 million inhabitants (POA2, 2021). The campaign aimed to transcend identity-based politics, as the populace grew weary of such divisions (AC1, 2021). By aligning with shared values and pressing needs, Imamoğlu's campaign channelled these elements into an effective communication strategy, resulting in a sense of unity among Istanbul's populace (CAM1, 2021).

During his campaign, Yıldırım used a populist discourse aligned with President Erdoğan's style, a rhetoric inherently associated with polarisation. Analysis of the interview data highlights that Yıldırım, as an individual, may not inherently possess populist traits, but his adoption of AKP's discourse cast his campaign within the populist framework. A retrospective examination of past elections reveals that the AKP effectively utilised polarising rhetoric and crisis creation to consolidate power. However, the 2019 electoral landscape created distinct results. Citizens were fatigued by narratives like the "99% versus them," and the absence of favourable crises that previously bolstered AKP's dominance has changed the dynamics (AC1, 2021; POA3, 2021). The public's receptivity to highly polarised discourse of "us versus them" and "corrupt elite" themes, waned in the face of economic hardships and the pursuit of positive prospects (AC1, 2021). Concurrently, Yıldırım's campaign used religious feelings strategically to solidify the conservative voter base and reinforce key religious values. They often highligthed religious identity and showed CHP as a potential threats to religious rights. In that sense, the campaign created fear about socio-political changes, making people feel as if they were in a dystopia. However, the campaign miscalculated the evolving societal dynamics and failed to fully comprehend the prevailing sentiment. Yıldırım's campaign notably centred on the polarising themes of "us versus them" and "religiousness" (Yılmaz, 2019). Voters were more interested in positive changes and discourses than the polarising discourse. This marked a big shift from previous elections.

The use of a candidate-centred approach versus a party-leader centred approach was another difference between the two campaigns. AC2 (2021) mentions that the 2014 presidential election in Turkey signified a new era for the AKP's political communication, as it transitioned from "party-centred campaigning to candidate-centred campaigning" with considerable professionalism. Nevertheless, the interview data underscored a distinct characteristic of the campaign dynamics, revealing Erdoğan's involvement in Yıldırım's campaign, effectively making it a party-leader centred campaign. The data indicated that Erdoğan conducted five rallies per day within Istanbul, even resorting to intimate gatherings as an integral campaign strategy (POA2, 2021). This intense involvement, though ostensibly directed to bolster Yıldırım's candidacy, paradoxically accentuated the party-leader centred nature of the campaign. Yılmaz's (2019) observation further illuminates this, as Erdoğan's proclamation that "Istanbul means Turkey and Turkey means Istanbul, and whoever wins Istanbul wins the entire country" encapsulated the strategic gravity he assigned to Istanbul in the broader political landscape. Due to the strategical importance he attributed to Istanbul, he overshadowed Yıldırım's campaign, reinforcing the notion that the contest was substantially shaped by Erdoğan's influence rather than centred on Yıldırım's candidacy itself.

On the other hand, Imamoğlu's campaign was personalised and candidate-centred, which is an aspect of an Americanised campaign. Although his campaign manager sees Americanisation as "making things fun" (CAM, 2021) by adopting shopping model approach, they used Americanised techniques in Imamoğlu's campaign. This approach marked a departure from the party-centric paradigm that had characterised their campaigns. Notably, in previous electoral undertakings, the placement of Kılıçdaroğlu, alongside the candidate was a common practice during rallies and promotional materials. However, the 2019 campaign strategically diverged from this pattern, focusing exclusively on Imamoğlu and his vision for Istanbul. This strategic shift was corroborated by Imamoğlu's campaign manager, who explicitly indicated the intention to distance Kılıçdaroğlu and other CHP members from Imamoğlu's campaign activities to localise and contribute to the heroisation of the candidate (CAM, 2021). During campaign rallies, Imamoğlu's family members, including his wife, children, and even his mother, made appearances—a potent symbol of the personalised Americanised campaign strategy. The significance of this approach resonated with interviewees, who frequently highlighted the positive reception among voters. This family-oriented portrayal endeared Imamoğlu to the electorate, fostering a relatable image that transcended the traditional political persona (AC2, 2021). Consequently, the campaign's focus on personalisation served to bridge the perceived gap between the candidate and the people, ultimately forging an emotional connection that extended beyond the confines of political rhetoric.

Another difference lay in the messaging and core focus of the two campaigns. From the insights gathered from the interviews, it becomes apparent that the AKP's campaign messaging was rooted in

highlighting their past successes, portraying themselves as the dedicated servers of Istanbul, and promising a perpetuation of these accomplishments if they were re-elected. However, this approach seemed to be oriented more towards retrospection than progression.

They used the phrase "*gönül belediyeciliği,*" which conveys the idea of governing with a strong sense of dedication, compassion, and sincerity for the well-being of the people and the city. *Gönül belediyeciliği* is a term that the AKP first used in the 2004 local elections and since then it is one of their main slogans stressing their emotional devotion to local issues (Erciyas and Baykal, 2018). In terms of delivering this message, Yıldırım appeared to be well-suited for the task, given his extensive track record of successful projects across Turkey. His political experience could have potentially persuaded citizens to believe in the prospects of further enhancing Istanbul under his leadership. However, despite their efforts to establish an emotional connection with voters through the term *"gönül belediyeciliği"* their extensive use of populist discourse, emphasising "us versus them", and creating fear of the other, created an unbalanced communication strategy and caused confusion among voters. As numerous interviewees underscored, the electorate was yearning for a sense of optimism concerning the days ahead. While AKP's projects undoubtedly exhibited grandeur and efficacy on certain fronts, they appeared to fall short in catering to the essential requirements of the populace. In this context, Yıldırım's campaign fell in short in implementing a communication strategy that was inclusive, positive and balanced. A more comprehensive examination of this matter is offered in the forthcoming chapter, which provides an analysis of the campaign advertisements.

On the other hand, Imamoğlu's campaign focused on local solutions and conveyed a vision of a brighter future by using the slogan "If there is Imamoğlu, then there is a solution". His campaign conveyed a message that centred on understanding and addressing the essential needs of the people. By pledging to tackle issues such as rising living costs, urban infrastructure, and access to public services, he tapped into the electorate's desire for practical and immediate solutions that directly impact their lives. This approach was notably different from Yıldırım's campaign, which seemed to place a larger emphasis on national-level achievements rather than addressing specific concerns of Istanbulites.

Moreover, Imamoğlu's positive vision for the future provided a stark contrast to Yıldırım's discourse. He used the slogan "If there is Imamoğlu, then there is hope" to inspire a sense of a brighter future. While Yıldırım's campaign occasionally resorted to a discourse of fear, warning that a victory for Imamoğlu might endanger certain religious values and lifestyles, Imamoğlu projected optimism and unity as part of his inverted populism approach. His campaign aimed to foster a sense of togetherness, and promised equal representation for everyone in Istanbul regardless of their background or beliefs. The use of inverted populist and its positive outlook resonated in a society that was fatigued by divisive rhetoric and was longing for a more inclusive and positive narrative.

In conclusion, the analysis of the interview data reveals a significant contrast between the campaign strategies of Imamoğlu and Yıldırım during the 2019 Istanbul local elections. Imamoğlu's campaign was characterised by a candidate-centred approach that emphasised personalisation and used positive solution-oriented campaigning through the use of inverted populism. Moreover, Imamoğlu's ability to bridge the gap between secular and conservative values, as well as his effective use of social media, contributed to his success in mobilising previously immobilised voter groups. On the other hand, Yıldırım's campaign was party-leader centred, relying on the AKP's past accomplishments and Yıldırım's professionalism in politics. It aimed to create nostalgia by reminding voters of the past, but the use of polarised discourse led to a misalignment in his campaign communication. The absence of a clear focus on addressing immediate concerns of the citizens, coupled with an emphasis on national-level achievements, seemed out of touch with the electorate's daily struggles. According to POA3 (2021), the differences in approach between the two campaigns underscore the evolving dynamics of political communication in Turkey, where a candidate's ability to connect with voters on a personal level, understand their needs, and provide viable solutions plays a pivotal role. Imamoğlu's success in engaging both secular and conservative voters through a positive, solution-oriented, inclusive and personalised campaign communication demonstrates the potential of a well-crafted candidate-centred communication strategy.

The upcoming chapter will encompass the data from the textual analysis of the campaign advertisements utilised by both candidates. It will investigate the distinctive features that characterised the discourse of CHP's political ads in contrast to AKP's during the Istanbul local elections.

Chapter 6 – Findings of Textual Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the qualitative findings from the 60 campaign ads (30 from each candidate). These campaign ads have been used to address the following research question posed in this study:

- **RQ1.2** What characterised CHP political ads discourse from that of AKP during Istanbul local elections?

As many of the ads employed the same messages and slogans, the analysed campaign ads were often examined under common themes.

Textual analysis is a methodology that aims to understand language, symbols or images present in texts in order to garner information regarding how people make sense of and communicate life and life experiences (Mckee, 2003). In this chapter, whilst analysing the texts from the campaign ads of Binali Yıldırım and Ekrem Imamoğlu, the main goal will be to find the underlying meanings of the ads, in other words, what candidates wanted to express by using these ads. The analysis of the texts will demonstrate the differences between AKP's and CHP's campaign messages and will be helpful to analyse how these differences reflected themselves on the election result. The selected ads will be examined under several codes that occur.

In the selection process of political advertisements for analysis, a meticulous approach was employed, guided by three distinct criteria. First, the selection encompassed advertisements that had gained popularity on the Twitter platform, a contemporary gauge of social media resonance, as indicated by the number of likes garnered (more than 100k like). This criterion allowed for the inclusion of ads that had successfully captured the attention of an online audience abroad, potentially reflecting their effectiveness in communicating key campaign messages. Second, advertisements that presented divergent narratives between the two candidates were used. This approach aimed to encapsulate the essence of the campaign strategies pursued by Ekrem Imamoğlu and Binali Yıldırım. By juxtaposing ads centred on the respective candidates focusing on the localised issues pertinent to the mayoral position in Istanbul, a comprehensive analysis emerged, illuminating the spectrum of messaging tactics deployed during the election. Lastly, the insights of interviewees were incorporated into the selection process. Recommendations from those who had directly engaged with the campaigns or had an insider's perspective provided a nuanced dimension to the sample. This approach aimed to capture the experiential viewpoints of individuals who had closely observed the campaigns, potentially unveiling unique insights into the efficacy of specific advertisements and their impact on the electorate. The sample consists of political advertisements collected from various sources and channels spanning the period December 30th, 2019, to June 20th, 2020. These sources include billboards located across

Istanbul, campaign websites of both Imamoğlu and Yıldırım and their Twitter accounts. Additionally, political ads were sourced from the YouTube channels associated with each of the candidates.[9]

The chosen political advertisements represent a diverse cross-section of campaign strategies, catering to their popularity, thematic variations, and expert recommendations. This triangulation aims to ensure a multifaceted examination of the political communication landscape during the 2019 Istanbul local elections, shedding light on the evolving techniques employed by political candidates to engage with and sway the electorate.

6.2 Textual analysis findings of AKP

6.2.1 The use of Yıldırım's political background/professionalism

Binali Yıldırım's political career in the AKP began in 2002, and since then he has been one of the most well-known politicians in Turkish politics (POA3, 2021). He has held the position of Minister of Transportation, Maritime Affairs and Communications, and he was Turkey's 27th and most recent Prime Minister. These accomplishments gave him a high-level bureaucratic political outlook during his campaign and when he was appointed as a mayoral candidate for Istanbul, according to the interviewees, he did not feel any excitement and/or any eagerness to take the duty of being a mayor as he was accustomed to the role of a high-level politician in Turkey. According to AC3 (2022), both this lack of eagerness, as well as his experience as a high-level politician were reflected in his campaign ads. In his campaign ads, he was portrayed as very serious, bureaucratic, and tired compared to Imamoğlu (POA3,2021). On the other hand, Imamoğlu was younger than him, more active and excited to be the mayor of Istanbul (ibid). He did not have such significant accomplishments as Yıldırım, having been the mayor of a small district of Istanbul called Beylikdüzü, and he expressed excitement at governing one of the biggest (population-wise) cities of Turkey (POA3, 2021).

In Yıldırım's prominent campaign ads, the background colour was blue, and the slogan was dark blue, red and white. The same colours were also used in the previous campaigns of AKP, including the 2014 local elections and the general election in 2011 (AK Parti, 2022). According to colour psychology, blue often refers to the feeling of calmness and serenity (Cherry, 2022). Using that colour in the campaign ads can be understood that everything will be good under Yıldırım's governance, showing calmness, as everything will be under his control. That might be a way to convince voters to vote for him (POA3, 2021). The use of white symbolises purity, cleanliness and peace (Cherry, 2022), which might indicate to voters that Yıldırım will govern Istanbul with pure honesty. The use of red indicates passion and power (ibid), and this choice of colour may symbolically represent Yıldırım's authority and moral standing. Apart from the colours, according to AC1 (2021), he stands up straight in the in the ads, his eyes look sharp and that gives him a very confident look; she thinks that look could be a strong indicator

---

[9] While analysing Yıldırım's campaigns, finding ads from his website and on the web was challenging and that is why the second election term, like in Imamoğlu's case, could not be examined on a weekly basis.

of his professionalism in politics. AC3 (2022) observes that Yıldırım appears confident, serious and wise and attributes this look to his political background and experience. In the ad, he wears a blue suit with a red tie which is also the colour of the Turkish flag. For the AKP "being a Muslim Turk" is a very important notion and AKP's campaign communication also relies on those nationalistic codes, such as the use of red to remind people of their communal identity (Yabancı, 2022).

Alongside the colours used in the ads, the confident posture displayed by Yıldırım in the campaign advertisement signifies his perceived understanding of Istanbul's challenges and his potential to provide solutions to them. The slogan employed by Yıldırım, "we did what we promised, we will do it again," (*Ne dediysek yaptık, yine biz yaparız*) prominently displayed in white and red, evokes nationalistic connotations as it aligns with the colours of the Turkish flag. The slogan underscores the notion of honesty, emphasising the party's track record of fulfilling their promises over the past 25 years. Moreover, it conveys a message of trust in Yıldırım's competence and professionalism.

Furthermore, the slogan "we will do it again" serves to highlight Yıldırım's past achievements as a substantiation of his ability to successfully undertake future endeavours. By emphasising his track record of delivering on promises, the slogan portrays Yıldırım as a steadfast and reliable politician who has consistently fulfilled his commitments over the course of 25 years. In essence, the slogan seeks to foster trust among the electorate by leveraging Yıldırım's extensive political experience and tangible accomplishments as evidence of his capability to continue fulfilling his pledges if elected.

As mentioned in the interview analysis, his campaign relied on his political professionalism and obtained its power from that qualification. His campaign hashtag, #İşEhlininKararMilletin (work belongs to professionals, and the decision belongs to the nation), confirms that assumption. They situate themselves as the experts of the city, and that people should decide upon their vote while keeping the devoted work of political experts in mind. The ad's title is "*Gayem Istanbul, derdim Istanbul, hayalim Istanbul*" which means "my aim is Istanbul, my pain is Istanbul, my dream is Istanbul". The title has emotional messages which show that Yıldırım is ready to give everything for Istanbul. His life is about Istanbul, his dream is about the city. The title portrays him as a devoted candidate whose only concern is Istanbul and in a way romanticises his view for Istanbul.

The ad opens with a view of the Bosphorous and Yıldırım begins to talk in the background. He says "to govern Istanbul, you should be an expert in politics", then starts to remind people what he has accomplished so far. For instance, he says "if you are the expert then you can end air pollution and bring natural gas to every corner of the city and present a clear air or if you are expert then you build art centres around the city for the disabled or if you are the real expert of the city, then you can connect the continents (the Eurasia tunnel)." Then we see him with a group of people, shaking hands and saying, "For 25 years, Istanbul has been in safe hands and now I aspire to take the city even further towards a better future. Then he adds; "Give the work to the professionals and may Istanbul and the nation both win".

The advertisement places significant emphasis on the past successes of the AKP, and on Yıldırım's political experience and professional background spanning over 25 years. Rather than overtly stating that the party had facilitated these achievements, the ad subtly reminds viewers of the party's accomplishments, implicitly conveying its professionalism. The ad highlights Yıldırım's accomplishments and utilises them as a pledge for the future. However, the campaign video does not offer any indication of new projects or solutions for current issues, rendering the campaign ad somewhat disconnected from the needs of the populace. It could be argued that the presentation of Yıldırım's expensive completed projects positions his campaign as "elitist" (AC2, 2021). Furthermore, Yıldırım's discourse in the ad is focused on the past rather than the future, and people were hoping for promises to address their future concerns. Notably, there is a moment in the ad where Yıldırım interacts with the crowd, and the nature of his handshake with the group implies that he has made a deal with the voters, suggesting that he is the candidate who is closest to the people.

6.2.2 **The use of party-centred campaign**

When analysing Yıldırım's main ad slogan "we did what we promised, we will do it again", the use of "we" in the slogan is an indicator that shows he carries out a party-centred campaign rather than a candidate-centred one. He represents AKP by using the word "we" and puts the party in a position superior position to that of his candidacy. According to POA4 (2021), that was a mistake. With all his experience in politics, people needed to hear his own words and promises rather than the assertion of his presence as a representative of the AKP. POA2 (2021) thinks that, with this slogan, voters cannot hear Yıldırım's voice and cannot create that emotional connection with him.

The meaning conveyed by the slogan "we will do it again" is rather ambiguous, lacking clarity in defining its intended message. It appears that the aim of the slogan is to allude to the party's forthcoming initiatives or projects; however, the advertisement fails to provide any visual imagery or explicit description of these endeavours. As a result, the slogan leaves room for interpretation and does not effectively convey a concrete depiction of the party's future plans. According to POA3 (2021), they might have wanted to use a short slogan that can be remembered easily, but he also thinks that the meaning is unclear. It has been stated that campaign slogans should be less than eight words, clear and easy to read (Fernandez, 2020). Thus, it might be the case that, by using short sentences like "we did what we promised", AKP wanted to keep it short, clear and straightforward. During the interview with CAM2 (2021), he stated that AKP's slogan was clear and catchy, but people could not remember Yıldırım's slogan during their focus group work. He also said that the objective lies in effectively capturing and conveying the intended sentiment associated with the slogan, whether it be the cultivation of a collective sense of unity or the establishment of trust.

During the 2019 local election, it was deemed crucial to effectively present the local challenges and potential solutions to the electorate (CAM1, 2021). However, Yıldırım's slogan lacks any explicit indication of a proposed solution or a sense of hope (ibid). Instead, it positions the AKP as a service-

oriented political party dedicated to diligently executing esteemed projects. Moreover, the slogan strives to draw upon the past successes of the AKP as a reliable benchmark for future endeavours in Istanbul. It heavily relies on the party's political track record, serving as a reminder to voters of the party's commitment to public service. For instance, Yıldırım's YouTube channel features a series of advertisements showcasing the party's previous achievements, such as the development of 123 modern parking areas, with the promise of an additional 93 in the future if elected. However, these advertisements primarily highlight AKP's past accomplishments without conveying a direct message or addressing the concerns of the voters. Consequently, while the emphasis on the party's service-oriented approach is commendable, voters expressed a desire for the AKP to address their current needs more explicitly, as the past projects failed to align with their present-day requirements.

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, the AKP has upheld a fundamental principle of serving the public and undertaking significant projects since its foundation. With the chosen slogan and the use of the inclusive pronoun "we," the AKP aims to reiterate its commitment to a service-oriented ideology to resonate with the voters. The slogan, in essence, serves as a representation of the AKP's collective voice rather than solely reflecting Yıldırım's individual perspective. In accordance with POA1's (2021) interview, there was a strong desire among the electorate for candidates to articulate local solutions and instil a sense of hope. Voters sought to hear the authentic voices of the candidates rather than merely encountering party representatives during the campaign.

6.2.3 Referring to the AKP's core value: *Gönül Belediyeciliği*

Another main slogan in the ad is "*Belediye işi gönül işi*" which means you need to work with your heart when you work for the municipality. Erdoğan announced the slogan in December 2019 and after that, all the candidates of AKP used that slogan as a part of their campaign ads around Turkey (Öztay, 2022). The slogan indicates that the AKP's work will be people-centred and they will govern the city by putting their heart into it (ibid). At the same time, the slogan also emphasises the importance of carrying out every task of the municipality with heartfelt dedication and utmost effort.

The term "gönül," which translates as "heart" in English, was initially introduced by Erdoğan during his candidacy for the Istanbul local elections in 1994 (Dursun, 2018). Erdoğan aimed to establish an emotional connection and to resonate with the public by expressing his desire to enter into the hearts of all citizens (AA, 2019). The term "heart" was reintroduced in the AKP's 2019 campaign, highlighting its significance as one of the party's fundamental values (Dursun, 2018), evoking positive emotions and sentiments. However, Erdoğan's populist discourse had a negative impact on the positive connotations associated with the term "heart" and it created an unbalanced communication strategy. The utilisation of the "gönül belediyeciliği" aims to evoke a sense of nostalgia and reconnect people with the values and ideals that were associated with the initial use of the term by Erdoğan. By invoking the past, the AKP intends to create a link between the present and a time when the term "gönül" held significant

meaning. This strategy seeks to elicit a positive response from voters by reminding them of the party's historical trajectory and its commitment to certain principles.

Returning to the interview data, as highlighted by AC1 (2021), in the 2019 local elections, Yıldırım's campaign tried to build that emotional connection by using some of the past slogans mainly used by Erdoğan. It was not, however, successful; it lacked intimacy because it was moslty covered by his polarising discourse of "us vs them" (POA1, 2021).

6.2.4 Past success stories

As highlighted during the interview section, the AKP's campaign primarily focused on showcasing their past achievements rather than addressing future prospects and instilling hope among voters (AC3, 2022). This claim finds support when analysing the campaign advertisements, where the backdrop prominently features one of their notable accomplishments, namely the new Istanbul Airport. The inclusion of the new Istanbul Airport in the advertisement serves as a symbolic representation, conveying the message that by electing the AKP, the party will persist in their efforts and deliver prestigious projects akin to the new airport.

In another advertisement featuring Yıldırım, the Third Bridge, another noteworthy AKP project, is prominently showcased. This advertisement follows a similar pattern of relying on past success stories to highlight the party's achievements and reassure the public of their commitment to delivering significant projects if elected. Yıldırım is positioned in the corner of the ad alongside the slogan "we did what we promised, we will do it again." The advertisement effectively links AKP's past successes with the promise of future projects, reinforcing the notion that the party has successfully undertaken numerous major initiatives and will uphold its commitment to delivering on its promises. As discussed in the interview section, the AKP identifies itself as a party with a strong emphasis on project-oriented governance, a characteristic that is prominently reflected in these advertisements. The ads mentioned were concerned with the combination of the past and present. By reminding the people of past projects, in the first place, they aimed to rely on their effective projects and in the second place, they wanted to give assurance that they would keep working and bringing prestigious projects to people's lives.

In one of the YouTube advertisement videos, besides showcasing infrastructure projects, they also display the mosques they have built. Particularly, the Çamlıca Mosque is featured, on which construction started in 2013 and was completed in 2019 in Üsküdar, a conservative district of Istanbul. The use of the mosque symbol reflects AKP's Islamic ideology, reminding us that they take a stance on religion and serve as representatives of the conservative electorate. In one scene of the advertisement, the phrase "Ramadan is love" *(Ramazan sevgidir)* is written over an image of the mosque. This also indicates that AKP is the protector of its religious symbols and values. The inclusion of mosque imagery and text in this advertisement can be seen as part of AKP's strategy to emphasise its religious values and Islamic identity. Particularly, phrases like "Ramadan is love" serve the purpose of highlighting the party's religious values and special occasions, while also potentially appealing to conservative voters.

Such symbols aim to establish an emotional connection among voters and convey AKP's commitment to preserving and supporting its religious and cultural values. It also reveals how the content of the advertisement reflects the party's campaign strategies, aiming to deliver a message that aligns with the values and beliefs of the target audience.

6.2.5 Love story and the Rabia sign as a campaign tool

In addition to the slogans "work with your heart when you work for the municipality" and "we did what we promised, we will do it again" another slogan used by AKP was "Istanbul is a love story for us" *(Istanbul bizim için bir aşk hikayesi)*. This slogan was not only used in Istanbul by Yıldırım, all AKP candidates around Turkey used it. This could be another issue as Yıldırım did not have his slogan for Istanbul. The slogan, in itself, carries a positive sentiment, suggesting a deep emotional connection with Istanbul and indicating that Istanbul is a long and meaningful story for them. The common meaning of a love story is; love triumphs when lovers overcome moral failings or sacrifice their needs for one another. Thus, in the campaign ad, by using this concept of a "love story" the AKP might have intended to show that despite obstacles along the way, they are ready to sacrifice their needs in order to govern Istanbul.

In the ad, Erdoğan is with Binali Yıldırım. They are positioned facing away from each other, with a bureaucratic appearance in their black suits and red ties. Seeing Yıldırım with Erdoğan makes the campaign party-leader centred, ratifying the interview data. According to POA4 (2021), Erdoğan's hegemony over the party affected Yıldırım's campaign, but not in a very positive way. It confused people and gave the impression of a general election rather than a local one (ibid). Yet, seeing Erdoğan with the candidate gives Yıldırım a powerful look, a positive aspect of his campaign, because it also signified that Erdoğan supports him rather than being impartial as a President. It shows that Erdoğan still carries out his AKP outlook and supports his party no matter what. With that strategy, firstly Erdoğan aimed to activate his supporters and make them vote Yıldırım, and secondly, he wanted to consolidate his voter base (AC1, 2021). The implicit message conveyed by the slogan can be interpreted as "I endorse Yıldırım, I encourage you to do the same". Erdoğan's endorsement of Yıldırım through the narrative of a love story also demonstrates that in the election, Imamoğlu campaigned not against Yıldırım but rather against Erdoğan.

The love story campaign ad also signified Erdoğan's ambition to win rather than Yıldırım's willingness to govern the city. The slogan featured in the advertisement states, "Istanbul is a love story for us," aiming to evoke positive sentiments and underline a profound emotional connection and dedication to the city. In this context, it can be argued that the AKP also employed the theme of love in their campaign ad, albeit with a different approach from Imamoğlu. However, not all voters felt a sense of belonging to this love-driven discourse, as it lacked inclusivity. This lack of inclusivity was apparent due to the contradictory nature of their messaging. While conveying a message of love and unity, the party also employed an "us vs them" discourse during rallies, resulting in an inconsistency that weakened their

persuasiveness among voters. The contradictory messaging strategy of the AKP's campaign, characterised by using both positive themes like love and divisive rhetoric like "us vs them," could have created confusion and scepticism among voters. The inclusion of love as a theme, while not being consistently reflected in their broader communication, might have contributed to a sense of disconnect between the campaign's messaging and the actual atmosphere at rallies. This potential mismatch between the advertisement's optimistic tone and the political discourse used in rallies may have hindered the party's effectiveness in convincing voters.

Another important notion of the ad was Erdoğan's Rabia sign. The Rabia salute/sign is a hand gesture that has become commonly used in Eygpt since 2013 by the supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood (whose elected government led by Mohammed Morsi was ousted by an army coup in Egypt) (Birgün Newspaper, 2017). The gesture has now been adopted by Turkey's ruling party AKP as a new article in its bylaws with a slightly different meaning but with the same gesture. It is a sign frequently used by Turkey's Erdoğan at virtually all public meetings. It symbolises AKP's newly adapted four principles: 'one homeland; one state; one flag; one nation.' (Birgün Newspaper, 2017). The recurring use of the Rabia sign signifies Erdoğan's unwavering commitment to his party's principles and his firm stance against any adversities. It symbolises his resilience and determination to safeguard the nation's unity and core values. By incorporating this sign into the ad, the AKP seeks to communicate its dedication to protecting Turkey's integrity and identity while presenting Erdoğan as a strong and resolute leader capable of facing challenges head-on. This use of symbolism effectively reinforces the party's message and resonates with supporters who view Erdoğan as a protector of national values and sovereignty. The use of the Rabia sign by Erdoğan is also tied to his portrayal as a "protector" or "saviour," aligning with the traits commonly associated with populist leadership. Populist leaders often present themselves as the authentic voice and champion of the common people, asserting that they possess the strength and will to resolve societal issues that other elites have failed to address (Mudde, 2017). The sign not only carries the symbolic weight of unity and defiance against perceived threats, but it also reinforces the image of Erdoğan as a formidable leader who can navigate challenges with unwavering determination. This strategy resonates with the populist play book, where leaders aim to create a persona that embodies the aspirations and concerns of the people.

By doing that, he wants to deliver the message of coming together around the nation's core values and standing against any enemy or coup threat. By using that gesture, he shows his defiance against any attack on him and it still showcases his strength.

6.2.6 The service
The term "service" was first used by Erdoğan during his 1994 Istanbul local election campaign. He also carried out a "service-oriented" outlook (Dağı, 2008) when they established the AK Party in 2001, the leaders of the party claimed to have abandoned their Islamist-oriented political view (MGH vision, see

chapter 3) and changed their orientation towards democracy, human rights and the European Union (Yılmaz and Bashirov, 2018). More importantly, they declared that the AKP is a centre-right party with a conservative democrat identity (Koyuncu, 2014). By defining itself under this political identity, the AKP distinguished itself from previous Islamic parties by locating itself in the centre-right, and operating as a mass party with a reformist, service-based and proactive domestic policy (Keyman, 2010). Since then, the term "service" has been important for the AK Party, and they used it again during the 2019 local elections. They chose to represent themselves as servant of society and the term is now associated with their hard work for Turkey for 25 years.

During the 2019 local elections, they also used the term in campaign discourse. They had various formats of the ads where they situated themselves as the servants of Istanbul. For example, one ad says: "We built 128 modern parking spaces and making 93 more", and on the right-hand side, it says, "serving Istanbul cannot be a waste" with an exclamation mark. In that slogan, there is the word "serving" which means that they situate themselves as the servants of the society and give the message that none of their projects for Istanbulites can be seen as a waste as they are the ones who have known and served the city for the last 25 years. They seek to establish a symbolic connection between the past and the present by employing the term "service," with the intention of invoking the collective memory of the AKP's historical values and accomplishments. By portraying themselves as servants of the people of Istanbul, they also attribute a humble political image to themselves. Creating a relationship of servitude between the rulers and the revered populace, they convey the message that they have dedicated themselves to this cause since 2001. And beyond their strength, they possess a political understanding that is truly humble and devoted to serving the people. In doing so, they craft an image that resonates with a genuine commitment to the well-being of the public. This portrayal of themselves as "servants" and the people as the recipients of their service establishes a profound relationship, suggesting that their entire effort has been directed towards the betterment of society. This narrative not only highlights their tenure since 2001 but also underscores the essence of their political approach, one that is grounded in serving the needs and interests of the people.

In essence, by positioning themselves as devoted servants of the Istanbul populace, they project an aura of service-oriented leadership. This narrative seeks to emphasise their dedication to public service, portraying their role as extending beyond the mere exercise of power. This aligns with a message of political modesty and underscores a commitment to catering to the genuine welfare of the people they serve.

6.2.7 The change in the AKP's strategy

During the first round of the election, both candidates implemented distinct advertising strategies in comparison to the initial phase. Yıldırım's campaign advertisements were predominantly party-leader centred but also emphasised his extensive 25-year political experience and professionalism. These ads

effectively showcased the party's past achievements, including notable projects such as the Third Bridge, tunnels, and the Istanbul airport, which served as evidence of their ability to deliver future ventures. Moreover, the advertisements strategically portrayed Yıldırım and Erdoğan as knowledgeable authorities on municipal affairs, aligning with the party's service-oriented approach and positioning the candidate as a dedicated public servant. Notably, Yıldırım's ads featured the presence of Erdoğan, symbolising the consolidation of voter support and effectively utilising a combination of past and present elements to resonate with the electorate. Yıldırım's campaign was party-leader centred and his candidacy was overshadowed by Erdoğan.

In the second round of the election, Yıldırım's campaign strategy underwent a significant shift, notably evident in the advertisements. Unlike the initial phase, where Yıldırım was featured alongside Erdoğan, the second-round ads exclusively showcased Yıldırım in a solo capacity. This change in strategy aimed to highlight Yıldırım's individual qualities, capabilities, and commitment to the city, potentially allowing him to connect with voters on a more personal level. By presenting Yıldırım independently, the campaign sought to emphasise his leadership qualities and position him as the primary figure driving the agenda and solutions for Istanbul. According to AC1's (2021) insights from the interviews, it was revealed that Yıldırım's campaign exhibited certain mixed signals. Furthermore, POA3 (2021) highlighted that the issues existing within the AKP were mirrored in Yıldırım's campaign, as evidenced by significant strategic changes, particularly the shift towards a candidate-centric campaign approach shortly before the second round of the election. These observations suggest a correlation between the internal dynamics and challenges within the AKP and the subsequent adjustments made in Yıldırım's campaign strategy.

During the second round, Yıldırım released a series of videos in which he used the hashtag #yinebizyaparız which means "only we can make it again" and #vatanaşkıylaçalışıyoruz "we work with the love of the nation". In the ads, there is a presentation of their past projects such as "we have constructed numerous sports centres in Istanbul that adhere to international standards, and we are the sole providers of free access to these facilities for university students". During the presentation of these projects, traditional music is employed in the background, serving to convey the message that the AKP upholds traditional values and positions itself as their custodian. This choice of music also symbolises the party's commitment to its roots. Notably, the advertisement features Yıldırım walking alone against the backdrop of the Bosphorus, his gaze turned towards the future. Clad in a black suit adorned with a Turkish flag badge, he retains his authoritative political appearance. This imagery suggests that he has a clear vision of projects and significant objectives to accomplish if elected. The portrayal of Yıldırım as a solitary figure in the advertisement signifies a candidate-centric campaign rather than one centred around the party leader. Simultaneously, a subtitle accompanies his presence, proclaiming, "We work with a love for our nation, and only we can realise these projects once again." The juxtaposition of Yıldırım strolling along the Bosphorus with this subtitle conveys the notion that he possesses the full

authority to govern the city and address the populace's needs through his extensive political experience. Once again, we witness the presentation of Yıldırım's professionalism and the strategic endeavour to foster trust by emphasising his experience.

In addition to his video series, Yıldırım's billboard ads prominently display him surrounded by diverse groups of individuals, including students, families, women wearing headscarves, and doctors. This diverse representation symbolises the inclusivity of his campaign and appeals to voters from various segments of the city's population. Yıldırım is positioned at the forefront, with open arms, symbolising his welcoming approach and suggesting that his agenda encompasses the interests and concerns of all constituents. This portrayal presents a more unpretentious figure, and gave him a more approachable look in comparison to his previous ads during the first round of the campaign.

Adjacent to Yıldırım's image, a slogan is displayed: "give the work to professionals; the decision belongs to the nation." The inclusion of the term "nation" in the slogan holds significant implications, as it extends beyond the boundaries of Istanbul and transforms the local election into a broader political contest. This positioning portrays the party as a political force not only for Istanbul but for the entire nation, thereby aiming to establish a political hegemony. Through this slogan, Yıldırım positions himself as the expert, the singular figure capable of effectively governing the city due to his extensive political experience. It conveys the message that he relies on his political acumen and service-oriented approach to persuade voters. The text suggests that Yıldırım's experience sets him apart as the most knowledgeable candidate for the task of governing the city, simultaneously insinuating that others lack the requisite expertise.

6.2.8 The Notion of Being Istanbulite

Another video ad on Yıldırım's YouTube channel is called #IstanbulRedWhite, and it starts with the view of a ferry, one of the symbols of Istanbul. The hashtag symbolises the colour of our flag which shows the nationalistic side of the AKP once again. According to AC3 (2021), the use of the Turkish flag is also another indicator of the AKP which identifies "the Muslim Turk" both at home and abroad. In the ad, there is a young guy eating simit (a Turkish bagel) on the ferry, which is a very Istanbulite scene. In the background, we hear a voice saying "we as a nation, we love talking with each other and we love to ask one specific question; where do you come from". The question of where you come from is a very common question that people in Istanbul ask each other when they first meet. Yıldırım's ad uses this question as a campaign tool and then starts to show people from different parts of Turkey. People ask each other about their origins, and they all have different answers. One baker says s/he comes from the Black Sea, a student comes from the East Anatolian side of Turkey, one lady is from the Aegean region and so on. The ad is 1'15" long and has very typical Istanbul scenes such as a guy on the street selling simit (bagel), bazaars, bridges, ferries, fishers, the Maiden Tower, and so forth. Then towards the end of the ad, Yıldırım appears with his red and white scarf saying Türkiye (Turkey) on it. He says "even though we come from different parts of Turkey, we are all red and white, we are

Turkey, let's do this Turkey. You made it once, you can make it again". After his speech, the slogan appears in red and white; "Let's do this Turkey, you made it before, you can make it once again."

The advertisement in question highlights the cosmopolitan aspect of Istanbul by featuring individuals from various regions of Turkey and utilising specific expressions and phrases commonly employed by Istanbulites. Its intention appears to be to establish an emotional connection with the voter base and underscore a shared identity, city, and values, with the AKP being purportedly cognisant of these commonalities. The advertisement employs the colours red and white, which are representative of the Turkish flag, potentially seeking to foster feelings of national belonging or nationalism among voters. Yıldırım's red and white scarf is consistent with the campaign slogan "we are all red and white" and may signal his representation of the nation as a whole, rather than solely the mayoral candidate of Istanbul. Consequently, the advertisement seemingly moves beyond merely targeting Istanbul and aspires to engage voters throughout Turkey, possibly resulting in confusion among voters. Yıldırım's campaign seeks to unite the electorate by emphasising a sense of coherence and belonging, regardless of individual differences, while concurrently evoking nationalistic sentiments of being a Turk or being red and white. The campaign's evolving tone strives for greater inclusivity than earlier iterations, though it remains reliant on nationalist feelings.

During his speech in the ad, by using the sentence "you made it before", Yıldırım referred to the previous elections by stressing it is time to vote for the AKP again, just as they did since 2002. In one sense, they placed a pressure on the voters to recreate their past voting behaviours, and encouraged a collective movement to do so. As with previous campaign messages, the AKP aims to establish a connection between past successes and current efforts, seeking to remind voters of the party's previous accomplishments through the present rhetoric.

6.3 The textual analysis of CHP

6.3.1 "Solution" as the keyword

Imamoğlu's main campaign ad slogan is "If there is Imamoğlu, then there is a solution" *(Imamoğlu varsa çözüm var)* and CAM1(2021) believes that they won the first round with the word "solution". In this ad, different from Yıldırım, Imamoğlu is alone, without any party leader, and this made his campaign a candidate-centred campaign while Yıldırım had a party-leader centred campaign. In the background, there is a use of bright colours giving the impression of a new beginning and hope for the future. In the ad, there is a view of the Bosphorous and the historical landscape of Istanbul, where we can see some important historical monuments such as Dolmabahçe and Topkapı Palace and Maiden Tower. In addition to the historical values highlighted in the ad, there is a prominent portrayal of one of Istanbul's iconic symbols, the ferry. The ferry holds significant cultural and practical significance in Istanbul, serving as a common mode of transportation between the Anatolian and European sides of the city. By incorporating this symbol, the ad effectively taps into the collective consciousness of Istanbul's

residents, evoking a sense of familiarity and shared experience. This strategic use of imagery conveys Imamoğlu's awareness and understanding of Istanbul's distinct values, and positions him as the representative who will uphold and embody these shared values. Furthermore, these visual references can serve as a reminder of the cultural and societal cohesion that exists among the people of Istanbul, fostering a sense of unity and collective identity. In animal symbolism the bird symbolises freedom (Victor, 2023) and in Imamoğlu's ad, there is a flying bird behind him which might symbolise the freedom that he will bring to Istanbul citizens with his solutions. The use of these symbols also reminds us that we are living in the same city, sharing the same values and he will be the representative of these values with his solutions.

When analysing the slogan, the word "solution" is written in red which might aim to catch the voters' attention, and preferring red might also symbolise his power and passion for Istanbul. The use of red might also be used to show the urgency or need for a solution. It gives the impression that Istanbul needs some urgent solutions and that there is no time to wait. By showing himself in the ad, he gives the impression that he will come up with solutions and is aware of the problems in the city. According to the interview data, "solution" was an essential word for that time because of the city's severe financial problems. Therefore, there was a perceived need for a solution, and for someone to understand the issues   of   the   people,   and   devise   a   plan. Imamoğlu's ad appears to have the objective of invoking the important values inherent to the city of Istanbul and conveying the message that he will strive to address the challenges faced by its residents while preserving and embracing these values. By showcasing the diverse cultural, historical, and social aspects of Istanbul, the ad seeks to create a sense of nostalgia and attachment among viewers, emphasising the significance of these values in shaping the identity of the city. Furthermore, the slogan "If there is Imamoğlu, then there is a solution" suggests that Imamoğlu, as the candidate, is committed to finding effective solutions that would enhance the quality of life for the people of Istanbul, aligning with and respecting the cherished values associated with the city. It aims to instil confidence in the voters, and that Imamoğlu will be a capable leader who can navigate the complexities of Istanbul's unique context and work towards a better future that upholds its core values. It could also suggest that he intended to instil hope in a seemingly hopeless situation by emphasising the concept of "solution." The inclusion of the word "solution" in the advertisement may symbolise the prospect of a fresh start for Istanbul.

6.3.2 The message of inclusivity as the fostering force of the campaign

The slogan "the decision is yours, Istanbul is yours" *(Karar senin, Istanbul senin)* employed by Imamoğlu's campaign conveys a message of empowerment and inclusivity to the voters. By emphasising that the decision-making power lies in the hands of the people, the slogan aims to foster a sense of ownership and engagement among the electorate. It also has a sense of unity and inclusivity as the slogan conveys the message that every citizen of Istanbul, regardless of their background or

affiliation, has an equal stake in the city's future and should have a say in its governance. This message aligns with the principles of participatory democracy, highlighting the importance of public input and involvement in the political process (Dacombe and Parvin, 2021). By positioning the voters as active agents in the decision-making process, the slogan seeks to evoke a sense of responsibility and encourages them to exercise their democratic right to choose the leader who will best represent their interests and aspirations. In this context, the slogan can be seen as an expression of inverted populism, wherein the positive elements of populism are utilised to foster unity and collective empowerment rather than division. By placing the decision-making power in the hands of the people and emphasising their collective ownership of Istanbul, Imamoğlu seeks to create a sense of shared responsibility and engagement in the political process. The slogan implies that the voters collectively hold the key to shaping the future of their city and that their choices and voices will be respected and valued by Imamoğlu. Overall, the slogan promotes a message of democratic participation, inclusivity, and unity among the diverse population of Istanbul.

In the background, there are voters from different parts of society. For example, one lady is wearing a headscarf, there is a doctor and next to him there is a farmer, with Imamoğlu in the corner of the ad. The presence of Imamoğlu in the same scenario suggests that he is positioning himself as a unifying figure who aims to bridge the differences among the voters and to lead Istanbul with an ethos of joint decision-making. This ad also indicates that Imamoğlu aims to abandon CHP's elitist political outlook (see Chapter 3) and strives for an inclusive political agenda. His slogan does not divide the society, on the contrary it offers to govern the city together, with joint decisions. The comparison between the campaign ads of Imamoğlu and Yıldırım illustrates a contrast between the rhetorical strategies of emphasising local identity and past achievements, respectively. While Yıldırım's ad featured him standing with people with the third bridge in the background, a tangible symbol of the ruling party's infrastructure projects, and asserted that "work belongs to professionals, decision belongs to the nation," Imamoğlu's ad relied on symbols of Istanbul, such as the Galata Tower and the Bosphorus, to evoke a sense of place-based pride and unity. Notably, Imamoğlu's ad did not feature his political background or past accomplishments, as he lacked the incumbency advantage of Yıldırım and the AKP. Instead, Imamoğlu sought to align himself with the aspirations and values of the local residents, emphasising the need for inclusivity and participatory governance.

6.3.3 Local Projects

As mentioned in the interview section, Imamoğlu's projects were smaller and more locally based than Yıldırım's. But as his campaign manager mentions, they were effective local projects, which was the most important thing for that time (CAM, 2021). In his ad series on projects, there is a use of different colours (orange, green or red) for each project and the reason could be to catch the voters' attention. In the ad, it appears as if Imamoğlu is looking away and thinking, visualising the future. It also gives an

impression that he is hopeful for the future, and with his signature below every ad, he gives the impression that he is the presenter and the guarantor of each project.

Some of his local projects are; a 40% discount on water, and an economy package for the families that need financial help, a job opportunity for 200.000 people, 78 health centres and so on. There is a clear difference when comparing his projects with Yıldırım's projects. Yıldırım presents projects such as food banks, biotechnology centres or energy villages which are big and prestigious projects. In contrast, Imamoğlu presents local projects to appeal to people's basic needs.

When analysing the ads about projects, the way the projects are presented is clear, they are easy to read and catchy because of the colours, and sound more down-to-earth compared to Yıldırım's projects (for example free bread and milk will be provided to families without income) (see the Appendix). Under each project, there is a heart-shaped logo saying that "if there is Imamoğlu, then there is a solution". So, he keeps giving positive messages by using the heart-shaped logo and getting away from negative feelings such as fear or anger towards each other. When presenting the projects, he also uses his youth and dynamism. The visual presentation of Imamoğlu in his campaign ad conveys a sense of futurity and dynamism, which contrasts with the age-based appeal of Yıldırım's ad. By portraying himself as a visionary leader who can visualise the future of the city, Imamoğlu seeks to project an image of competence and determination. This message is reinforced by his relative youth compared to Yıldırım, who utilises his experience and professional track record to establish credibility. The contrast between the two candidates' age-based appeals reflects a broader tension between generational change and political experience in contemporary campaigns. While Yıldırım's strategy relies on the traditional association between age and wisdom, Imamoğlu seeks to turn the youthfulness into an asset by emphasising his potential to bring fresh ideas and solutions to the challenges facing Istanbul.

6.3.4 The use of Hope

While Yıldırım's ads changed their strategy into a candidate-centred campaign and used Yıldırım's political experience of 25 years as their campaign slogan, Imamoğlu uses hope and injustice for his second-round campaign ads. As mentioned earlier, during the first round Imamoğlu's slogan was "if there is Imamoğlu, there is a solution" and for the second round his slogan turned out to be "if there is Imamoğlu then there is hope" *(Imamoğlu varsa umut var).* So, instead of "solution", they used "hope" this time. For CAM1 (2021), it was a practical change and made the slogan easy to remember for the voters. After the rerun decision, voters who had voted for Imamoğlu might have felt hopeless or believed that their vote had been in vain. In order to address this sentiment and combat the perception of futility, it was crucial for Imamoğlu's campaign to incorporate the element of hope (ibid). The inclusion of the word "hope" and positioning Imamoğlu as the ambassador of hope became significant in this context. The campaign poster featured the slogan "If there is Imamoğlu, there is hope," placed within a heart symbol. This served as a continuation of Imamoğlu's positive campaign approach that he had maintained since the beginning. Additionally, the use of Imamoğlu's smiling face alongside the

heart further conveyed a message of hope. Indeed, the word "hope" in political communication evokes reminiscences of Barack Obama's 2008 campaign (Stitzlein, 2019). In his 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama employed a strategy that resonated with a significant number of voters, which centred around the theme of "Hope and Change," as exemplified by his campaign slogan, "Yes, we can." (Bacon, 2016). This message was particularly appealing to those who were dissatisfied with the existing political system and aspired to a more optimistic and progressive future (Bacon, 2016). Obama's emphasis on hope and positivity as a means of mobilising the electorate reflected a broader trend in contemporary campaigns that recognise the importance of affective appeals and the need to inspire and motivate voters (ibid). Just like Obama's "Hope and Change" message, Imamoğlu's slogan "If there is Imamoğlu, there is hope" seeks to instil a sense of optimism and possibility among voters. By linking his candidacy with the idea of hope, Imamoğlu aims to inspire voters to believe in the potential for positive change and to reject cynicism and despair. This message is particularly relevant in the context of Istanbul, where residents face various challenges, ranging from economic inequality to environmental degradation. By positioning himself as a beacon of hope, Imamoğlu seeks to establish a personal connection with the electorate and to signal his commitment to address these issues with a sense of urgency and determination.

Another campaign slogan that evoked a sense of hope was "Everything will be good" (*Her şey çok güzel olacak)*, where the word "good" was emphasised with capital letters and displayed in red. The use of a graffiti-like font in the slogan conveyed a sense of youthfulness, energy, and rebellion. The use of red in the ad shows the eagerness, passion and energy that he still has. Imamoğlu's campaign poster featured a black and white image of himself rendered in a graffiti-like style. Graffiti art, originally associated with the youth culture of New York City, can be seen as a form of rebellion against dominant norms and values (*Tate, n.d*). Imamoğlu's utilisation of a graffiti-inspired design and typography in his campaign poster may aim to evoke a sense of rebellion or defiance, particularly in light of the fact that despite winning in the first round, the election was repeated. This visual approach could serve as a symbol of resilience and determination in the face of adversity. Also, by appropriating a visual style associated with urban subcultures, Imamoğlu seeks to position himself as a candidate who can speak to the concerns and aspirations of young, urban voters.

The image of Imamoğlu in the campaign ad, portrayed in black and white and wearing a smile, carries significant symbolism. His smiling face can be interpreted as a powerful message that despite the election outcome, he maintains a positive outlook and strives to foster unity rather than polarisation. The ad effectively communicates Imamoğlu's unwavering determination and commitment to continue working towards a brighter future. It conveys the idea that he remains resilient and determined to bring positive change to the city, regardless of the challenges he may face.

6.3.5 **The change in Imamoğlu's discourse**

After the rerun decision, Imamoğlu utilised multiple slogans over the course of four weeks. The use of multiple slogans is a common tactic employed by political campaigns to convey different messages to different segments of the electorate and to respond to changing circumstances and events (Green and Gerber, 2019). In the case of Imamoğlu's campaign, the use of multiple slogans may also reflect the need to maintain momentum and sustain interest among supporters in the face of a highly competitive and dynamic political environment. In the following section, the various slogans used by Imamoğlu during this phase of the campaign will be examined.

In the aftermath of the rerun decision, Imamoğlu's campaign employed two main slogans: "We will end this system of waste" and "No one will be silent, everyone will talk." The slogan "*israf düzeni son bulacak*" (the era of waste will come to an end) conveys İmamoğlu's message that he perceives the projects carried out by the AKP as wasteful and aims to put an end to this system. By using the term "*israf düzeni*" (era of waste), Imamoğlu emphasises his stance against what he considers the unnecessary and inefficient allocation of resources. The slogan implies that Imamoğlu's administration would prioritise responsible and efficient use of public funds, redirecting them towards more beneficial initiatives for the city. The prominent display of the phrase "system of waste" in bold font on the advertisement indicates the intention to draw attention to the economic challenges experienced by the population and to portray the projects implemented by the AKP as a mis-allocation of resources. By highlighting the concept of waste, the campaign seeks to resonate with the concerns of the electorate and position Imamoğlu as the candidate who recognises and aims to address these issues. The use of bold typography adds visual impact and reinforces the message, effectively capturing the viewers' attention and conveying the seriousness of the problem at hand. Additionally, the term implied that the AKP's projects were not aligned with the basic needs of the people. The slogan was indirectly aimed at drawing attention to the financial issues that people were facing and questioning the necessity of the AKP's projects. In response to Imamoğlu's campaign, the AKP used the slogan "serving Istanbul is not a waste" to present their projects as investments for the betterment of Istanbul. However, the opposition saw'the"e projects as unnecessary and believed that they did not align with the basic needs of the people. Therefore, the use of slogans was significant in this campaign as it helped to frame the debate and draw attention to the issues that were of concern to the electorate. Imamoğlu's slogan not only serves to criticise Yıldırım's projects but also highlights his own smaller-scale projects as an alternative. Through an indirect mode of communication, by using the term "waste," Imamoğlu aimed to deliver his message to voters without directly offending AKP. His projects were presented under the theme of the "system of waste will end" slogan, with an emphasis on prioritising the needs of children, starting an educational campaign, providing free water and bread to families with no income, and mobilising development and productivity in Istanbul (*ibb, 2023*). Indeed, this approach can be interpreted as a manifestation of inverted populism in the campaign strategy. By focusing on simpler, more practical projects aimed at

meeting the immediate needs of the people, Imamoğlu's campaign indirectly critiques the AKP's larger-scale projects by labelling them as "waste".

Imamoğlu's second slogan, "No one will be silent, everyone will talk,"(*Kimse susmayacak, herkes konuşacak)* was derived from his speech on the night the election result was annulled by the electoral board. In his speech, he urged everyone in society to speak up, stand against injustice, and seek justice. By incorporating this sentence into his campaign slogan, he aimed to remind people of that night, inspire them, and express his anger towards the decision. The message was clear: he did not want to lose the second round, and everyone needed to vote and support him. His campaign advertisement sought to create solidarity around him and end the unjust system. One interviewee even suggested that the slogan could be seen as a new movement that served as a wake-up call not only for Istanbul but also for the entire country (POA3, 2021). This shift in Imamoğlu's approach signalled his willingness to fight for what is right and to challenge injustice, departing from his previous, humbler demeanour.

While giving these messages, he continued announcing some important projects such as that bread, milk and water will be free for families without any income, or that financial aid of 6.000 to 13.000 Turkish Lira will be given to those in need. These were important projects of Imamoğlu which targeted basic needs and signified his understanding of the people's problems. By coming up with these projects, he also wanted to keep his focus on the local needs and problems that people were facing. His second-week campaign ads were both focused on finding justice and continued to present more local projects. For AC1(2021), it was important to keep that balance because people did not want to see furious and angry politicians in Turkey any more.

In the third week of the campaign, Imamoğlu shifted his campaign message to one of unity, using the tactic of inverted populism to convey his message. He used several campaign ads during that week. The first one was "we are the great majority of this city" *(biz bu şehrin büyük çoğunluğuyuz).* With this he was sending a message of unity to the people of Istanbul, emphasising the idea that they are all in this together, regardless of their political affiliations. At the same time, however, he was also implicitly criticising AKP's discourse of "we are the majority of this country," which is often used to justify their policies and decisions. By employing this strategy, he effectively utilised inverted populism, a tactic that unites people around positive sentiments. Through this slogan, he aimed to ensure that his supporters did not feel isolated following the contentious decision, and he fostered a sense of unity and trust among them.

Another noteworthy campaign ad featured the message "partisanship will end," *(partizanlık bitecek)* in which he once again subtly criticised the governance of the AKP. This approach alluded to the AKP's tendency to appoint its own party members or even relatives to crucial government positions. In employing these subtly critical slogans, he skilfully drew attention to the perceived corruption within governance. This sentiment is echoed by Yılmaz (2019), who asserts that Erdoğan formed a close-knit circle of loyal individuals around him, often disregarding the expectations of the grassroots. This

tendency to operate within small circles extended even to the appointment of his son-in-law as the finance minister.

He also used the slogan "the 16 million will win" *(16 milyon kazanacak).* This slogan underscored the importance of inclusivity and a non-partisan approach to governance. By referring to the population of Istanbul, which is approximately 16 million, Imamoğlu conveyed the message that the collective needs and aspirations of the city's residents would take precedence over narrow political interests. The slogan aimed to gather people from diverse backgrounds and political affiliations, emphasising their shared identity as residents of Istanbul. It sought to transcend political polarisation and unite the electorate under the common goal of working towards a better future for the city. Imamoğlu's campaign positioned him as a unifying figure who would prioritise the well-being of all citizens, irrespective of their political leanings.

He also used "the municipality will be the server of the 16 million people" *(belediyeyi 16 milyonun hizmetkarı yapacağız)* as a slogan which conveyed the message that his governance would be devoid of clientelism and favouritism. This slogan also carried an implicit critique of the AKP's practice of clientelistic relationships within the municipality. It aimed to showcase Imamoğlu as a leader who would prioritise serving the entire society without any discriminatory biases. The slogan strategically incorporated the term "service," which has been a central slogan for the AKP since its establishment. By using the word "server" in his campaign, Imamoğlu sought to capture the attention of AKP's voters and present an alternative approach to governance. It implied that Imamoğlu's administration would be focused on providing equal and unbiased service to all members of society.

The fourth slogan was "partisanship will be over, the municipality will win" *(particilik değil, belediyecilik yapacağız)* which again indirectly plays on the AKP's partisanship and corrupted relations in governance. His slogan indicates that Imamoğlu will offer transparent governance without any clientelistic relations. He aims to distance himself from the AKP's reputation for rewarding political loyalty with appointments and benefits. Instead, he positions himself as a candidate who will prioritise the needs and concerns of the municipality as a whole, fostering a sense of trust and accountability in his governance. This slogan underscores his broader campaign theme of inclusive and accountable leadership, effectively contrasting his approach with what many perceive as the AKP's insular and partisan tendencies.

The last slogan from this series is "We will unify and reconcil" *(birleştirecek, bütünleştirecek, barıştıracağız).* With the data coming from the interviews, from the beginning until the end of his campaign, Imamoğlu's campaign was about unifying people and giving hope to them with local solutions. In this slogan, Imamoğlu still keeps his positive attitude and promises to unify people. Despite the injustice, his slogan continues to be inclusive. He represents himself as the messenger who will find the middle way to end the polarisation in society and his campaign slogan in this ad is a reminder of

that feeling of unity. Furthermore, through this slogan, Imamoğlu is also distinguishing himself from the conventional political approach associated with the CHP. He is moving away from the image of the CHP as a party exclusively for the pro-Western and secularist population. Instead, he presents himself as a candidate who will govern the city with a political ideology that encompasses everyone, regardless of their political or religious inclinations.

This strategic move signifies a departure from the long-standing secularist stance of the CHP and aligns more with a politics of inclusivity and unity (POA3, 2021). By doing so, Imamoğlu aims to project an image of a leader who can bring together diverse segments of the population, resonating with those who have grown weary of divisive political rhetoric in Turkish politics. This approach is aimed at portraying himself as a unifying figure who can bridge gaps and foster a sense of belonging for all citizens under his governance in Istanbul (ibid).

During the fourth week of the campaign, one week before the second round of the election, the ads of Imamoğlu became bolder. As a campaign ad, the image of Imamoğlu is used from that historical speech he gave on the re-election decision night. There was a crucial moment during his speech where he rolled up his sleeves to show his anger and gave the message, "I am ready to fight against this injustice" (*bu haksızlığa karşı savaşmaya hazırım)*. This moment is used in the ad, his sleeves are rolled up and he looks angry but also determined to win the election again. The image of Imamoğlu in the ad looks like a Marvel book drawing, which aims to situate him as a hero and is in line with the heroisation process mentioned by his campaign manager in the interview data analysis section. In the ad, we see his fist, which signifies his power, determination and ambition to win once again.

His second ad slogan on the fourth week is "right/truth will find its place" *(hak yerini bulacak)* and "everything will be good". The term "right" holds a significant role here, as it reflects Imamoğlu's conviction that the decision to rerun the election was orchestrated by the AKP. He gives the message that he will pursue his right, he will not give up and he believes in a happy ending by saying that everything will be good again. In other words, he keeps giving hope to people for a better future. The last slogans are "Go to the ballot box" *(herkes sandık başına)* and "Imamoğlu head to work" *(Imamoğlu iş başına)*. With these slogans, the aim is to call people to vote and not give up because of the previous election result. They also serve a dual purpose. It not only encourages citizens to actively participate in the voting process, but also conveys a sense of urgency and responsibility. By urging people to "go to the ballot box", Imamoğlu aims to counter any potential voter apathy resulting from the earlier election outcome. Additionally, the phrase "Imamoğlu head to work" signifies a dynamic commitment to immediately assume his mayoral responsibilities upon being elected, reinforcing his dedication to swift and effective governance for Istanbul. This slogan embodies an aura of proactive action, appealing to voters' sense of agency and their potential role in shaping the city's future under his leadership.

6.4 Conclusion

The aim of this section was to compare the campaign ads used by both candidates throughout the two election periods and demonstrate the aspects in which the CHP ads differentiated from those of the AKP. Imamoğlu's campaign was characterised by a strategic communication approach that initially focused on offering solutions and promoting inclusivity, and later transitioned towards conveying messages of hope and the pursuit of justice. This deliberate strategy aimed to differentiate itself from Yıldırım's campaign ads and effectively engage with the electorate.

While examining the reasons that differentiate Imamoğlu's campaign ads from Yıldırım's, there are several differences between the ads of the two candidates. Firstly, Imamoğlu's campaign ads prominently feature local solutions, hope and unity. He focuses on addressing the specific issues faced by Istanbul and presents himself as a problem solver. Imamoğlu's campaign ads demonstrated a deliberate intention to foster inclusivity and did not use polarisation. The messaging and visuals employed in his ads aimed to appeal to a broad range of voters and create a sense of unity among diverse segments of society. By steering clear of divisive rhetoric and focusing on shared values and aspirations, Imamoğlu aimed to position himself as a candidate who could bridge the gaps and bring people together. In the second round, however, the campaign ads of Imamoğlu took on a tone that reflected a sense of rebellion and the pursuit of justice, even though the message of hope replaced the emphasis on concrete solutions. This shift in the campaign ads can be attributed to a deliberate strategy aimed at resonating with the sentiments of the electorate and addressing their concerns regarding the fairness of the election process. The ads adopted a tone of defiance and the quest for justice, signalling a departure from the earlier emphasis on specific solutions. By adopting an assertive and rebellious stance, the campaign appealed to voters who felt hopeless by the circumstances surrounding the election and who tried to find a solution for injustices. This strategic choice aimed to address the emotions and frustrations of the electorate, fostering a sense of solidarity and mobilising support among those who shared similar sentiments.

In contrast to Imamoğlu's campaign ads, Yıldırım's ads primarily focused on highlighting the AKP and Erdoğan, his professionalism, invoking nationalistic sentiments, emphasising his political experience, and showcasing past achievements. The messaging and visuals used in his ads aimed to project a sense of competence, leadership, and alignment with the core values of his party, with the backing of Erdoğan serving as an additional source of support. Yıldırım's campaign ads strategically employed a reminiscence of his past achievements, used AKP's core values to create an emotional attachment and utilised his extensive experience as a testament to his capabilities, should he be elected. These ads served as a reminder to the electorate of his track record and aimed to establish a connection between his past accomplishments and the potential for future success. By highlighting his experience, Yıldırım aimed to convey a sense of competence and proficiency in effectively addressing the challenges facing Istanbul. Moreover, Yıldırım's campaign ads adopted a party-leader-centred approach, aligning

themselves with the discourse and values of the AKP. The utilisation of inclusive pronouns such as "we" instead of a more individualistic discourse centred on "I" demonstrated his intention to present himself as a representative of the party and its collective objectives, rather than solely emphasising his personal candidacy. By embodying the party's discourse and identity in his campaign ads, Yıldırım aimed to emphasise continuity and the party's established agenda for governance. The Rabia sign employed by Erdoğan and the presence of mosque imagery in campaign advertisements were also signifiers of the power of Erdoğan and AKP's political orientation. The use of the Rabia sign signifies Erdoğan's sense of defiance and invincibility, projecting an image of resolute determination. Simultaneously, the use of mosque highlights the AKP's Islamic orientation, aiming to solidify its voter base. By showcasing the mosques, the campaign seeks to remind voters of the AKP's dedication to upholding Islamic principles and serving as the representative of conservative constituents. In essence, both the Rabia sign and mosque imagery in campaign materials contribute to Erdoğan's portrayal as a source of powerful leadership and underscore the AKP's Islamic character. By appealing to a sense of unity and religiosity, these symbols aim to consolidate the party's voter base while simultaneously projecting a message of strength and unwavering commitment to its supporters.

In conclusion, the campaign ads of Imamoğlu and Yıldırım showed the contrasting strategies employed by the candidates. Imamoğlu's ads conveyed a sense of practicality and optimism, highlighting his commitment to addressing local issues and offering a vision of hope and justice. Yıldırım's ads, in turn, leaned on past accomplishments, their political professionalism and core values to create an emotional bond, and relied on party-leader and Islamic symbolism. This dichotomy in messaging ultimately emphasised the candidates' distinct approaches to winning the trust and support of Istanbul's electorate. Even though Yıldırım's communication strategy changed and become more personalised around himself in the second round of elections, interview data indicated that it did not achieve the expected impact on the voters but caused confusion.

The upcoming chapter will show the data from the qualitative content analysis of the rally speeches of both candidates. It will consider if AKP's and CHP's use of populism intersects with each other at some point, and whether the use of populist political communication was a factor that caused the AKP's election loss.

Chapter 7 – Findings of Qualitative Content analysis

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative content analysis of 120 speeches given by Ekrem Imamoğlu and Binali Yıldırım during the 2019 local election campaigns. The research uses qualitative content analysis to find populist words and sentences and presents them under relevant themes. By analysing the speeches, the aim is to demonstrate which dimensions of populism are successful in the Turkish context: the polarising side of populism, or the concept of inverted populism which aims to unify. Research question 1.3 also aims to answer the question whether AKP's and CHP's use of populism intersects with each other at some point, and if the use of populist political communication was a factor that caused the AKP's election loss.

Speeches play an essential role in portraying the ideology and worldview of an individual or institution (Finlayson and Martin, 2008). Political speeches by political leaders serve an additional purpose, as they are key to motivating voters, building relations during the rallies and trying to persuade voters about the value of political ideologies (ibid). Political speeches could be seen as a means of unifying the aims of "political institutions, citizens and politicians" (ibid.: 452).

The primary aim of qualitative content analysis is to focus on the words and language used systematically (Neuendorf, 2002). The sample was analysed first by reading and transcribing the speeches to identify the populist messages conveyed by Imamoğlu and Yıldırım and then relating frequent words and terms to find the mutual themes to present a general overview of textual and ideological representation. To demonstrate key populist words and themes, I will code the speeches systematically across the two election periods. In order to present a comprehensive and rational understanding, I randomly selected the speeches from each month out of a total of 250 speeches. I analysed every speech in themes according to the words/sentences identified as populist (see the Methodology Chapter table 1). The themes and populist words and sentences were initially identified and coded from the rally speeches. The speeches were taken from different sources (explained in Section 4.6) and were in Turkish. The content analysis was analysed in the original language; however, the terms and segments referred to in this thesis have been translated into English.

The available evidence drawn from the interviews with elites and textual analysis of the campaign ads of AKP and CHP (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) for this study, suggests that Imamoğlu's campaign relied on some specific content and concepts such as finding local solutions for local problems, the use of inverted populism to stand against populism, inclusive and hopeful discourse for the future, and the use of candidate-centred campaign. On the other hand, Yıldırım's campaign focused on AKP's core values such as their service-oriented look, past success stories, religion, and this campaign can be defined as a party-leader-centred campaign. In the analysed 60 campaign speeches of Yıldırım, one of

the key elements that made the campaign party-leader-centric was Erdoğan delivering 40 of these speeches himself. That is why Erdoğan's speeches will be under analysis more than Yıldırım's speeches. Another important point to mention is that Erdoğan's speeches were almost identical, they had very similar content to each other. Whilst analysing the two campaign periods, the focus will be on the use of populism (under the themes) and how candidates use or avoid populism in their discourses between January 2019-June 2019.

7.2 The recurring themes of AKP

For the qualitative content analysis part of the thesis, 60 speeches from AKP have been analysed and populist themes occurred almost in every speech delivered mostly by Erdoğan (40 speeches) and by Yıldırım (20 speeches). The populist themes are: protecting territorial integrity, AKP as the voice of the oppressed people, demonising the opponent, protecting religious identity, stealing the vote, and the use of Rabia as the symbol of defiance. As mentioned earlier in the interview analysis and textual analysis of the campaign ads of AKP and CHP, AKP carried out a party-leader-centred campaign which is why when analysing the rally speeches, Erdoğan was more dominant than Yıldırım. Because of this, I will be referencing him more than Yıldırım throughout this chapter. In one of his rally speeches, Erdoğan said that he made 28 district rallies in Istanbul (Yenikapı rally, 2019) and Istanbul has 39 districts, and this number could be seen as an important indicator that the AKP carried out a party-leader-centred campaign. The reason Erdoğan made more rally speeches than Yıldırım is that Erdoğan's discourse skills are better than any other member of AKP, he can convince and consolidate AKP's voter base more than other political figures in the party and he is still the dominant power of the AKP (Dogan, 2022).

As themes, protection of religious identity and the use of Rabia[10] as a defiance symbol constituted a significant portion of their discourses (but mostly Erdoğan's): in total religion was referenced 116 times and the Rabia sign used 60 times in 60 speeches. Other than religious identity, the most used populist themes were: demonising the opponent by calling them corrupted elites, protecting territorial integrity by showing CHP as a traitor, and AKP being the voice of the oppressed. When analysing sentences in-depth, these themes are embedded in sentences such as; "they are corrupted elites", "CHP is a mud, hole and dirt but AKP means cleanliness", "they are thieves, losers and dishonest", "CHP is a nightmare", "we work with the love of the God, and we protect our azan [11]against them".

As previously mentioned, showing the "other" as an enemy, corrupted (morally) and represented as a danger to society is defined as the main characteristic of populist political leaders and parties around

---

[10] Before moving on to the other elements of his discourse, it would be worth defining the Rabia sign. The Rabia was a sign used by Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and their supporters in the Islamic world after Eygptian Mohammed Morsi was ousted from office by the military coup on 3 July 2013, and after the commander-in-chief of the Egyptian armed forces Abdel Fattah al-Sisi took over the power.

[11] Azan is the Muslim call to prayer five times a day made by a muezzin from the minaret of a mosque.

the world (Mudde, 2017). In the rally speeches of Erdoğan and Yıldırım, some of the most used themes were demonising the opponent, creating fear of "the other" by presenting them as danger, and by denigrating Imamoğlu and the CHP as terrorists working with terrorist groups to divide Turkey. The AKP also demonised the CHP by saying "CHP is a mud, dirt and hole", they called them liars, thieves (AKP said that CHP stole the votes in the first round) and losers. As part of their demonisation strategy, the AKP preferred to create a new concept called "CHP mentality", which also meant being corrupt, elite and distanced from the people's and Istanbul's needs, another way of demonising the opponent. In contradistinction to this, they placed themselves as the voice of the oppressed people.

Overall, the most popular theme in their speeches was the protection of religious identity. Sentences such as "we only bend our knee in front of God", "we protect our azan against them (CHP)", "they are enemy to our azan and flag" were used 116 times by Erdoğan. Such a high number reveals how their discourse largely relied upon the idea of protecting religious identity. The religion-focused theme was followed by demonising the opponent, by using the polarised discourse such as "us being honourable vs them being dishonourable", and the third most used theme was the protection of territorial integrity in which they equated the CHP with terror and terrorist groups (this will be referred to as protecting territorial integrity in the chapter).

This chapter will concentrate on these themes and try to show how the AKP placed them in their political communication and why these themes are defined as populist by referring back to the literature (see Chapter 2).

7.2.1 Protecting territorial integrity and creating danger

Taggart (2000) defines populism as a homogeneous group belonging to the imagined community of the heartland, where the heartland is in a severe state of crisis because the elites (e.g., the opposition) failed to represent the will of the people (Canovan, 1999). Hence, the in-group is threatened by the "corrupt elite," the homogeneous out-group constructed in opposition to the people (Laclau, 1977; Mudde, 2004). According to Taggart (2000), the people are silenced by corrupt politicians who are blind to the real problems of the nation, and because of that they cannot assist their heartland out of the state of crisis; thus, the corrupt elites are held responsible for causing the crisis of the heartland. In Taggart's heartland concept, populists attest that the elites are responsible for the crisis and by doing that, populist leaders also tend to create fear and anger by showing "imaginary" enemies and presenting themselves as saviours in the face of those enemies (Mudde, 2004). In other words, in the populist agenda, "elites" are groups of people who support those "dangerous groups" that threaten society.

When analysing campaign speeches, there was a use of "protecting territorial integrity" against elites (CHP and their supporters) by Yıldırım and Erdoğan. In rallies, they prefer to show CHP as an ally with PKK ('Kurdistan Worker's Party', a Kurdish militant organisation and armed guerilla movement), Erdoğan often uses the sentence "CHP means terror, they are supported by the terrorist groups" (Bahçelievler rally, 2019), and they vilified CHP as a threat and security problem for the nation. A

description of the PKK is useful in order to better understand what it means for Turkey and why it has been seen as a threat to the country's security. On the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Turkey, the PKK is defined as a terrorist organisation founded in 1978. There has been Kurdish–Turkish conflict since its foundation, as various Kurdish groups demanded separation from Turkey to create an independent Kurdistan, or attempted to secure autonomy and greater political and cultural rights for Kurds inside the Republic of Turkey. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs website states that more than 40 thousand people lost their lives because of PKK terrorism and that the PKK wants to suppress the diversity of Turkey, prevent participation and integration of Turkey's citizens of Kurdish origin and intimidate the people in the region. During the campaign, Erdoğan often used the PKK and called CHP an ally of PKK, and a traitor (Beylikdüzü rally, 2019). Erdoğan's way of using the CHP and the PKK in the same sentence also verifies Mudde's (2004) claim that imaginary enemies of populists create fear in society. In the speeches, Erdoğan used the word "they are supported by the PKK" (Yenikapı rally 2019, Beykoz rally, 2019) 82 times in 60 speeches. This is an indicator that the messaging attempts to link the CHP to the terror organisation or potentially aiming to generate fear in society towards CHP. He also used the sentence "we need to survive against the ones that want to divide us" (Bağcılar rally, 2019) 10 times and wanted to show that the CHP aims to divide society instead of unifying them. Placing the CHP as a threat to society also challenged Imamoğlu's slogan, "we will reconcile, we will unify", because Erdoğan positioned them as a threat that would cause division in society. CAM1 (2019) mentioned in the interview that "Imamoğlu's campaign was about unifying people and giving hope. But by using populism Erdoğan tried to ruin that feeling by showing CHP as a threat to territorial integrity. Yet this time, he could not succeed." He thinks, with their campaign strategy, Imamoğlu managed to convince people that he is a good person, a reliable politician that people can place their trust in (ibid).

In his speeches, he divides society into two: the ones who want to divide Turkey by supporting CHP and those who support AKP as the patriots, good people. According to Mudde (2017), dividing society into two groups such as "us (good people) and them (enemies), is one of the main indicators of populist leaders and populist communication. In 36 of Erdoğan's speeches, he used the sentence "their candidate [Ekrem Imamoğlu] got his support from Kandil" (Kandil is where PKK leaders reside) (Pendik rally, 2019). By using such sentence, he presents Ekrem Imamoğlu as an ally of PKK. All these claims could be seen as a populist factor aimed at dividing society by disseminating fear about "the other" and aimed to create anger towards the CHP. The desired outcome is for people to feel the need to protect territorial integrity against the CHP and thus should not vote for Imamoğlu.

According to Naushirvanov (2022), dissemination of fear about "the other" is another characteristic of populism which leads to high-level polarisation, and Pappas (2019) proclaims "extreme polarisation" to be "the most important element of populist rule". In Chapter 2.4.4, under the title of a populist leader, Wuthrich and Ingleby (2020) make definition of a populist leader as follows; calling the opposition candidate or political party a "terrorist" or "foreign agent" or any conflict or disagreement with the

populist leader labels as "treason" by the populist leaders. This definition is in line with AKP's discourse in the rallies. For instance, during his rally in Beylikdüzü in 2019, Erdoğan claimed that "CHP takes order from foreign forces, they have a secret plan" or "they are a threat to our security" (Büyükçekmece rally, 2019) with the aim if representing CHP as a traitor.

In total, Yıldırım and Erdoğan (mostly Erdoğan) mentioned the sentence "they are terrorists" in 53 per cent of their speeches, which indicates that populism was used to protect the territorial integrity and also create fear of "the other" during the elections.

7.2.2 AKP is the voice of the oppressed people

One of the most important characteristics of populist leaders is to appeal to ordinary people, in other words, the silent majority of society (Canovan, 1999). In this context, populist leaders claim to speak for the "silent majority" or "ordinary people" whose interests are not seen by the elites or by the corrupted politicians (ibid). Mudde (2004) also claims that a populist leader tends to speak in the name of "oppressed people" and show himself as the "man of the people" by using the discourse of "us vs them" or by situating the opposition party as the elite/corrupted who does not care about the problems of people.

In such contexts, when analysing the rally speeches of Erdoğan, he defines himself as the "voice of the oppressed people" 24 times and says that "CHP looks down on people, they are elitist" 35 times. Besides, he situates AKP as the "friend of the oppressed people" and himself as the "man of the people". In total, Erdoğan used these sentences 92 times in 60 speeches. These numbers show that Erdoğan's communication relied on one of the characteristics of populism: impersonating the voice of the "silent majority" oppressed by the elites. Such sentences also show that the AKP used populism to appeal to ordinary people, that they speak for the "silent majority" or represent "oppressed people" subject to the elites. This might coincide with the presentation of Erdoğan and his party (us) as the "heroes" or as "ordinary," and Ekrem Imamoğlu and the CHP (them) as elitist, insensitive and incapable of understanding people's needs.

His usage of "being the voice of the oppressed people" is not a new concept for AKP. He has used this discourse since the AKP's foundation in 2001 (Şahin, 2021). Since the foundation of AKP, they usually preferred to show themselves as the voice of the silent majority (mostly the conservative sector of society) and presented Erdoğan as their strongman/hero who would solve their problems, the only one who could understand their needs that were oppressed by CHP. To prove that, AKP and Erdoğan mostly used Erdoğan's background, being a boy from Kasımpaşa (a poor neighbourhood in Istanbul) and showed himself as a self-made hero coming from the area that elitists did not care about. At his rally speeches, he still uses the same strategy and shows himself as the man of the people, who can understand the real issues in suburban areas, on account of the experience of his youth. In a way, he always presents himself as proud of where he comes from, and this is an important point that carries weight as he typifies himself as the real representative of the people, while contrasting the CHP as a political party full of

elitist politicians who do not know the people. In other words, Erdoğan still believes they represent the periphery as they did in 2001. According to Tuğal (2016), in their populist agenda, the AKP uses the discourse of the "man of the nation" and positions the AKP members as heroes who endure all kinds of difficulties to protect oppressed people against the corrupt Kemalist elite (ibid). However, the AKP and Erdoğan no longer represent the periphery. It is believed that as their power increased, they became distanced from the periphery and could no longer read the real needs of the people (POA4,2021). In the literature, this process is defined as power intoxication, when a politician or political party holds onto a position of power for an extended period. This can result in the individual becoming entitled, disconnected from reality, and out of touch with the needs and concerns of the people they are meant to serve (Anderson et al., 2002). The data from the analysis also proved the power intoxication that the AKP faced during their campaigns. They showed that the AKP's projects and discourse throughout the campaign were not responding to people's needs. Their main focus was on polarisation, their past success stories and some prestigious projects they would bring to Istanbul. POA3 (2021) claimed that the AKP's campaign strategy was based on "us vs them", blaming CHP and their success stories in the past". CAM1 (2021) also said that "AKP's campaign discourse was away from people's needs, they say that they understand people's needs better than anyone else but it was hard to see it in their campaign."

Even though they tend to represent themselves as the voice of the oppressed people in their campaign ads and discourse, there is a big question mark on the validity of this claim.

7.2.3 Demonising the opponent

Besides presenting themselves as "the man of the people", Erdoğan positioned Imamoğlu and the CHP as liars or dirt 48 times in 60 speeches. The sentences often run along the lines of "CHP is a liar, CHP is a thief" (Sancaktepe rally, 2019), or "are you going to let thieves govern the city?" (Bahçelievler rally, 2019) or "they are dirt, CHP means dirt" (Büyükçekmece rally, 2019). Erdoğan used such sentences 48 times to demonise the party's opponent in different ways. By calling them thieves, he recalled the election and meant that the CHP stole the vote, by saying that they were liars he wanted to create distrust about their promises for Istanbul and by labelling CHP as dirt he created a feeling of detestation towards the CHP. According to POA1 (2021), these definitions lead people to think of the CHP as an enemy and caused polarisation in society, but she also said that this strategy did not work this time. In the literature review on populist leaders, one of their main characteristics was creating polarisation in society by showing the other as something dangerous or bad for people (Aydın Düzgit and Balta, 2018). In 60 speeches, Erdoğan situated CHP as trash 31 times both literally and metaphorically and he used sentences as follows: "CHP means 3Ç, çamur, çöpluk, çukur (mud, trash and hole)." The reason he called them trash or mud is that when he took over Istanbul in 1994 as a mayor, Istanbul was under CHP governance and he says "when I became mayor of Istanbul, Istanbul streets were full of holes and dirt. This is what CHP is, this is how they govern and will govern if you

give them control" (Pendik rally, 2019). In total, he used this sentence 14 times: "when we came to power in Istanbul in 1994, Istanbul was full of the mountains of trash, holes and mud that is what CHP is". In every rally speech, Yıldırım and more often Erdoğan, used a projector to show videos of CHP's previous work and what they had done during the 17 years of their rule. He used the sentence, "if you choose them, this is how they will govern the city. We saved you from that dirt and we rebuilt Istanbul for you," and asked "do you want them to govern Istanbul and turn it back to those bad times again because that is what will happen if you choose them" 10 times in 60 speeches. By doing this, AKP aimed to show their hard-working character versus CHP's so-called lazy side. Their demonising strategy compared their hard work and CHP's laziness. Almost in every speech, he reminded people what CHP is, 3C (mud, dirt, hole) and even wanted people to repeat after him. The same strategy was carried out in Trump's campaign where he asked voters to raise their right hands and swear to vote for him (Diamond and Scott, 2016). This rhetorical pattern in both cases separates the world into two opposing groups: a demonised set of others versus those who have the power and will to overcome them (Löwenthal and Guterman, 1970). Another demonisation strategy was based on wordplay. Erdoğan used "CHP means dirt and AKP means cleanliness" 41 times. The use of wordplay in the comparison between AKP and CHP can be interpreted in multiple ways. Firstly, the word "AK" in Turkish means "clean" or "white," which could be why AKP defines themselves as the clean and pure party, in contrast to CHP, which they refer to as "dirt." Secondly, the connotation of purity and transparency associated with the colour white may suggest that AKP governs transparently and is an honourable party. Thirdly, the word "AK" is also associated with the concept of honesty in Turkish, as in the phrase "*alnı ak,*" meaning a person is fair, honorable, and modest in every aspect of their life. AKP may have used the word "AK" to imply that they are humble, trustable and just rulers, in contrast to their opponents, who they depict as corrupt and indolent.

Such claims as creating anxiety, fear and anger are one of the widespread characterisations of populism (Rico et al., 2017). They also argue that fear and anger are most frequently used to spread populism (ibid). Voters want to live in a better city, and they want a better future so by reminding them of the failures from the past such as the CHP governance in the 90s in Istanbul, Erdoğan aims to create anxiety and fear for the future. However, more importantly, he wants to spread anger towards CHP and thus Imamoğlu. He shows AKP as hard-working and honest and that they could make Istanbul a better place (given previous accomplishments) and CHP as lazy, morally corrupted and that they do not have the will and power to make Istanbul a better city because of their previous failures. Most politicians use this strategy to blame the opposition, for example, the previous President of the United States, Donald Trump, when carrying his campaign against Joe Biden (Savoy and Wehren, 2021). That said, Erdoğan may well be the only one who has used a projector to show videos from the 1990s aimed to trigger that negative feeling in people (AC3,2021).

7.2.4 Stealing the vote and denial strategy

As known, Ekrem Imamoğlu won the first round of the election on 31st March 2019. However, AKP contested the election result, and just after Imamoğlu started to work as a mayor of Istanbul, then the election board subsequently decided to nullify the election results and ordered a rerun. From April 2019 until June 2019, candidates competed to win Istanbul. On 23rd June 2019, Imamoğlu, was again elected mayor of Istanbul, this time with more than 54 per cent of the vote against 45 per cent for his opponent AKP's candidate Binali Yıldırım.

During this second election period, Erdoğan and Yıldırım's discourse changed, and they started to call CHP a thief, and blame them for stealing the votes and being dishonourable. When analysing the speeches, some sentences were highly focused on positioning CHP as a thief, such as: "are you going to give your votes to the thieves?" used 23 times; or "they are dishonest, they do not have any manner, can they govern the city?" used 15 times; and "they stole the votes" used 30 times in 60 speeches. These numbers are important indicators because they prove that the AKP blamed the CHP for stealing the vote in half of their speeches and showed them as a reason for the second election run. Using such sentences in such frequency might cause anger in voters because they push people to think CHP is morally corrupted and that the party is not composed of reliable, honourable members capable of governing the city. For Wojczewski (2020) this is a very typical version of the use of populism to create enemies, and he mentions that populist politicians speak on behalf of the people who are "fooled" by the opposition. Another important populist characteristic of that kind of speech is how populist leaders create their imaginary community (Anderson, 1991 cited Stanyer et al., 2017). As can be seen from AKP's example, by denigrating them as a thief, AKP aims to trigger the community into a feeling of ownership of and belonging to the homeland. A very similar example could be seen in Mexico's president Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador when he lost the presidential election in 2006 and then he declared there was fraud and did not accept the election result (Melimopoulos, 2018). In the homeland, people share specific virtues such as honesty, religion, authenticity, or hard work (Stanyer et al., 2017) and a morally corrupted opposition ruins their honourable life. In AKP's discourse, the CHP has been disparaged as a party without virtues because they stole the votes and that is why they ruined the honourable life of the people. Recently, Mueller (2022) published an article questioning why populists do not concede to defeat. In his analysis, Muller defines election denial as a new global trend such as the recent election in Brazil and how Jair Bolsonaro crafted his version of the "Big Lie", claiming that a loss at the ballot box is fraudulent (ibid). According to Mueller (2022), populists force their supporters never to trust the system and always assume that elites are manipulating the outcomes behind the scenes. Mueller (2022) believes that populists do say that they present "the silent majority" which is often a loud majority because they often get the military and the police on their side, as in the case of Bolsonaro.

In his speeches, Erdoğan often said that there was fraud at the ballot box and that the CHP stole the votes (Kağıthane, 2019). This is in line with Mueller's (2022) claim about populists' election denial strategy. According to the interview extract from POA4 (2021), it was Erdoğan's way of showing the opposition as morally corrupted and his party as an honourable victim. Another important point to raise regarding Erdoğan's election denial is that Istanbul has been the backbone of the AKP's long grip on power both in an economic and symbolic way. Symbolically, the city represents AKP's core desire to place Islam and Turkey's Ottoman past at the centre of Turkish identity (Demiralp and Balta, 2021). Economically, Istanbul has been AKP's economic growth and patronage network which has provided valuable land rents (Demiralp, 2018). Besides, Istanbul is very important for Erdoğan and for the AKP as he launched his political career as Istanbul mayor in 1994 and ruled the city with his close circle until Imamoğlu's victory and he always used his claim "If you lose Istanbul, you lose Turkey" (Demiralp and Balta, 2021). That is also why AKP did not easily admit the loss of Istanbul because it was a major setback for AKP's political power in Turkey (ibid).

7.2.5 The use of religion and the Rabia as a symbol of defiance

When the AKP came to power in 2002, they wanted to leave the Welfare Party's Islamist political ideology behind and, instead, preferred representing themselves as a political party that could adopt higher goals beyond the obsession with Islam. This stance was fully in line with the modern capitalist world despite coming from an Islamic background (Cizre, 2016). They adopted more moderate political discourses and positions (ibid). When they came to power according to Yılmaz (2017), the AKP represented a "new genre of politics" in Turkish politics in the sense that they succeeded in supporting those who "suffered" at the hands of the secular regime by being kept out of the central decision-making process. This genre of politics has reproduced the division of the Ottoman – Turkey polity between secular and Islamic parts while increasing anxiety between them (ibid).

The AKP governance period could be analysed as two distinctive phases as discussed in Chapter 3. Starting from 2007, they abandoned their pro-EU political outlook which promised to maintain the "modern" and "secular" Turkish state (Ciddi, 2008). At this point Erdoğan and his party started to show the authoritarian traits of governance such as making reforms to weaken rival secular political institutions such as judiciary and military (Yılmaz and Bashirov, 2018) and using religious elements in politics, such as putting taxes on alcohol[12] (Mardin, 2007). These actions led to their characterisation in the second phase as an "Islamist" political party (Cizre, 2008).

When analysing rally speeches, Erdoğan used religion by mentioning God, which aligns with their Islamist political view (Akyol, 2015). Additionally, separated from the religious context, he used the Rabia sign almost in every speech. While analysing the speeches, this use of the Rabia sign was an interesting point. He made the Rabia sign and then, asked people its meaning (one flag, one nation, one

---

[12] In the Quran drinking alcohol is forbidden, thus Muslim socities believe consuming alcohol is a sin (Alhashimi et al., 2018)

state, one homeland) and he wanted the crowd to shout the slogan together with him. It was the same strategy as his previous one, where he asked people what CHP means and invited them to shout together "mud, dirt and hole" as a definition of CHP. He created a fearful crowd and fostered a feeling of belonging by doing that. This type of communication strengthens the collective identity, and aims for supporters to be tied to the identity expressed by their leader (Hogg et al., 2012). Here, Erdoğan strengthens the collective identity of nationalism, standing against any coup attempt (explained later on in this chapter) by chanting together "one flag, one nation, one state and one homeland".

Before moving on to the other elements of his discourse, it would be worth defining the Rabia sign. The Rabia was a sign used by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and their supporters in the Islamic world after the Eygptian Mohammed Morsi was ousted from office by the military coup on 3 July 2013, and after the commander-in-chief of the Egyptian armed forces Abdel Fattah al-Sisi took over. At that time, the army attacked a protest arranged by the Muslim Brotherhood, killing over 1,000 people on 14 August 2013 in Rabaa al-Adawiyya Square. From that time, the Muslim Brotherhood supporters used the Rabia sign to express their support and solidarity with them. Initially, AKP used the sign in their discourses and speeches to support the Muslim Brotherhood. They wanted to show that Turkey was against the military coup in Egypt, that they did not accept al-Sisi, who became a president of Egypt in 2014, as a legitimate president of Egypt and that the AKP supported democracy and people oppressed by the al-Sisi regime (Sultan, 2020). After a while, the AKP adopted the sign in its by-law of the party on 20 May 2017. With a different meaning but with the same gesture the new slogan was: "one state, one nation, one flag, one homeland." (Birgün Newspaper, 2017).

Erdoğan emerged with his own four principles after the failed coup attempt in 2016 in Istanbul and used the gesture for domestic politics to stand against any anti-government movement against him and his party (Middle East Eye correspondent, 2022). Some academics indicate that he does not use the sign any more (ibid). However, analysis from the speeches of Erdoğan indicates that the word Rabia (with its four principals) is used at the end of every speech, which is 60 times in 60 speeches. His use of the Rabia sign indicates his fear of facing another coup attempt and reminds his supporters of his core values held as armour against any threat to his rule (AC1, 2021). Thus, in that sense, the use of Rabia is a message of defiance against any coup attempt. While using the Rabia sign, he also wants to trigger national feelings such as belonging to one homeland and reminds people of the core values of his presidency.

When coding religious sentences, the most used sentences were: "we take our strength from the people, from God" used 33 times; "We only kneel down when we pray and for God, other than that we never bend our knee to anyone" used 23 times, and; "Only we can protect azan, we are responsible to the God" used 25 times. While talking about religion and being religious, Erdoğan situates the CHP as faithless by saying "they are enemies to our azan and flag," said 38 times, and "we will give them their lesson at the ballot" said 20 times. Using such sentences in almost half of their speeches, the aim is to reveal Imamoğlu and the CHP as enemies of Islam and attempt to spread fear by using religion. The

main message circulates around the idea of the CHP being an enemy of religion, with the implication that if they choose CHP conservatives will lose their religious rights such as wearing a headscarf in public spaces. Akyol (2015) thinks that the problem is not having too much religion in politics, rather it is the exploitation of religion for political gains. He argues that it is possible to refer to God in politics without exploitation such as Abraham Lincoln's claims during the US Civil War: "My greatest concern is not whether God is on our side, my greatest concern is to be on God's side" (ibid). The difference between the two claims is that the AKP's reference is self-righteous, whereas Lincoln's is a self-critical reference in relation to the notion of right and justice of God (ibid). Palaver (2019) thinks that populist leaders use religion as a populist tool to mobilise the majority, create a collective identity and make their polarising responses more appealing. AC2 (2021) claimed that Erdoğan and AKP candidates use religious codes to remind people that they gave them their religious rights and that if they do not choose AKP, they will lose those rights again. This creates fear and anxiety in some parts of society, mostly for AKP's voter base, and once again, they situated CHP almost as a devil in people's minds.

The sentences such as "we take our strength from God they are enemies to our azan" were used 40 times where AKP situated CHP and Imamoğlu as enemies of Islam and Islamic traditions such as azan. The sentence where he says "he takes his power from God", or that God backs him could be related to Erdoğan's caliphate dream (Ibrahim, 2023). According to Nurettin Nebati, a former lawmaker now working as the deputy minister of the Treasury Ministry, Erdoğan is the promised and expected leader to bring all Muslim nations together, and can be the leader of Ummah. (Ummah is the Arabic term for "nation", in Islam, Ummah refers to the whole Muslim world or the community of believers). Erdoğan's dream of being the leader of the entire Muslim community (Ummah) can also be easily identified in his political discourse which aims to set the course back to the caliphate days of the Ottoman Empire (Masoud et al., 2020).

7.3 The recurring themes of CHP

The second part of the qualitative content analysis looks at Ekrem Imamoğlu's 60 campaign speeches in Istanbul between January 2019-June 2019. Imamoğlu also used populism but he used indirect sentences whereas the AKP used a more direct and polarised discourse concerning the CHP. He also depended on the positive aspect of populism which aimed at unity and inclusivity. The themes that occurred in CHP's discourses are: contesting AKP legacy, the message of unity and love, the use of "solution", Imamoğlu's use of religion and inverted populism as a counteracting strategy. In this part, the themes that will be analysed will be the guide as to how Imamoğlu used embedded populist messages in his discourse by not directly addressing the AKP. It is not possible to say that he avoided every aspect of populism but it is possible to say that his way of using the positive sides of populism worked well for his campaign.

His campaign discourse primarily relied on the themes of the unifying force of love and unity, followed by the use of "solution" in his speeches. The phrases mostly frequently used were "being united" and "promise of good future," followed by "promising to be the inclusive mayor" and "peace, solution and freedom coming". These sentences are important to mention because they prove that Imamoğlu's campaign gave positive messages and for the most part used the positive aspect of populism.

7.3.1 Contesting the AKP Legacy

Erdoğan started to govern Istanbul as a mayor in 1994, and until the 2019 local elections, AKP ruled Istanbul, so for 25 years AKP governed Istanbul. This period provided them with the time to establish their legacy in Istanbul and there was no-one that could compete with that legacy (Özkan, 2019). When Imamoğlu came to the political stage as a candidate for Istanbul, he was an unknown politician to most of the people in Istanbul (ibid). As his political consultant mentions in his book *Kahramanın Yolculuğu* (The journey of the hero), when Imamoğlu first started his campaign, his recognition rate was 14 per cent, and Imamoğlu's campaign team's first goal was to familiarise him in the public gaze (Özkan, 2019). He was contesting an election against a political party that had been governing the city for 25 years, had accomplished many projects and also had control of the media. Özkan (2019) says that, at the very beginning, it was not easy for them to compete against the AKP's legacy and they had a great many things to do. In order to increase his visibility, rallies were perfect situations for him to introduce himself to the public and also the ideal place to let people know about his projects and solutions (ibid). AC3 (2019), says that the way Imamoğlu approached the public-making home visits, fasting with people during Ramadan or going to the mosques- was very similar to the AKP's strategy in 1994.

AKP has long prided itself on its numerous projects, which have become a part of the party's legacy in Istanbul. However, Imamoğlu challenged this legacy by proposing local projects and solutions that differed from AKP's priorities. These proposals included ideas such as providing financial aid for

families in need, discounted water rates, and addressing youth unemployment. In contrast, AKP's projects were often grandiose and prestigious, such as constructing an energy village, a geothermal park, a stadium, and a biotechnology centre in Istanbul. These projects were more geared towards showcasing the party's accomplishments rather than directly addressing the basic needs of voters.

In his speeches, Imamoğlu talked incessantly about his projects. For example, at his rally in Bağcılar in 2019, he said:

> The unemployment rate is very high, our young generation does not deserve that. With our employment offices, we will be in contact with different business areas, we will understand their needs and we will educate people regarding those needs, we will also build city institutions, and we will educate our people.

In Avcılar in 2019, he said, "it is good to see more women in rally areas and do not worry, with our daycare centres, women will be able to work, will have their spare time and they will not have to worry about their kids". In some of his speeches, he also talked about the economic issues that people are facing and responded to them with his projects: "We are coming to make your life easier, I know that water bills are very high, we will make 40% discount on them" and he talked about transportation issues for students by saying, "I will decrease the price of the student transportation cards from 85TL to 40 TL". On the other hand, Yıldırım made a rally speech in Ataşehir in 2019 and his speech did not indicate any concrete project; for example, he said, "I know our problems about reconstruction for Ataşehir, our President will be with you soon, he will give you the good news regarding these issues". This sentence indicates that his campaign relied on Erdoğan and that he could not talk about their projects as freely as Imamoğlu. Then he said, "I have heard that the tube construction is going slow, when we win the election on the 31st of March, we will take the required action to finish the work as early as possible, I know Ataşehir's problems very well." In this sentence, Yıldırım talked about an issue that Ataşehir is facing but he did not offer any solution to the problem during his speech. By constantly deferring to the President and his proposed projects, Yıldırım appeared weaker in comparison to Imamoğlu. By presenting a more assertive image, Imamoğlu was able to contest the legacy of the AKP. Özkan (2019) believes that by doing the opposite of what AKP was saying and doing, and more importantly touching people's lives with his projects, Imamoğlu managed to contest AKP's legacy.

7.3.2 The message of unity and love

During Imamoğlu's campaign, apart from contesting AKP's legacy with local solutions, another important recurring theme was unity. The most frequently used sentences to give that feeling were: "a united, happy life is coming soon" used 54 times, "peace, solution, freedom is coming" used 90 times, and he promised to be an inclusive mayor 110 times. He also used the sentence "there will not be any loser of this election, 16 million will be the winner of this election", used 40 times. The numbers indicate that his speech relied on being inclusive, bringing solutions and promising a happy life to voters. According to his consultant, his strategy was different from what AKP was expecting; he did not argue with anyone nor did he suggest the polarisation of society (Özkan, 2019). Instead, his communication strategy aimed to unite people. His campaign ads were also in line with his campaign discourse. For example, one of his campaign ad slogans was "we will reconcile, we will reunite", which had a message of togetherness regardless of any religious or ideological discrimination. By using unity, Imamoğlu's campaign created a new construction of "the People" as an alternative to the conservative versus modern secular polarisation that AKP has been spreading for years (Şener et al., 2022). Imamoğlu did not directly respond to AKP's claims about them, but he responded to them in a discreet way, for example saying "16 million will be the winner of this election" as a response to AKP's claim "CHP works with the terror organisation, they aim to divide us". In a way, by using unified sentences, Imamoğlu responded to AKP's attacks but also kept giving positive messages. Imamoğlu's strategy was another way of unifying people which also worked against the "othering" that AKP had been using, and also created a supra-identity in order to fight against social polarisation (ibid).

Imamoğlu often emphasised equality and fraternity in his speeches, and he called Istanbulites "my fellow citizens," or "I am here to be like your brother Ekrem". In Turkish, the term brother is also used as a friend or to show closeness with another. Imamoğlu appeared to want to create a feeling of brotherhood and remove the hierarchy between the politician and the citizen. In the Esenyurt rally in 2019, Imamoğlu said "I am coming to serve for young generations of this city, I am coming to become their brother Ekrem" and adds "I say peace, they call me terrorist, I say let's share and unify they say Pontus[13], may God give that handful of people wisdom". This sentence shows that Imamoğlu makes a comparison between his unifying discourse and the AKP's polarised discourse and uses the word "handful of people" which connotes the AKP. It is, in a way, populism but his populism is embedded in his discourse, it is not directly addressing the AKP.

Another theme that Imamoğlu often used was the use of love against the polarising discourse carried out by the opponent. POA4 (2021) says that Imamoğlu used a different strategy from previous

---

[13] Ekrem Imamoğlu is according to some reports of Pontian origin and a Greek speaker who managed to "conquer" one of the strongholds of Turkish President Recep Tayyip by defeating his opponent Binali Yıldırım (Thema Newsroom, 2019).

candidates and used love as one of his main campaign messages. From his campaign ads, where he made a heart with his hand, to his rally speeches where he talked about loving each other, and he concluded every rally speech by saying "I love you" to voters. In one of his rally speeches in Avcılar in 2019, Imamoğlu said, "We will work together, we will make Istanbul a better city. I love you all so much". He used the same sentence almost in every speech which also differentiates his campaign discourse from AKP. In his rally speech in Beylikdüzü 2019, Imamoğlu said, "I only spoke about being happy and nothing else for three months and I only want the people to unify and love each other again". While Erdoğan focused more on fighting with CHP and "CHP mentality", as they would call it, Imamoğlu used words such as being united again and promising a good future 218 times, whereas AKP used such phrases only 20 times. The similar pattern could be analysed in different politician's speeches around the world; for example, in Tony Blair's 1997 election campaign he used the pop song "Things can only get better" as Labour's political broadcast and used the slogan "New Labour, New life for Britain" to make people believe in a better future where they will make a real difference to people's lives (Rentoul, 1996). Similar to Blair, Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign used the slogan "Yes We Can" to inspire hope and a belief in the possibility of change. The message emphasised the power of collective action and encouraged people to become involved in the political process (Hodges, 2019). Another example could be Jacinda Ardern's successful 2017 campaign for Prime Minister of New Zealand focused on kindness and empathy, with the slogan "Let's do this." Her message emphasised the importance of unity and a shared vision and tried to push people to take action for their future (Curtin, 2017).

As analysed from the AKP's data, instead of positive discourse, they chose to rely on negative, polarised and fearful messages. Whereas Imamoğlu focused on unifying people by spreading love. In his speech in Beylikdüzü after the declaration of the rerun decision in May 2019, Imamoğlu said, "They want conflict from us, but we, the people who do not want this nation to fight, we will insist upon embracing each other." While Imamoğlu was doing one of his bazaar visits, he once said "find a neighbour who is from a different party, and just give them a hug" (2019), which again gives a message of solidarity and a message that does not create fear or anger for each other. In an interview with *The Atlantic* in 2019, Imamoğlu said that "if a populist style helps to unite people, it is a good thing, we are showing that walls can be torn down with love." To tear down walls with love and to overcome polarising populists who spread fear and anxiety, Imamoğlu's "emotion work" (Hochschild, 2019) focused on talking less, listening more, being open-minded, avoiding ideological debates, and ignoring Erdoğan while nonetheless loving those who love him. Hochschild (2019) also calls this process "empathy walls" which is about mastering a temporary suspension of self to surrender to deep curiosity about others. She says that CHP's "Radical Love" strategy was not naive; on the contrary, it was a good solution to respond to the conflict. Wuthrich (2019) makes a comparison between the Democratic Party in the US

and the CHP and claims that both parties tend to make the same mistake; instead of focusing on the genuine concerns of voters, the Democratic Party's focus has been on Trump's misbehaviour and removing him from office through impeachment, and this mistake was made by the old CHP too. Yet, Imamoğlu changed that old strategy and did not respond to the AKP's direct attacks on him, instead, focusing on love and unity in his discourses. It is not possible to say that his discourse was just about love and unity and did not use populism at all; he used populism but with new discursive strategies to counter AKP's polarising discourse (Korkmaz, 2022). Imamoğlu's emphasis on emotional engagement and the normalisation of diverse political views worked to break down barriers and promote a sense of unity among Istanbul's electorate. By fostering understanding and empathy, his campaign departed from the typical confrontational discourse, presenting a fresh perspective that resonated with a diverse range of voters.

7.3.3 The use of "solution"

The use of "solution" was another reoccurring theme in Imamoğlu's speeches during his rallies in the 2019 local elections. The CHP's communication campaigns from 2002-2010 were focused on negative campaigns that fostered fear, aggression towards AKP which only worked for the party's voter base but alienated AKP's voters (Korkmaz, 2022). In the 2019 elections, rather than targeting Erdoğan or the accusations of the AKP, Imamoğlu focused on his projects and explained his desire to represent all residents of Istanbul (ibid). Özkan (2019) says that to reach that goal, from the first day of the campaign, they focused on the word solution and used the slogan "if there is Imamoğlu then there is a solution". Imamoğlu also used this slogan in his rallies to remind people that he has the solutions that people need. He used the word "solution" 124 times in 60 speeches which verifies the statement of his campaign manager. He said, "Istanbul will become a productive city" or "I am coming to solve your problems by making social aids. We have quintupled those aids such as the food supply package, education package and transportation packages to make your life easier." (Tuzla and Ümraniye rally, 2019). Hence, he presented his projects as local solutions for local problems. While using the word "solution" for his projects, he called AKP's projects "waste", situating them as a waste of money. In his rally in Esenyurt in 2019, he said, "Our families always told us not to waste, they taught us that rule and we all give importance to these words in our families, we will end the waste period and we need to make savings from now on". Once again, he implicitly criticised AKP and their projects and used the word "waste" as a moral rule that we stand against from a young age. In his speech, he connected the word "waste" with family values (our families taught us not to waste) and used the slogan "we will end this system of waste" to start making savings to make the city livable for all. The slogan is clear and indirectly targets the AKP. The use of the word "waste" challenged the AKP project-wise, as their projects were very important for their campaign and they were proud of them. Imamoğlu's campaign discourse showed them as a bulk of very expensive projects with no local solution, just a waste of money. It was

an important word for that time because of the financial problems people were facing, and the word "waste" implied that they should think twice about the AKP and question the need for these projects, and their costs (Özkan, 2019).

7.3.4 The use of religion and the emphasis on Ramadan in Imamoğlu's discourse

Imamoğlu's discourse did not contain religious slogans like AKP's "we take our power from God", nor did he declare anyone a non-believer as did the AKP. He also did not reject/do othering to religious people like the old CHP did (Şener et al., 2022). On the contrary, he used religion to differentiate himself from the previous CHP candidates. For example, in this rally speech in Tuzla in 2019 he said "I do not have to be accountable to anyone but the 16 million people." This was discourse clearly opposite to that of the AKP: "We are only accountable to God". Instead, he used a different strategy where he established himself as someone devoted to his religion, who performed Friday prayers with citizens and shared those images on his Instagram and Twitter accounts to show his difference from the previous so-called elitist CHP candidates. His family background was also what Turkey needed at that time, the blend of both secular and conservative values; his mother wears a headscarf, but his wife is uncovered and is a business person (AC1, 2021). He made some of his rallies with his family members to show himself as a blend of traditional and modern lifestyles in Turkey. An important part of his campaign communication was also his visits to conservative areas of Istanbul that were seen as AKP's districts such as Fatih, Bağcılar and Başakşehir. He approached people from those districts with constructive dialogue by saying that he loves and respects them even though they will not vote for him.

Unlike AKP's view of being the leader of the Muslim community (*Ummah*), Imamoğlu approached other religions with respect (Esen and Gümüşçü, 2019). For example, he celebrated Armenian Christmas with the Armenian community in their church in Istanbul. He also read a prayer from the Quran at Eyüpsultan Mosque for Muslims who lost their lives after the terror attack in New Zealand in 2019. Academics think that this gesture was well received because it was effortless, it was not aiming at polarising the population (ibid). His knowledge of Arabic also suggested that he had undergone a Quranic education and was genuine; though he did not use the Quran to influence the media and conservative voters (Demiralp and Balta, 2021). By showing that side of him, he broke the perception that "CHP is a non-religious party" created by AKP.

The use of Ramadan was also apparent in his discourses. The second period of campaigns was during Ramadan, a holy month in Turkey and other Muslim countries. It is a month that people are encouraged to help people in need, to be fair and engage in fasting, it is believed that people cleanse their souls by freeing them from harmful impurities (muslimhands.org). After the rerun decision on the 6th of May in Beylikdüzü, Imamoğlu said, "Ramadan is a month to be fair, we do not want our young generation to dream about other countries; we want fairness in this country. That is what we pray for during Ramadan". In these sentences, he evoked Ramadan's meaning (to be fair), and tried to unify people around the Muslim tradition. He also criticised the unlawful rerun decision in a discreet way. During

the holy month, his campaign speeches focused on standing away from forbidden wealth (*haram*) and not taking advantage of, nor exploiting someone else's work (*kul hakkı yemek*). Imamoğlu not only conveyed implicit messages in his speeches, but also linked them to the observance of Ramadan. By doing so, he aimed to appeal to conservative voters and make his voice heard more widely. Throughout his campaign, he emphasised the importance of fairness and avoiding unlawful actions, echoing the central themes of Ramadan. Through this message, he subtly criticised the decision to rerun the election and sought to unify people around Muslim traditions.

Moreover, in the month of Ramadan, Imamoğlu distinguished himself from previous CHP candidates by breaking his fast with families. The scenes of Imamoğlu breaking his fast bore a striking resemblance to the AKP's election strategy, yet represented a novel phenomenon for both the CHP and among the voters. Imamoğlu's decision to fast during Ramadan was significant because it demonstrated his belief in and respect for Muslim traditions. By publicly observing the fast, he indirectly responded to claims by Erdoğan and others that he and his supporters were anti-religious. Furthermore, Imamoğlu's adherence to the fast underscored his commitment to the values of fairness and self-discipline, which are central to the observance of Ramadan. In this way, his actions served to reinforce the implicit messages he conveyed in his campaign speeches.

7.3.5 The use of inverted populism in Imamoğlu's discourse

As stated before, Imamoğlu's campaign was primarily focused on love and unity, and finding local solutions. During the course of the campaign, Imamoğlu refrained from making direct criticisms of the AKP, instead opting for implicit critiques through insinuations, in line with the definition of the term inverted populism.

The strategy of inverted populism entails adopting the democratic and distributive elements of populism, while simultaneously opposing the negative aspects of populist competitive authoritarian regimes (Demiralp and Balta, 2021). Demiralp (2022) argues that inverted populism is not inherently negative; in fact, it can be a positive and inclusive approach that prioritises people's fundamental needs. According to them, the implementation of inverted populism was instrumental in Imamoğlu's success, and it provided a way for the CHP to distance itself from its previous communication style that relied on conflict and discussions with the AKP (ibid). For example, he said:

> When spending the people's money, every penny will be scrutinised. This nation is hardworking and we will not allow those who waste while we struggle to earn. Their concern is a handful of people, while our concern is the sixteen million people of Istanbul (rally in Kağıthane, 2019).

Here, firstly, he positions the nation as composed of hard workers and shows himself as their leader with the task of defending their right against any waste. Then he makes a comparison in an explicit way by saying "handful of people" versus "us". The intended target of the statement is the AKP, yet it is conveyed in an indirect and implicit manner through the use of inverted populism, thereby avoiding the use of overtly aggressive language against the AKP. It is a smart strategy to apply populism, Imamoğlu

advocated for one's rights without causing polarisation or divison in society. Another example of this strategy is in his speeches: while referring to AKP or Yıldırım, instead of calling their names or directly targeting them, Imamoğlu preferred using "these friends" or "my opponent" whereas Erdoğan used "Mr Imamoğlu" while talking about him. With the indirect appeal of inverted populism, voters can still understand whom he implies, but not using their names directly he is not subject to blame for his discourse. The same strategy goes with the "privileged minority" claim as well. Imamoğlu did not target the AKP or Yıldırım, but called them privileged and the ones who employ relatives or friends. He used the sentence "I will not employ any relatives, spouses or friends," and indirectly targeted the AKP because Erdoğan appointed his wife, son-in-law and many more friends to governmental roles and the public knew that. On the other hand, some of Erdoğan's sentences were: "CHP cannot serve this nation. Mr Imamoğlu, how familiar are you with the city? How capable are you to govern a city like Istanbul?" in his rally speech in Pendik in 2019. In that framework, the AKP used populism more directly than the CHP.

It would be inaccurate to claim that Imamoğlu refrained from utilising populism during his campaigns. In total, he used populist words and sentences 53 times, verifying that he used populism in a way that demonised the opponent. He used sentences such as:

> These people do not have heart, they cannot go to the bazaars to be with people, they do not have a brain, my accomplishments in 18 days made them crazy, they lie, they will go even crazier in five years, I am sad for them, may God give them wisdom, you are the rightful crowd, they are a handful of people, do not listen to them, close the TVs."

These sentences can be regarded as an example of populist rhetoric in Imamoğlu's rally speeches. He classifies AKP as heartless, brainless and liars, which is very close to AKP's classification of the CHP. AC2 (2021) said that almost like every politician Imamoğlu also utilised some aspects of populism and that every politician will use populism at some point. Imamoğlu used sentences such as "they went crazy". In this sentence, by using "they" he referred to AKP and showed his accomplishments in 18 days as a reason to make them crazy (after 18 days, the election board ordered the rerun of the election) and it is a populist sentence because Imamoğlu wants to trigger negative feelings about the AKP and he made it appear that AKP's frustration makes him happy. In his speeches, while using this sentence, there was always a smile on his face as if he was mocking them. Another sentence was, "they will go even crazier in five years", in Tuzla rally in 2019. In that sentence he saw himself already as the winner of the second round, and with his projects he would make AKP very angry, and they would go crazy. By using such sentences, firstly he wanted to give a message that he is confident in his work and secondly, he thinks his projects will be better than theirs and that will make them mad. According to POA2 (2021), such sentences also had triggering sides because he challenged AKP's authority in Istanbul for 25 years and the projects they are proud of. The data analysis of their campaign ads also showed that AKP's campaign was based on their success stories and projects. And in their rally speech, Erdoğan tended to blame Imamoğlu and CHP for being lazy. Hence, it could be assumed that as a

response to AKP's discourse, Imamoğlu used his accomplishment in 18 days and made a counter-argument to AKP. While he positioned himself as the one who made them crazy and mad because of his achievements, he was cynical.

Throughout his campaign, Imamoğlu utilised populism, employing language such as "handful of people will go insane," while also incorporating the positive aspects of populism by using love and unity as a campaign discourse. In this sense, Imamoğlu introduced a different perspective on populism, demonstrating that it is not always a negative phenomenon and can be effective when employed for the right purposes.

7.4 Conclusion

The analysis concludes that the AKP and the CHP employed populism in different ways. In total, 120 speeches were analysed, with the AKP using populist words 454 times and the CHP using them 102 times. Specifically, the AKP used populist language that included terms like "thieves," "mud," "hole," "elite," "terrorists" and "they cannot understand your problems," while also invoking the concept of the "CHP mentality" as a negative stereotype. While the CHP used populist language that included phrases such as "they are a handful of people against us," "close the TVs and do not watch them," "they lie," and "they cannot go to the bazaars." These words were used to stir up emotions among the public and create a sense of "us versus them" mentality. To answer RQ1.3 "What role did populism play during the Istanbul local election?" one could argue that the AKP's campaign communication initially employed populism to polarise society by depicting "the other" as a threat. Additionally, the use of religion as a form of populist communication aimed to unify people around shared values and their homeland while portraying "the other" as morally corrupted. On the other hand, while the CHP's campaign emphasised local projects, solutions, love and unity by using inverted populism, it also strategically employed populism within these themes without targeting specific groups. This was perceived more as a response to the AKP's dominance to create a collective momentum, though in some instances, it also resorted to direct populism.

The comparison could begin with the nature of both campaigns and could make it easier to determine which candidate relied more on populism than the other; AKP's campaign was party-leader centred, and most of the speeches were carried out by Erdoğan. Yıldırım's speeches appeared to be nearly identical to those of Erdoğan, which suggests the extent of Erdoğan's control over his party and the expectation that his candidates adopt his rhetoric during their campaigns (POA3, 2021). Secondly, the most common use of populism is the division between "the pure" versus "corrupted elite" (Mudde, 2017) and in speeches held by Erdoğan that classification can be identified. He mostly used "us vs them" discourse and defined the CHP as an elitist party, and even took it further by discrediting Imamoğlu and the CHP as an ally to the terrorist groups and a threat to Turkey. Thirdly, the use of terror, reminding people of the bad governance of CHP in the 90s, could be seen as another face of populism as it aims to create fear and nervousness about "the other". According to Heinisch (2003)

and Oliver and Rahn (2016), populist leaders have a political style based on aggressiveness, offensive language, negative emotionality and provocations. For Heinisch (2003), fear is a key tactic in populist communication. Populist politicians often employ messaging that emphasises real or symbolic threats, which can provoke anxieties about losing one's identity or economic prosperity (Mols and Jetten, 2016; Matthes and Schmuck, 2017). Psychological research indicates that fear is likely to create a sense of impending danger within the in-group (e.g related to terrorist attacks; Huddy et al., 2005; Brader, et al., 2008). This phenomenon can intensify the sense of solidarity and shared belonging among members of the in-group, while also promoting rejection of the out-group (Bettencourt et al.,2001; Huddy et al.,2003). Consequently, populist candidates have a strategic incentive to play the fear card (Nai, 2021). It could be said that Erdoğan's and Yıldırım's speeches relied on creating fear, anxiety and polarisation in society.

During the interview, AC1 (2021) summed up the AKP's characteristics as follow:

> "AKP tends to feed itself through crises, polarisation and chaos and Erdoğan appears as the only leader who could solve them. During these elections, they aimed to use the same strategy but this time it did not work, they could not create the crises and polarisation they aimed for."

Fourthly, religion was another tool for them to disseminate populist messages. In their speeches, they always reminded people that they take their power from God and that there is no other force than God that can stop them. According to Gürsel (2019), religion is AKP's safest card and they prefer playing it when they feel insecure. The AKP utilised populism in their campaign communication to generate polarisation and fear of "the other", with the added use of religion to intensify this sense of "othering". Consequently, many scholars have classified the AKP as a populist-Islamist party and Erdoğan as a populist-Islamist leader, a characterisation that is supported by the content of their speeches (Yılmaz, 2021).

When examining the findings from Imamoğlu's speeches, it becomes evident that his speeches were relied on inverted populism. This approach aimed to redefine "the people", to create a more inclusive agenda, and convey positive feelings and messages such as hope, solutions or love as opposed to populist communication. By employing this approach, Imamoğlu's campaign set itself apart from the AKP, and in essence, ran a campaign that was contrary to the AKP's approach, as well as being based upon a different strategy than previous CHP candidates. Although Imamoğlu conveyed positive messages, it would be inaccurate to claim that he entirely avoided otherising groups. For instance, AKP was polarising people by using "us vs them" and Imamoğlu used the sentences such as: "they are a handful of people", or "they copy us" which are not very different from AKP's othering strategy. But on the other hand, when AKP attacked him directly, he chose not to respond to them and continued to use his positive language by addressing Erdoğan as "my president", and he did not get into any debate with them. In doing so, he employed an indirect and constructive approach to confront AKP's populist

discourse. Another important point of Imamoğlu's use of inverted populism was his discourse of unity. In Turkey, the division between urban, secular, and socio-economically privileged groups on the one hand, and provincial, religious, and socio-economically disadvantaged segments on the other, has been portrayed as a superiority-inferiority binary. This division originates from the Turkish Republic's foundation in 1923 (Demiralp and Balta, 2021) and Erdoğan made the most out of these cleavages by establishing himself as the voice of the under-represented majority (ibid). As a member of a party that traditionally represents the former segment (see Chapter 3), Imamoğlu had to work hard to fight against that division between the rural and urban segments of society, and reinvent himself and his party as representatives of the majority. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to redefine the majority and minority groups in Turkey by introducing other divides that cut across deeper economic and identity-based fault lines. In this regard, Imamoğlu utilised a discourse aimed at bridging Turkey's traditional social cleavages, including those between the religious and secular, rural and urban, nationalist and pro-Kurdish, while also resisting more recent divisions such as pro- and anti-Erdoğan factions. In one of his speeches in Maltepe in 2019, he promised that "everybody would feel free and there will not be anymore Turkish, Kurdish, Laski, Jewish, Greek or Armenian division, in this city, everyone would be an Istanboulite." It could be emphasised that both Erdoğan's and Imamoğlu's approaches were inclusive as they both promised representation to the "people" but Imamoğlu redefined people by broadening the definition of "the people" and narrowed the "elites" to a small group of people. According to Özkan (2019), Imamoğlu's campaign defined the "righteous self" as 98 per cent of the population, including the AKP voters. The "other", on the other hand, was the two per cent, self-satisfied, rent-seeking minority, including the AKP's elites (a handful of people). Another important message of Imamoğlu was that he embraced not only those who voted for his party but also those who did not. To loyal Erdoğan voters, he said, "I only want your prayers, not your vote" (Laflafa, 2019). When he won for the second time, he said, "I do not like the word "victory" because you cannot have a victory against your nation. I like the word "a new start" (Yeni, 2019). By using this sentence, he meant that he saw everyone as equal, not as an opponent to each other. Wuthrich calls this process "Radical Love" (2020), and counteracts populism's polarising logic to focus on proximity to the people by contrasting it with the carelessness of establishment elites.

During the second round of his campaign (after the rerun decision), Imamoğlu's campaign started to be more populist than before. He called the second period a "fight for democracy" and used sentences such as "these guys are a laughingstock", "those who intend to betray our democracy" or "you will teach these friends a lesson in democracy" in his rally speeches. By using such sentences, Imamoğlu also used populism and used "othering" as a strategy. In that sense, his discourse intersects with AKP's "us vs them" theme. AC1 (2021) claimed that "I do not think it is possible to stay away from populist discourse, at the end of the day, every political party and candidate use some aspect of populism and I think some of Imamoğlu's claims were also populist during his campaigns." Hence, it cannot be said that Imamoğlu won the election without any populist strategy and won solely with inverted populism.

However, the difference is that they blended it mostly with inverted populism and addressed the positive sides of populism rather than its polarised characteristic. The analysis shows that AKP's campaign discourse primarily relied on polarising discourse by using religion. However, people needed unifying, solution-oriented, positive messages, and Imamoğlu's campaign strategy demonstrated a skillful use of inverted populism. By employing populist elements strategically and emphasising unity, he resonated with a diverse electorate and achieved a successful outcome (AC1, 2021).

The findings in this chapter will be central to the next chapter which will triangulate the data from the elite interviews, textual analysis of the campaign ads and rally speeches to answer the research questions, thereby making a unique contribution to the literature.

Chapter 8 – Discussion

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the data from the qualitative analysis of the AKP and CHP campaigns during the 2019 local elections in Istanbul is synthesised and compared. The data comes from twelve in-depth interviews with elites, textual analysis of 60 campaign ads, and qualitative content analysis of 120 speeches given by AKP and CHP candidates. The goal of this chapter is to evaluate the evidence provided by these sources to demonstrate the main features and differences between the campaigns. By doing so, this chapter aims to show where the campaigns meet and where they differ from each other and it also allows us to understand better the winning strategy of the CHP and the strategy that caused the AKP to lose Istanbul after 25 years. The findings suggest that the AKP, due to its power intoxication (Polat, 2021), deviated from addressing the public's needs but attempted to emotionally connect with voters through past success stories and its core value "heart-based municipality" to counter this deviation. However, the use of populist discourse diminished the campaign's effectiveness and turned it into a form of revanchism against the CHP (Çakır, 2019). On the other hand, while the political professionalism and recognition of the CHP's candidate, Imamoğlu, was not sufficient compared to Yıldırım, he closed the gap between himself and his opponent by using a positive, inclusive and solution-oriented campaign. The findings indicate that Imamoğlu also used populism in his campaign but did so by using inverted populism which did not create revanchism, but mostly relied on an indirect approach and did not utilise polarisation against the AKP and their supporters.

8.2 "Power Intoxication" of the AKP

During local election times, the crucial factor that can make or break a candidate's chances of success is their ability to prioritise and implement local projects (Estache et al., 2016). In the context of the 2019 Istanbul local elections, both the ruling party (AKP) and the opposition party (CHP) focused on issues related to local governance and presented their respective projects regarding transportation, infrastructure, public services and so on. However, the data gathered from interviews suggest that most of AKP's projects failed to address people's basic needs, which raises the question of why the AKP was unable to respond effectively to the demands and concerns of the electorate during the election. According to AKP's founding member and first Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yaşar Yakış, the reason for the AKP's lack of responsiveness to people's needs can be attributed to their "power intoxication" (Polat, 2021). The term "power intoxication" refers to holding power for an extended period which can lead to a sense of entitlement, a disconnection from reality, and a loss of touch with the needs and concerns of the people (Keltner, 2016). Yakış (2019) saw this as a gradual process that started when

the AKP came to power in 2002 and continued until the 2019 local elections. There are various examples of intoxication of power around the world, for example Vladimir Putin, the current President of the Russian Federation, has been accused of exhibiting signs of power intoxication throughout his time in office (Aslund, 2019). Putin has been accused of cracking down on political opposition within Russia, including journalists, activists, and opposition politicians (ibid). Donald Trump could be another example of power intoxication, for his controversial policies and divisive rhetoric. He consolidated his control and used his presidential power to exclude the opposition. For example, in July 2019, he said that "I have an Article II[14], I can do whatever I want as President" (CNN, 2019).

As seen in the literature review, when AKP came to power in 2002, they promised to fight against poverty, corruption and prohibitions around religious expression and they declared that the AKP was a centre-right party with a conservative democrat identity (Koyuncu, 2014). By adopting this definition, the AKP positioned itself as a centre-right party setting itself apart from previous Islamic parties in Turkish politics. It functioned as a mass party with a focus on reform, service-based initiatives, and proactive domestic and foreign policies (ibid). From 2002 until the 2019 local elections, the AKP has become increasingly stronger and more authoritarian, winning every election it has entered which is explained as electoral hegemony in the literature (Keyman, 2010). According to Keyman (2010), the AKP's electoral hegemony became dominant during the electoral period and the other parties had no claim to win the elections in a convincing way. Thus, the AKP's consistent electoral success from 2002 until the 2019 local elections gave the AKP extensive power and contributed to the party's experience of power intoxication, which caused it to drift away from the periphery (conservative/rural part) it had set out to represent (Yakış, 2021). The interview data showed that, as a consequence, during the 2019 local elections, the effects of power intoxication became evident during the AKP's campaign, as the AKP increasingly struggled to comprehend and address the needs and concerns of the conservative population it had originally intended to represent (AC1, 2021).

Apart from the power intoxication, the research findings indicate that the AKP's campaign strategy was primarily centred on promoting their past achievements and portraying themselves as a professional and experienced political party. In their campaign ads, they attempted to showcase their successful track record in areas such as the economy, infrastructure development, and social policies. They used the slogan "We promised what we did, we will do it again" to remind people of their past success stories in these areas and foster that message by using Yıldırım's political experience. Yet, the findings of this study suggest that the AKP faced challenges in understanding the desires of their voters due to a build-up of power intoxication since 2002, as well as relying on past achievements and on Yıldırım's political career as prime minister and occupying several ministerial positions, to persuade voters during the campaign. AKP's prolonged grip on power has resulted in a certain degree of detachment from the public, making it difficult for the party to fully comprehend the demands and expectations of voters.

---

[14] Article II outlines the President's powers but also includes a provision that the President can be impeached (CNN, 2019).

This phenomenon can be referred to as "hubris syndrome" (Owen, 2010), where those in positions of power become increasingly isolated from the needs of ordinary citizens. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair could be an example of this syndrome. Blair was criticised for his leadership style, which some described as "messianic" and "arrogant" (Rawnsley, 2010). His decision to go to war in Iraq despite widespread public opposition has been seen as a classic case of hubris syndrome (Owen, 2012). Owen (2012) argued that Blair exhibited many of the symptoms of the syndrome, including an inflated sense of self-importance, a tendency to surround himself with yes-men, and a disregard for the opinions of others. Based on the findings this thesis obtained, I theorise that hubris syndrome was also experienced within the AKP in the 2019 Istanbul elections. With the effect of power intoxication, the AKP may have struggled to adequately respond to the changing demands of the electorate during the election, no matter how much they referred to their past successes and disregarded the opinions of others (AC4,2021). Furthermore, the AKP's reliance on highlighting past successes and Yıldırım's political record as a means of convincing voters may have been ineffective. Research showed that while highlighting past achievements can be a persuasive tactic, relying solely on this approach can lead to diminished impact over time (Rothschild et al., 2018). They argue that while momentum (i.e., a candidate's recent success or failures) was important in shaping voters' perceptions, relying solely on past performance or endorsements was not enough to create a connection with voters. Instead, campaigns need to engage with voters and generate excitement to build momentum (ibid) which might not be the case for the AKP's campaign.

According to the data of this thesis, it appears that Imamoğlu's campaign was not susceptible to the effects of power intoxication. As his relatively recent entry into the political arena, which was initially perceived as a potential hindrance, ultimately emerged as his primary advantage during the campaign. Apart from being a relatively new name in politics, his campaign promises were more simple, yet they appeared to resonate more effectively with voters by addressing their basic needs (Korkmaz, 2019). The interviewees agreed that the AKP had failed to identify the core concerns of the electorate, while Imamoğlu had successfully connected with them by touching their lives with his "solutions". This was exemplified by his first campaign slogan, "If there is Imamoğlu, then there is a solution," which stood in contrast to the AKP's slogan, "We did what we promised, we will make it again." By emphasising the concept of "solution," Imamoğlu relied on positive campaigning that was able to capture the attention of voters who were seeking practical and effective responses for future, while the AKP's slogan was more about the past success stories and did not offer any "solution". While having solid projects and policy proposals is crucial, it is equally essential to articulate them in a way that resonates with voters and conveys a sense of credibility and trustworthiness (Lees-Marshment, 2018). Imamoğlu's campaign was able to achieve this by addressing the needs of the electorate, and by framing these proposals in a way that was clear, concise, and easily understood. This suggests that political campaigns must not only identify the core concerns of the electorate but also effectively communicate their proposals and solutions in a way that resonates with voters.

8.3 Positive and Negative Campaigns

Campaigns often rely on appealing to people's emotions to motivate them to vote for a particular candidate or party (Brader, 2008) and political campaigns deliberately try to manipulate the emotions of individual voters through targeted emotional appeals, with emotions such as hope and fear playing a crucial role in that strategy (ibid). Hope and fear are two emotions that are particularly powerful in this regard, as they can inspire people to take action in support of a candidate or prevent their opponents from winning.

The interview with Imamoğlu's political advisor revealed that their success in the 2019 local elections was based on two main themes: "solution" and "hope". By utilising the campaign slogan "If there is Imamoğlu, then there is hope," Imamoğlu effectively appealed to voters' emotions and conveyed a positive campaign that instilled a sense of hope for the future. He used this slogan in his campaign ads while making a heart sign with his hand and disseminated positive feelings through his body language and the slogan. The same strategy of giving hope was used in Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. Obama's campaign was centred around the message of "Hope and Change," with the slogan "Yes, we can" which resonated with many voters who were disillusioned with the status quo and wanted to see a more positive and progressive future (Skocpol, 2012). In Obama's campaign ads, there was the use of the stencil technique and vivid, overlapping colours in a bold manner bringing to mind the style of Andy Warhol (Cornwell, 2012). It conveyed a sense of confidence and resoluteness, along with the coolness that motivated numerous young voters to support Obama (Cornwell, 2012). The textual analysis for this thesis of Imamoğlu's campaign ads showed that the same type of drawing was used in the campaign posters. Through this strategy, an image of a young hero was portrayed, symbolising a fresh start for Turkish politics. Imamoğlu used the power of positive campaigning to inspire and motivate voters to take action in support of his candidacy, like Obama. However, Obama's message of hope was more than just inspiring positive emotions in voters. It was also a call to action, urging voters to become actively involved in the political process and work towards creating a better future for themselves and their communities (Fredrickson and Branigan, 2005). In this sense, Obama's use of hope was not just a political tactic, but a genuine expression of his belief in the power of individuals to effect positive change in society, through hope rather than fear (ibid). Imamoğlu's use of love and hope in the 2019 local elections in Istanbul was similar, he also sought to inspire and motivate voters to take action for a better future by using positive emotions in his campaign. According to Fredrickson et al., (2005) hope has the power to expand our horizons and overcome feelings of fear and despair, allowing us to see the bigger picture. She thinks that hope is based on the conviction that change is possible, no matter how bleak or uncertain the present may seem (ibid). Imamoğlu endeavoured to ignite hope and expanded perspectives by utilising hope as a cornerstone of his campaign message, exemplified by the slogan "We will reconcile, we will reunite." By shedding light on the polarisation that gripped society, he promoted a sense of optimism and facilitated the formation of a collective vision for a more united future. His campaign message was reinforced by his emphasis on inclusivity, which helped to bridge

social divides and strengthen a sense of unity among the people. Overall, Imamoğlu's campaign successfully used a positive campaign by creating emotional connection with voters by portraying him as a new leader and a symbol of solution and hope. During his rally speeches, Imamoğlu proclaimed the arrival of "hope," as evidenced by his declaration of "hope is here" during the Beylikdüzü rally speech in 2019, positioning himself as a symbol of this optimistic sentiment. As a result, voters rallied behind this message of "hope," leading to his electoral success. It could be asserted that Imamoğlu's campaign approach demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the societal challenges facing Turkey and a commitment to building a better future through the power of hope and unity.

Based on the findings, it appears that the campaign strategy of the CHP predominantly relied on positive campaigning, whereas the AKP's communication strategy placed greater emphasis on negative campaigning. Although the AKP's campaign advertisements featured emotionally-charged slogans, such as "*gönül belediyeciliği*" (heart-based municipality) or "Istanbul is a love story for us," the data collected suggests that certain rally speeches instilled fear towards the opposition by labelling the CHP as traitors or terrorists, ultimately getting away from the campaign's positive messaging.

The AKP mainly used two slogans which could be counted as having positive emotions. The first one was "*gönül belediyeciliği*" and the second one was "Istanbul is a love story for us". The slogan "*gönül belediyeciliği*" was used in an attempt to take voters back to the era of the AKP's municipal governance in 2004. At the time, the AKP had gained popularity by touting their success in municipal governance with the term "AKP municipality" (AK Parti belediyeciliği), which became synonymous with their hardwork at the local level. In preparation for the 2019 local elections, the party strategically employed an emotional appeal by using the term "heart" and transforming the slogan to "heart-based municipality," in an attempt to foster an emotional connection with voters. The slogan "*gönül belediyeciliği*" promised to protect the underprivileged, embrace everyone, work hard and connect with the people (Kapsam Haber, 2018). The problem was while promising to embrace everyone and showing Istanbul as a love story for them, AKP's campaign also positioned CHP and its supporters as elitists and made references such as "CHP means mud, trash and hole". Such claims contradicted the central message of embracing everyone in the campaign and may have triggered a negative reaction among voters. In other words, it appears that the messaging employed during the rallies by the AKP did not align with their stated objective of fostering a "heart-based municipality", or "love story" ads discourse which intended to be an positive and inclusive campaign, reaching every citizen. In addition to the othering rhetoric used by the AKP, there was also the use of a mechanism of fear-mongering throughout their campaign. As per Çakır's (2020) analysis, Erdoğan's campaign tactics were characterised by a focus on negative emotions, specifically through the use of a revanchist strategy that can be described as "If I sink, you will sink too" (ibid). Erdem (2023) thinks that, when you use retaliatory expressions for a specific party, the voters of that party become even more consolidated around their party because they think that attitude is directed against them (Serbestiyet Newspaper, 2023). Based on this, Erdoğan's use of revanchism might have consolidated CHP's voters even more and created an opposite wave. As

mentioned in the theoretical part of this study, this strategy is also known as "negative campaigning" or "retaliatory campaigning," and it involves attacking one's opponent with negative or aggressive messages while simultaneously threatening voters with the dire consequences of not supporting the attacker (Topçu and Weitzel, 2022). Nevertheless, these threats can backfire and improve the opposition party's electoral performance by motivating voters to rally behind it (Banda and Windett, 2016).

One of the most used slogans in the billboard ads was "Istanbul is a love story for us". Textual analysis findings showed that, with that slogan, they attempted to establish an emotional connection with the voters and it was stated that their love for Istanbul is infinite and real. While notions such as heart, soul, and love were used in these slogans, the interviewee CAM2 (2021) said that they organised focus groups during the election to understand which slogan was more effective and the results showed that none of Yıldırım's slogans remained in the voters' minds, on the contrary, Imamoğlu's "If there is Imamoğlu, there is hope" slogan came to mind. The reason for this can be attributed to Imamoğlu's consistent use of the same language of love from the beginning and the absence of inconsistency in his communication strategy where as Yıldırım's campaign communication was focused on love and spreading fear about the other which caused unstableness in his campaign communication.

When analysing the AKP's strategy, apart from their campaign ad slogans "Istanbul is a love story for us" or "heart-based municipality", most of the campaign speeches aimed to evoke a sense of fear, intimidation, and a "me or them" mentality in voters. According to AC2 (2021), the AKP and particularly Erdoğan possess great skill in delivering political discourse, as demonstrated by their powerful rhetoric. However, it did not work during the 2019 local elections because, according to Selçuki in interview with Aksoy (2021), there was a group of "restless conservatives" which he defines as undecided voters who had previously supported the AKP but were currently experiencing a degree of unease and indecisiveness regarding their political preferences. He also thinks they were dissatisfied with the current socio-economic situation and their expectations had also changed (ibid). Restless conservatives did not have the concern of "if Erdoğan goes, we will have to push our religious conservatism back to the background" any more and the AKP failed to read this change in voters, and could not understand the changing needs of this group. This was why the fear / negative campaigning strategy of AKP did not work as well as it used to (ibid).

Based on the data of this research, it appears that the AKP did not have a consistent campaign communication strategy. While their campaign ads conveyed positive messages, their speeches utilised highly polarised language, leading to confusion about their initial political communication. This inconsistency in campaign messaging and Erdoğan's use of populist discourse, along with the power intoxication of AKP seemed to overshadow the positive aspects of the campaign. As a result, lack of cohesive communication strategy, the use of negative campaigning, and excessive use of polarising rhetoric could potentially hinder the effectiveness and the positive aspect of the AKP's political campaign whereas the use of positive campaigning, and their focus on emotion-based communication strategy could be counted as a part of Imamoğlu's winning strategy.

8.4 Party-leader centred campaign versus candidate-centred campaign

Another distinction examined between the two campaigns was the type of the campaigns themselves. Based on the theoretical framework of this research and the data gathered from the interviews, textual analysis of the campaign ads and qualitative content analysis of the speeches concluded that Yıldırım's campaign was centred around the party leader, Erdoğan, while Imamoğlu's campaign was focused on the candidate himself. This means Imamoğlu's campaign was more personalised, and thus, in that sense, more Americanised than Yıldırım's election campaign. When examining the use of party-leader centred campaigns, it is also possible to raise the question of Americanisation in political campaigns. It is well known that the Americanisation of political campaigns has been defined as a modern way of campaigning and personalisation is an additional aspect of it (Negrine et al., 2007).

From that perspective, Yıldırım's campaign communication was heavily directed by Erdoğan, which made it more party-leader centred than candidate centred, and thus distanced from Americanised campaigning. Erdoğan remained a dominant presence throughout the campaign and refused to hand over control to high-profile nominees (Esen and Gumuscu, 2019). He conducted 102 rallies across 59 cities in 50 days (Sabah Newspaper, 2019) and his image was prominently featured alongside the nominees on party banners nationwide. Additionally, he participated in eight televised interviews across 14 different channels to discuss AKP's approach to local governance (Esen and Gumuscu, 2019). In one notable interview, Erdoğan appeared alongside all of the nominees for Istanbul's 39 districts, positioned at the centre of the stage while the nominees stood silently in the background. This seating arrangement highlights the growing trend of "Erdoğanisation" and his authority over the local election campaigns and politics (Esen and Gumuscu, 2019). While analysing the speeches, Yıldırım's attitude at rallies provided a significant indication of a party-leader centred campaign. Yıldırım often invited Erdoğan to the stage to present their joint projects to the voters. In addition, his campaign ads featured him posing next to Erdoğan with the slogan "Istanbul is a love story for us" (see Appendix 2), and in his rally speeches, Yıldırım frequently thanked Erdoğan before addressing the audience, as well as mentioning President Erdoğan and emphasising his leadership. These elements reinforced the party-leader centric nature of Yıldırım's campaign, which detracted from his local appeal as a candidate. This strategy allowed the AKP to link itself into Erdoğan's popularity and leverage his status as a dominant political figure in Turkey to create a sense of authority and credibility for Yıldırım's campaign.

Rahat and Sheafer (2007: 65) have described the term personalisation as a phenomenon in which the importance of an individual actor within the political process gradually becomes more significant, while the political party becomes less central. In recent years, political experts have observed a growing tendency towards the personalisation of political systems (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002; Renwick and Pilet, 2016). According to several scholars (Dalton and Wattenberg in 2002, McAllister 2007, and Garzia in 2011), the personal characteristics of politicians are becoming more significant than party-oriented appeals in determining voters' choices. For instance, studies have demonstrated that candidate's occupational background can significantly impact their attractiveness to voters, both positively and

negatively (Campbell and Cowley, 2014; Coffe and Theiss-Morse, 2016). Additionally, research consistently shows that voters tend to prefer candidates who have strong connections to their local communities (Cowley, 2013; Fiva and Halse, 2016). Furthermore, experimental evidence from the United States and Denmark suggests that a candidate's personality traits, such as warmth and strength, can have heterogeneous effects on their appeal to voters (Laustsen, 2017). This trend towards personalisation in politics has been observed across many countries around the world (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002; Renwick and Pilet, 2016).

In terms of occupational background and ability to establish a strong rapport with local communities, Yıldırım's professional political experience surpassed that of Imamoğlu. Nevertheless, Erdoğan's prominent role during the campaign may have overshadowed Yıldırım's positive qualities and ultimately hindered his ability to appeal to voters. This highlights the potential drawbacks of a party-leader led campaign strategy, where the focus is on the popularity and authority of a single individual, rather than the broader policies and values of the party. While emphasising the leader's role may help to create a sense of authority and credibility, it can also detract from the candidate's local appeal and ability to connect with voters. This approach may ultimately lead to a personality-driven political environment, rather than one focused on the issues and concerns of the local community.

 Furthermore, Yıldırım's extensive bureaucratic history in politics since 2002 could have posed a challenge in establishing a genuine connection with the spirit of the local elections and local communities. In other words, being a mayor of Istanbul was an insufficient appointment in terms of his political experience due to his higher political positions in the past. He left local politics over ten years ago and worked as a high-level politician in the AKP and therefore, could not relate himself with local needs (AC1, 2021). In terms of Yıldırım's connection with voters, a campaign strategist who had previously worked with the AKP stated in interview that AKP voters desired close contact with politicians and frequently lined up to take pictures with them (POA,2 2021). This sentiment can be attributed to the emotional nature of Turkish society, as suggested by POA4 (2021). However, during Yıldırım's campaign, he was unable to establish the desired closeness with voters, as Erdoğan's dominant presence overshadowed him. Kirişçi (2019) notes that Erdoğan utilised personalisation in Yıldırım's campaign by making the election a referendum on his own leadership and popularity. The analysis of this research also reveals that in campaign advertisements, Yıldırım's use of "we" put a distance between himself and the voters as he acted as a spokesman of the party. Yıldırım consistently prioritised the AKP over his candidacy by using phrases such as "we will do it," "we will succeed," and "we will accomplish the unimaginable" whereas Imamoğlu used sentences such as "I am coming to resolve your problems". It is possible to argue that, Yıldırım's campaign had a strong sense of personalisation focused on Erdoğan and AKP rather than himself and that is why his campaign was party-leader centred and was distanced from the personalisation which is an important aspect of Americanisation.

In the CHP's campaign, Imamoğlu did not start out with as much political experience as Yıldırım. To increase his recognition, he made visits to neighbourhoods in Istanbul, and during these visits he attempted to establish a connection with the voters through his conversations. For instance, by making bazaar visits, he represented himself and built emotional connections with local communities by conversing with the voters of all sides. This approach is seen as personalised and individualistic, which is more in line with the Americanisation of political campaigns, where the focus is often on the candidate's personality and character (Cowley, 2013; Fiva and Halse, 2016). By presenting Imamoğlu as an individual with whom voters can relate, the campaign aimed to create an emotional response and illustrated a positive association with the candidate expressing his affection towards the audience by saying "I love you all" at the end of his rally speeches. In his campaign ads, he did not appear with any elite figures from the CHP which in contrast to Yıldırım's campaign ads with Erdoğan. Another important element of a personalised campaign is the localness of the candidate. Several recent studies indicate that candidates who are perceived to be more local and reside closer to their voters tend to have greater success in elections (Arzheimer and Evans, 2012; Campbell and Cowley, 2014; Evans et al., 2017). When examining the localness of the candidates and their campaigns, Imamoğlu demonstrated his localness by highlighting "local projects" in his rally speeches to show his understanding of the issues faced by the people. Additionally, he referred to his previous experience as the mayor of the Beylikdüzü district to showcase his competence. In contrast, Yıldırım, who had more political experience than Imamoğlu as the former Prime Minister of Turkey, focused on his expertise and professionalism in politics by using the slogan "we did what we promised, we will do it again" (Bahçelievler rally, May 2019) and mostly relied on polarised dicscourse rather focusing on local solutions during his rally speeches.

Upon examining both campaigns, it becomes apparent that they have adopted certain Americanised features, specifically personalisation tactics. However, the nature of personalisation was different in each campaign. In Imamoğlu's campaign, a personalised, candidate-centred approach was used which is an important aspect of Americanisation in political campaigning. Their approach could also be categorised within the shopping model approach, as it incorporated certain components of professional campaign techniques imported from US, emphasising Imamoğlu's personal qualities. Conversely, Yıldırım's campaign was centred on the party leader, Erdoğan, and his persona, thereby creating a personalisation around Erdoğan and composing a party-leader centred campaign.

8.5 Populism and Inverted Populism

According to Dinçşahin (2012), the enduring political dominance of the AKP and its leader, Erdoğan, for a period exceeding 15 years has been commonly attributed to their adoption of populist strategies. Gürsoy (2021) argues that there is no agreement among scholars on the specific category of populism that the AKP falls into. As mentioned in the Chapter 2, populism involves dividing people into two camps: the "pure" people versus the "corrupt elites" and "dangerous others". According to Taggart

(2002), the "people" are typically imagined as a unified and ideal population. For populist actors elites are self-interested, morally corrupted, unreliable, and unvirtuous (Caiani and della Porta 2010; Rooduijn et al. 2014). By showing "the other" morally corrupted, populist actors construct a collective identity for the "good people" based on shared interests, values, lifestyles, opinions, and beliefs, creating boundaries between themselves and their enemies (Canovan 2002; Müller 2016).

The data gathered from the AKP's rally speeches and from the interviews show that Erdoğan used populism in a way that demonised the "other" and created fear of the "other" by positioning the CHP as traitors or terrorists, and presented the AKP as the protector of territorial security. Thus, the AKP used "othering" to demonise the opponent to show itself as the voice of the oppressed people. Erdoğan often described CHP as "mud, trash and dirt" or as a "contempt and shame" (*illet ve zillet ittifakı*) while calling AKP "pure, honest and trustworthy." By creating that opposition, supporters of the AKP felt they belonged to the collective identity of "being pure and honest," thus morally superior than CHP supporters.

Another way for Erdoğan to foster collectiveness was religion. He frequently used sentences such as "we take our power from God," while demonising the "other" by saying "CHP is an enemy to our azan". According to the interview dat and the literature review, AKP started its political life by defining itself as "conservative democrats" but after 2007 the party turned into populist Islamist party (Doğan, 2022). Thereby, from 2007 until today, AKP and mainly Erdoğan takes its power from being religious/conservative. In other saying, their religiousness is a tool to consolidate their voter base (Doğan, 2022) and that was why during the 2019 local elections, he promised to convert Hagia Sophia Museum into a mosque (AC2, 2021). While showing themselves as the protector of Islam through their projects, he blamed CHP and Imamoğlu for being anti-religious in a direct manner. This religious rhetoric used by Erdoğan serves to appeal to the religious sensibilities of his supporters and present himself as a defender of Islamic values, as the "saviour of the *Ummah*[15]". By framing his political opponents as enemies of Islam, he also reinforces the "us vs them" mentality discussed earlier. This tactic is not unique to Erdoğan or Turkey; it is a common strategy used by populist leaders in other countries as well, who use religion as a means of garnering support and dividing society along religious lines. For example, in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have promoted a Hindu nationalist agenda using religious language and symbols to appeal to the country's Hindu majority (Jaffrelot, 2019). In the United States, former President Donald Trump often appealed to his Christian base, using religious language and imagery to present himself as a defender of Christian values (Marzouki and McDonnell, 2018). In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro has similarly used religious language to appeal to his supporters, presenting himself as a defender of Christian values against what he portrays as the secular and liberal establishment (Phillips, 2021).

---

[15] In reference to Islam, *ummah* refers to the whole Muslim world, or the community of believers (Brown edu).

Imamoğlu's use of religion was different from Erdoğan's. Imamoğlu moved away from CHP's elitist and secular stance and did not prioritise religion as much as conservative parties do (AC1, 2021). To demonstrate his religiosity, Imamoğlu visited mosques and participated in Friday prayers, as well as reading the Quran in Arabic. As seen in the literature review, CHP's political outlook in previous years had been characterised as more elitist and secular, leading voters to become accustomed to this image (Ciddi, 2009). As a result, when CHP candidate Imamoğlu read from the Quran during his campaign, it was perceived as a new way of CHP's politics and unfamiliar for some voters. However, crucially, he did not use religion as a tool in his rally speeches or campaign advertisements. Instead, he showcased his religious practices during his field visits, which were shared by people on their social media accounts. The important difference is that he used religion in his campaign but indirectly, in a close manner, when compared to AKP's use. Imamoğlu's use of religion has also rendered ineffective Erdoğan's arguments such as "what does CHP know about the Azan" in his rally speeches. By showing his religiosity covertly, he also responded to Erdoğan's claims about his religiousness in an indirect manner.

Apart from the discursive approach, the concept of populism is also approached from an ideological perspective, which draws on the definition offered by Mudde (2004). According to Mudde, populism can be characterised as a "thin-centred ideology" that views society as divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: the "pure people" and the "corrupt elite". Populist ideology further asserts that politics should reflect the "general will" of the pure people (Mudde, 2004). The exact definition of "the people" in populism can vary between different contexts, giving rise to inclusionary and exclusionary forms of populism. Inclusionary populism characterises "the people" as predominantly consisting of the common people, with the goal of representing groups that were previously excluded from political participation. This form of populism has the potential to increase democratic participation and incorporate a broader range of voices in politics (Filc, 2015). In contrast, exclusionary populism views "the people" primarily as a cultural and ethnic community. The antagonism between "the elite" and "the people" is framed in xenophobic and nativist terms, with groups outside of the community perceived as a threatening "other". Exclusionary populism aims to expel these groups from society, reflecting a narrow and exclusionary worldview (ibid). Exclusionary populism is often associated with radical right-wing ideologies (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013), while inclusionary populism tends to be associated with leftist ideologies (Filc, 2015).

When the AKP first came to power in 2002, their promise was to represent suppressed people and increase democratic participation, which was in line with inclusionary populism. However, as of 2007, AKP's populism can be categorised as exclusionary populism, which defines "the people" based on their ideological views (AC2, 2021). The research results indicate that the AKP employed exclusionary populism by using nationalistic feelings and by associating secular individuals with the CHP and thereby excluding them. As evidenced by the data from the qualitative analysis, the AKP's discourse revolved around themes of Turkish identity and patriotism which foster nationalistic feelings while

positioning the "other" as a threat to the homeland. In their rally speeches, as an example of the exclusion of elites, Erdoğan's sentences were "Elites like CHP would not understand your problems" (in Bahçelievler rally, 2019). Meanwhile, he presented himself as the "man of the people". For instance, in the Ataşehir rally in 2019, Yıldırım announced Erdoğan as the "voice of the oppressed, the man of the people is coming to the stage" during his rallies to remind them that only Erdoğan could understand their needs, as he is the man of the people, and has been since 2002. In terms of nationalistic feelings, they were apparent in the party's campaign advertisements on YouTube, where they employed a commonly used phrase among Turkish citizens, "where are you coming from," in order to evoke a sense of belonging to the homeland. Additionally, the AKP utilised the hashtag #IstanbulKırmızıBeyaz (IstanbulRedWhite), which corresponds to the colours of the Turkish flag, to cultivate nationalistic sentiments. In these advertisements, Yıldırım frequently appeared with a Turkish flag draped around his neck, serving as a visual representation of his and the AKP's commitment to Turkish identity.

On the other hand, the CHP's use of populism was in line with inclusionary populism. According to Markou (2016), this type of populism is the integration of excluded groups and aims to enlarge democracy. The slogans such as, "I am coming to become the mayor of 16 million" or "16 million will be the winner of this election," or "we are coming to reconcile and unite people" as well as during his rally speeches he had sentences such as "we are going to govern Istanbul together", and "there will not be any distinction," exemplifying his inclusive approach. Additionally, Imamoğlu's campaign emphasised the importance of reconciliation and the need for love in politics which is defined as "Radical Love" (Wuthrich and Ingleby, 2020). Through the use of "Radical Love," (ibid) the data of this thesis shows that Imamoğlu's campaign created a political language that prioritised positive emotions such as love, unity and hope.

In contrast to the AKP's candidate, data shows that Imamoğlu's campaign used the opposite strategy which is inverted populism (Demiralp and Balta, 2021). He did not use fear, instead, he put "love and hope" as the centre of his campaign message and he responded to Erdoğan in an indirect manner. He used simple but powerful gestures, such as ending his rally speeches with "I love you so much" or making heart-shaped hand gestures in his campaign ads. These actions were aimed at conveying a sense of warmth, empathy, and unity. By doing so, Imamoğlu aimed to connect with voters on an emotional level, delivering a message of love and togetherness rather than fear and hostility. Furthermore, his willingness to engage with AKP's voters demonstrated a commitment to bridging political divides which is also in line with his slogan "we are coming to reconcile, reunite" where as AKP's emotional appeals were more negative, direct, highlighting polarisation and portraying the CHP as an enemy. For example, Erdoğan said "CHP works with Kandil (where PKK resides)", which could illustrate a good example of his direct manner and how he showed CHP traitor and made people fear CHP. In this way, instead of treating political opponents as enemies, Imamoğlu's approach was one of reaching out and appealing to a broader base of support. Imamoğlu also used populism, and made "us vs them" comparison by calling AKP "handful of people" or by saying "do not watch them on TV". However,

his use of populism was perceived as a response to political hegemony of AKP and as a tool to mobilise people to create a collective identity that aims to get its popular support by creating a "people" or "popular identity" that opposes the ruling party.

8.6 Conclusion

This research and the applied methodologies highlight the potential for effective communication strategies and campaigns to reach diverse voter groups, challenging the notion that populism is an invincible force in electoral politics. These results emphasise the importance of focusing on the real needs and issues of voters rather than relying solely on populist rhetoric and past success stories. Effective, positive and inclusive communication strategies coupled with the selection of a catch-all candidate have the potential to change public perceptions of incumbent powers and broaden the appeal of political campaigns. It can be inferred that the Istanbul mayoral election of 2019 was a highly contested and polarised political event. Both the AKP and the CHP employed modern campaign strategies and techniques, including personalisation, positive and negative campaigning and inverted populism and populism, to appeal to voters. However, the AKP's reliance on a party-leader centred campaign, the power intoxication over years and the use of highly populist, negative campaigning aligning with non-linear communication has been identified as potential factors contributing to their electoral losses. On the other hand, Imamoğlu's use of personalised and candidate-centred campaign which is in line with Americanisation, along with inverted populism and a focus on solution-oriented positive campaigning including local solutions, hope and unity brought the victory for the CHP.

The AKP's campaign's main message was based on past success stories and focused on Yıldırım's political career accomplishments and what he could achieve through his experience. Although the AKP campaign endeavoured to establish an emotional connection with voters by highlighting the party's past successes, creating a sense of nostalgia and utilising slogans centred around concepts such as the "heart-based municipality" or viewing Istanbul as a love story, it is clear from the research findings that the highly polarised populist discourse employed by Erdoğan ultimately overshadowed the positive and emotionally resonant elements of Yıldırım's campaign. The research findings also show that voters were seeking solid solutions, emotional connection with the candidate rather than reminders of past success stories delivered mainly by Erdoğan. They attempted to change that strategy durig the second round of elections, but data shows that it created confusion among voters mind and resulted in an unbalanced political communication strategy. This finding underscores the importance of understanding voter needs, aligning them with a catch- all candidate, carrying out a candidate-centred campaign, maintaining a consistent communication strategy focusing on emotional appeals and striking a balance between negative campaigning and populism, as inbalance between the two can potentially lead to backlash.

During their political campaign, Erdoğan employed the tactic of populist discourse, which aimed to create a polarising narrative of "us versus them" between the common people and the elites. This

approach helped to frame the election as a battle between the downtrodden masses and the privileged few and positioned Erdoğan as the representative of the former. At the same time, Erdoğan discredited the CHP, by branding them as corrupt politicians out of touch with the needs of ordinary people and labelled them as anti-religious. He repeatedly referred to them as "shameful" and "disgraceful" members of society, suggesting that they were more interested in serving their interests than those of the people they were elected to represent. According to the interview data, the strategy of Erdoğan worked until the 2019 elections, but in the 2019 Istanbul local elections populist communication did not have the intended effect due to changing voter needs and the AKP's failure to recognise and respond to these changes, possibly due to power intoxication that they are facing.

The results obtained from the research showed that the nature of Turkish politics has begun to change, and voters needed unifying discourse and projects that would meet their basic needs rather than the use of polarised communication which does not respond to their needs. In other words, in this election, the voters in Istanbul were looking for solutions and hope for their future. Another notable feature of Yıldırım's campaign was its focus on its party leader Erdoğan, rather than on the candidate himself, which made his campaign a party-leader centred campaign. As mentioned earlier, Yıldırım's campaign was likened to a referendum on Erdoğan's popularity, and it evolved from being Yıldırım's campaign to a personalised election campaign for Erdoğan. This approach was used by Erdoğan to further his own political agenda and to showcase his continued relevance in Turkish politics. However, it also stressed the lack of confidence in Yıldırım as a candidate and the reliance on Erdoğan's personal popularity to win the election. This strategy failed to resonate with voters and did not bring the AKP the expected electoral victory. The findings show that Yıldırım's communication strategy underwent a transformation during the second around of the elections. His advertisements personalised around him and during his rally speeches he distanced himself from Erdoğan and adopted a more positive campaign approach, moving away from populist discourse. However, the data suggests that, this change might have been viewed positively within the AKP, but from voters' perception, Yıldırım's campaign presented mixed messages and created confusion hence did not work as they hoped for.

The findings obtained from the qualitative analysis for this research shed light on the election success of Imamoğlu's campaign strategy. Specifically, the findings revealed that Imamoğlu's approach differed significantly from that of his opponent Yıldırım and the AKP, as he emphasised a more positive, inclusive, local, and personalised campaign. The interview data shows that Imamoğlu's success in his campaign was achieved by doing the opposite of what the AKP had done. The findings indicate that one of the visible differences between Imamoğlu's campaign from that of the AKP was his use of an inclusive, solution-oriented and embracing discourse, which is defined as inverted populism, rather than a polarising one. In terms of visual elements of his campaign, from the very beginning of the campaign communication, Imamoğlu's campaign advertisements promised local solutions, hope for the future, embraced people from different parts of Istanbul. His main slogans, "If there is Imamoğlu, then there is a solution" or "If there is Imamoğlu, there is hope", were clear examples of his use of solution-

oriented and positive campaign communication. Despite being a relatively new politician in the political arena compared to Yıldırım, Imamoğlu successfully conveyed his message to the voters. In doing so, he eliminated the CHP's old, elitist and stereotyped political ideology and by making field visits without any CHP party member he personalised his campaign and started to build an emotional attachment with voters.

In terms of his use of inverted populism, he also demonstrated his religious side indirectly, by attending Friday prayers, reading the Quran, fasting, and by showing his family, where we saw his mother with Hijab and his wife without Hijab, aimed to demonstrate his ability to represent every segment of society and that he was one of us. This strategy was very different from the secular image that voters were used to see from the CHP. Imamoğlu's campaign strategy, which focused on inclusivity, enabled him to position himself as a candidate who could be embraced by voters from all backgrounds, whether secular or conservative. By adopting a more open and welcoming approach, Imamoğlu was able to create a sense of unity and appeal to a broader base of voters. This approach stood in contrast to the AKP's polarising rhetoric, which often sought to divide the electorate and position the party as the only true representative of conservative values. Unlike the AKP's discourse, Imamoğlu did not openly or explicitly frame his campaign in religious terms. Instead, he incorporated these elements into his campaign in a way that was more covert, making them seem like routine activities rather than overt political gestures. This approach allowed him to appeal to voters who were drawn to the AKP's religious message, while at the same time avoiding the appearance of engaging in overtly populist rhetoric. As a result, Imamoğlu was able to capture the support of a diverse range of voters and emerge as a unifying figure capable of bringing people together around a shared vision for Istanbul's future. The data collected also indicates that Imamoğlu employed elements of populism in his campaign, such as his use of the phrase "a select group of people". However, a key difference between Imamoğlu's approach to that of Erdoğan and the AKP was the way in which he employed populist rhetoric. Firstly, while the AKP's campaign relied heavily on overt and direct appeals to populist sentiment, Imamoğlu's campaign was characterised by a more subtle and indirect use of populist themes, which was also defined as inverted populism. Secondly, according to Laclau (1977), populism is a response to the perceived hegemony of the ruling class, so Imamoğlu's use of populism could be seen as a response to the AKP political hegemony by creating a new momentum, and a collective identity. Compared to AKP's use of direct populism, Imamoğlu's use of inverted populism proved to be effective in winning votes.

Imamoğlu's campaign was marked by a candidate-centred, personalised approach that focused on inclusive, positive emotions and solutions-oriented messaging. His campaign succeeded in building trust and credibility with voters by avoiding direct negative attacks on opponents and presenting a message that appealed to a broad cross-section of the electorate in Istanbul.

The findings of this research highlight the contrasting campaign strategies employed by the two candidates in the 2019 Istanbul mayoral election. While Imamoğlu's campaign focused on personalised,

positive messaging that resonated with voters and built trust and credibility, there were also elements of populist discourse in his campaign, albeit not overtly, which was more in line with inverted populism. Yıldırım's campaign relied on AKP's past success stories, his professionalism in politics, populism and heavily on the popularity of Erdoğan.

These results suggest that Turkish voters are increasingly seeking a unifying discourse that addresses their basic needs and aspirations, rather than divisive and populist rhetoric. This trend indicates a shift in the nature of Turkish politics towards a more solution-oriented and inclusive approach. The 2019 Istanbul local elections demonstrated the changing nature of Turkish politics and that populist parties can be defeated with a consistent, inclusive and positive communication strategy, highlighting the importance of effective campaign messaging and candidate credibility in winning over voters.

While composing this thesis, it is worth noting that the 2023 presidential elections took place, resulting in the re-election of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the President of Turkey. When comparing this election outcome with the 2019 local elections, it is worth noting that one was local, the other one was presidential election and their areas of influence were different. However, when analysing the reason of CHP's defeat, it is widely believed that one of the primary reasons for the loss of the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), and its candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, was a campaign that failed to address the basic needs of the people and that many voters expressed their desire to see new political leadership emerge from the CHP (CAM1, 2023). It is argued that the CHP's campaign in the 2023 presidential elections largely resonated within its own voter base, effectively creating an echo chamber (CAM1, 2023). The key deficiency attributed to the CHP's campaign was its inability to reach beyond its core supporters whereas Imamoğlu's campaign succeeded to reach diverse voters around Istanbul even beyond Istanbul in some cases. Drawing parallels between the 2019 Istanbul local elections and the 2023 presidential elections, both campaigns shared a common theme of offering hope and pursuing a unifying, conciliatory communication strategy. However, a notable difference lay in Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's inability to convince voters with this campaign message "*sana söz yine baharlar gelecek*" (I promise you, spring will come again) as it failed to offer substantial promises. In contrast to Imamoğlu's 2019 campaign, which initially focused on local solutions and later transitioned to a message of hope, the 2023 campaign employed a slogan promising the arrival of "*bahar*" (spring) but it fell short of providing concrete solutions. While hope continued to be fostered with the word "bahar", it proved insufficient on its own (CAM1, 2023). When looking at Erdoğan's election campaign, the slogan "*Türkiye yüzyılı için, doğru zaman, doğru adam*" (The right time, the right person for the century of Turkey) positioned him as a more "appropriate, trustable" candidate than Kılıçdaroğlu (CAM2, 2023). He positioned himself as a strong candidate who could work for the century of Turkey. Considering the election success he has achieved since 2002, and the fact that Kılıçdaroğlu has faced defeat 13 times in elections against Erdoğan since 2010, it is possible to argue that confidence in Kılıçdaroğlu among the electorate has waned (AC4, 2023). This necessitated the need of a more compelling campaign communication and new leadership to challenge Erdoğan. However, the

important point is that, in the 2023 elections, Erdoğan could not surpass Kılıçdaroğlu in major cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Antalya, but he emerged as the winner through his accomplishments in the region of Anatolia. The crucial point to emphasise here is that Kılıçdaroğlu's communication strategy worked in metropolitan areas but did not find a foothold in the periphery. This dichotomy in communication between major cities and the periphery provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of Turkish politics. While Erdoğan's message found traction in Anatolian regions where his policies were perceived as beneficial, Kılıçdaroğlu's campaign failed to bridge the gap between urban and rural voters, highlighting the importance of tailoring communication strategies to specific demographics and regions within Turkey. An argument can be made that under Kılıçdaroğlu's leadership, the CHP was defined as an elitist party and this perception may have lead to a lack of support from people in the periphery (AC4, 2023). Accordingly, the research findings suggest that, with a new face like Imamoğlu, the CHP managed leave its elitist image and adopted a more inclusive approach while offering solid solutions to the public. This highlights the requirement for a more persuasive campaign communication strategy and a new leadership within the CHP to challenge Erdoğan's leadership.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This research analysed the political communication techniques of the AKP and the CHP during 2019 the local elections in Istanbul. The main research question (RQ1) driving this study is: "What are the main features and differences between AKP and CHP's political communication strategies during the 2019 Istanbul local election campaigns?" To address this question, the thesis posed the following sub research questions:

- **RQ1.1** What were the political communication techniques that had been used by the AKP and the CHP candidates during the local election campaigning?

- **RQ1.2** What characterised CHP political ads discourse from that of AKP during the Istanbul local election?

- **RQ1.3** What role did populism play during the Istanbul local election?

The results for the RQ1.1 indicated distinct strategies employed by the two parties. The AKP's campaign relied on their past success stories, used party-leader centred campaigning along with polarised discourse. Additionally, they used Yıldırım's extensive political experience as a proof of their professionalism in politics. As a result, their campaign not only adopted a polarising discourse but also aimed to establish a connection with voters by evoking a sense of familiarity through the recollection of past achievements and their professionalism in politics. In terms of personalisation, Yıldırım's campaign was personalised around Erdoğan rather than Yıldırım himself. Consequently, his campaign was party-leader centred campaign rather than being candidate-centred. However, in the second round of elections, Yıldırım's campaign shifted towards a more candidate-centred approach. Yet, this change caused inconsistencies in their communication strategy, causing voter confusion. In terms of using positive campaigning, Yıldırım's campaign attempted to create an emotional connection with the electorate by using symbols such as heart. However, the extensive use of polarised discourse during Erdoğan's rallies overshadowed the positive side of their campaign, thereby did not meet their expectations. Beside using rallies, Erdoğan tried to built that emotional connection with the voters by using their extensive power over media outlets as well as digital media channels. However, the data of this study shows that their adeptness in utilising social media channels was more professional and better planned in the past, and has since diminished in effectiveness.

The data obtained from this thesis reveals that Imamoğlu employed a communication strategy that was the opposite of the AKP's approach. He adopted an inclusive discourse, followed a consistent communication strategy composed by his political consultant and his team, and used a candidate-centered and positive campaign that was personalised around himself, aligning more with the

Americanisation. Another important point was his use of digital media tools such as Instagram live, or Twitter as other broadcast channels were under control of the AKP. In that sense, his campaign can be identified as an example of "Fast Politics" like Obama's campaign, which also relied on user generated content on social media (Bimber, 2014). Through his social media accounts and the rallies, unlike prioritising large-scale projects, he focused more on local initiatives disseminating them across various channels to reach a wide spectrum of voters.

The findings gathered from the analysis shed light on significant characteristics observed in the advertising discourse employed by the CHP and the AKP during the 2019 Istanbul local elections to understand what characterised CHP ads discourse from that of AKP. To analyse this aspect, a thorough textual analysis of 60 campaign ads was conducted. Imamoğlu's campaign commenced with a solution-oriented advertisement, setting the tone for a communicative approach that emphasised inclusivity and consensus by proclaiming that everyone in Istanbul would have a voice. This discourse was consistently maintained throughout the campaign, aiming to foster an atmosphere of unity and cooperation. Even during the second round of the elections, although the advertising posters adopted a more ambitious discourse, they continued to instil hope in the electorate, which showed that Imamoğlu's campaign was focused on positive emotions as a strategic communication tool. In contrast, Yıldırım assumed a role as a representative of his party, rather than primarily promoting himself as a candidate. Consequently, his campaign adopted a discourse that primarily aimed to promote AKP's past achievements and did not offer any solution for local needs. Moreover, the findings indicate that although Yıldırım attempted to change his advertising strategy and run a more personalised campaign in the second round and this change in his campaign created different messages as it did not follow a linear strategy and resulted in confusion among the voters. Another important point is that while the AKP's campaign referenced the past and emphasised Istanbul as a cherished love story, evoking emotional connections, the slogan was also applied to other cities in Turkey which hindered the intended emotional connection with the Istanbul electorate. This inconsistency suggests a potential misalignment between the campaign's emotional appeal and the use of a generic slogan that failed to establish a specific emotional connection with the Istanbul electorate.

The data obtained for RQ1.3 demonstrated that both candidates employed populism as a communication strategy, albeit in different manners. To reach this conclusion, a total of 120 rally speeches (60 rally speeches from each candidate) were analysed, allowing for a comprehensive examination of their use of populism in their campaigns. The findings show that Erdoğan adopted a classic approach to populism, emphasising an "us vs them" division, labelling the opposition terrorists or referred to them as "mud" and "dirt" in order to generate fear, dislike toward them. He also used religion as a populist tool to consolidate his voter base and present himself as the "saviour of Ummah". On the other hand, Imamoğlu adopted inverted populism, using a unifying discourse and declaring his intention to make Istanbul's mayor accountable to its 16 million residents. As part of his use of inverted populism, he emphasised love rather than fear, used indirect approach when discussing his opponent and avoided

creating a divisive "us vs them" dynamic. However, it is worth noting that Imamoğlu tactfully employed religious references in a more subtle manner to persuade conservative voters without overtly emphasising religion. In this sense, Imamoğlu employed an indirect approach, effectively utilising a strategy of inverted populism. Additionally, Imamoğlu made comparisons such as "a handful of people," but these were primarily used as responses to political hegemony and to mobilise collective identity. Thus, they were aimed at gathering support rather than creating divisions in society.

Based on the aim of understanding the political communication techniques used by both parties and the reasons behind the victory of the CHP and the loss of the AKP in Istanbul after 25 years, it can be concluded that the campaigns of the two parties differed significantly in terms of their political messaging and communication style. The data obtained from this thesis shows that the AKP and the CHP did both utilise contemporary campaign strategies, such as personalisation, positive and negative campaigning, emotional appeals, and populism and inverted populism, in their efforts to win over voters. However, AKP's party-leader centred campaign strategy, which was personalised around Erdoğan rather than Yıldırım, appeared to have prioritised the promotion of Erdoğan's personal image and accomplishments over the Yıldırım's solutions to address the needs and concerns of the electorate. This was reinforced by Erdoğan's use of populist discourse, which may have contributed to polarising the electorate and creating an "us vs them" mentality and thus transforming the campaign into a more negative and polarised contest. Additionally, the AKP's prolonged time in power may have led to power intoxication which in turn resulted in a failure to listen to the electorate's needs. This failure reflected in their communications strategy which did not resonate with the needs of electorate. The data analysis indicates that despite the AKP's intentions to convey positive messages during their campaign, the findings reveal that their efforts were hindered by the utilisation of polarising language and a heavy reliance on a party-leader centred approach. These factors negatively impacted the overall effectiveness of their communication strategy. In addition, the data gathered suggest that primarily Erdoğan may have attempted to consolidate his voter base by using religious identity, the Rabia as a sign of defiance and fear-based appeals about the "other" as a populist approaches, which in the end did not work as effectively as they hoped for. These findings underscore the importance of prioritising substantive issues over polarised political rhetoric, particularly in the context of extended periods of political hegemony. Furthermore, they provide insight into the potential pitfalls of populist political communication and the dangers of relying on party-leader centred campaigns, fostering fear and religion-based communication strategies to secure electoral victories.

The data suggests that the success of CHP in the election was largely attributed to their shift in political approach and strategy. They abandoned their previously elitist and secular stance and instead, embraced a more personalised, inclusive and positive communication strategy, which differed from their past strategies (POA1, 2021). The party's decision to change their approach to campaign communication proved to be a wise move, as it effectively appealed to a broader and more diverse electorate. By adopting a more diverse and inclusive communication approach, the CHP was able to establish a

stronger connection with a broader spectrum of voters, enabling them to address the needs and concerns of a wider range of individuals. This approach not only facilitated a more personal and relatable engagement with voters but also fostered a sense of inclusivity and instilled a feeling of hope among the electorate. The use of a personalised campaign provided an emotional connection with voters, localised the candidate and aligned Imamoğlu's campaign more closely with Americanisation. As a result, the Imamoğlu's communication strategy effectively resonated with diverse segments of the population in Istanbul. These efforts to create a more positive, inclusive and solution-oriented campaign communication approach were key to Imamoğlu's success in the election. Furthermore, Imamoğlu's campaign resonated with a broad range of voters due to his ability to appeal to both secular and conservative voters. He did this by crafting a message that addressed the needs and concerns of all voters, regardless of their political leanings. His campaign was solution-focused and hopeful, rather than divisive or exclusionary, which appealed to voters who were tired of negative campaigning and political rhetoric. Imamoğlu's use of inverted populism (Demiralp and Balta, 2021) was also identified as a significant factor in his election victory. Unlike traditional populism, which often relies on divisive rhetoric and exclusionary messaging, inverted populism focuses on inclusion and building a sense of community. By using this approach, Imamoğlu was able to unite voters around a positive message of hope and change, rather than dividing them along political or ideological lines. Additionally, the subtle use of religious identity in Imamoğlu's campaign further contributed to his success, allowing him to connect with voters on a personal level without alienating those who may have different religious beliefs.

The findings indicate that there are multiple factors that influence election outcomes. While an inclusive and positive campaign can have a positive impact on voters, the selection of a catch-all candidate, who can appeal to a wide range of voters, the use of right communication strategy, understanding voters' needs and reflecting these needs into the communication strategy also plays a crucial role in effectively delivering the message to the electorate and persuading them to go to the polls. In other words, choosing a candidate who can effectively employ a positive and inclusive communication strategy, addressing the diverse needs and concerns of the electorate, may prove more effective than selecting a candidate with extensive experience but who adopts a divisive or exclusionary approach. This is especially crucial during prolonged periods of electoral authoritarianian regimes, highlighting the importance of embracing inclusive and unifying rhetoric to resonate with a broad range of voters.

9.2 Contribution of the Research

There is a dearth of scholarly research on the political communication techniques employed by the CHP, particularly in the context of recent election cycles in Turkey. Similarly, there is limited literature analysing the political communication features of both the AKP and the CHP during recent election periods. The scarcity of research in this area highlights the need for further examination of the

communication strategies of Turkish political parties, particularly in the context of changing political and social dynamics.

Firstly, given the limited research on the political communication strategies of the AKP and the CHP, this study aims to make a contribution to this area by analysing the primary features and distinctions of their political communication strategies utilised during the local elections in Istanbul on the 31st of March and 23rd of June 2019. Secondly, this research contributes to the field of political communication by examining the significance of personalisation which is an important aspect of Americanised campaigns. Personalisation is not a common practice in Turkish politics. Therefore, by analysing Imamoğlu's campaign from this framework, this thesis presents a contrast to party-leader centred campaigns where personalisation revolves primarily around the party leader rather than individual candidates. Thirdly, the research findings highlight the potential effectiveness of campaign communication strategies that utilise inverted populism and emotional appeals to address the needs of diverse voter groups and to envision a more positive future. These strategies can be used as valuable tools in challenging the seemingly invincible power of populist regimes and neutralising their polarising rhetoric. By analysing these tools, the study contributes to the growing literature on counter-populist strategies by using this election as a case study. Fourthly, by highligting the contrast between positive campaigning and negative campaigning, this study shows that, despite the prevalence of negative campaigning in the literature, it can be countered with well-planned strategic communication. Furthermore, at the time of writing this thesis, political campaigns by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu for the 2023 presidential elections were held in Turkey. To understand the political communication strategies of the 2023 presidential election used by the candidates, this thesis presents communication approaches where Imamoğlu differs from Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu as well as, identifying the strategic shortcomings of Yıldırım comparing to Erdoğan's communication. Understanding the communication strategies employed in these two significant campaigns, analysing them, and identifying the distinct techniques utilised by the two candidates make this thesis an important resource. It contributes to the understanding of the communication paths in these crucial campaigns and offers insights into the diverse approaches adopted by Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu. Consequently, this research serves as a valuable reference for comprehending the evolving landscape of political communication and campaign strategies, not only in the context of the 2019 Istanbul local elections but also in the broader context of Turkish politics, including the 2023 presidential election.

Lastly, the results of this research offer insights into how political opposition parties can challenge and defeat populist regimes around the world by adopting effective, positive, and inclusive communication strategies. The findings of this research will not only contribute to academic literature but also serve as a resource for political strategists, policy-makers, and researchers interested in the dynamic realm of political communication.

9.3 Research Limitations

There were several limitations that had an impact on the data and material gathered for this thesis.

- Firstly, the paucity of literature and research on the political communication strategies employed by AKP and CHP posed a significant challenge in terms of identifying pertinent sources for this study.

- Secondly, gaining the participation of AKP members or campaign consultants for the interviews was a major difficulty.

9.4 Recommendations for Future Studies

This research is the first comprehensive doctoral study to analyse the main features and differences between the AKP and the CHP political communication strategies during the 2019 Istanbul local elections. It is anticipated that this research will serve as a foundation for future research in this field, as it offers a more extensive exploration of the subject than prior studies.

Future research on this topic could focus on the political communication strategies used by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who ran as candidates during the 2023 presidential election. While examining their communication strategies, this thesis offers insights to understand the areas where Kılıçdaroğlu fell short and implemented ineffective communication strategies in the electoral race against a political leader like Erdoğan who has been in power for two decades. It also opens a door to analyse the communication factors underlying Erdoğan's electoral success and why these factors did not yield the same impact in the Istanbul local elections.

Moreover, considering Ekrem Imamoğlu's involvement as Vice President in Kılıçdaroğlu's 2023 presidential campaign, the insights obtained from Imamoğlu's campaign techniques in this study can serve as a valuable basis for a comparative analysis with his 2023 campaign as Vice President. Erdoğan's electoral victory in 2023 highlights the ongoing challenge for the CHP in establishing a strong connection with rural citizens in Anatolia. While Kılıçdaroğlu managed to surpass Erdoğan in major urban centres such as Ankara and Istanbul, his electoral failure in rural areas warrants further investigation on his campaign communication for future research in this domain. The election result raises the need for an in-depth exploration of the political communication factors that contribute to the CHP's weaker presence in rural regions.

In addition to this, it is important to note that, it was significant for the CHP to advance to the second round of the presidential election because it marked the first time in President Erdoğan's 25-year political career, that he had to compete in a second round of elections. Although the election outcome may not have favoured the CHP, this development indicates the emergence of counter-populist strategies and the CHP gaining ground in Turkish politics.

This thesis can serve as a resource for the upcoming local election on March 30, 2024, providing insights into the effectiveness of political communication strategies used by the candidates. By analysing the communication techniques employed by both candidates, it offers a guideline on which strategies are more likely to lead to electoral success for the upcoming local election in 2024. The comprehensive understanding of the communication strategies employed by the AKP and CHP during the 2019 Istanbul local elections opens doors to research, fostering a deeper comprehension of the complex interplay between political communication and electoral success. With these insights, scholars can analyse the evolving landscape of political communication, contributing to the advancement of effective communication strategies in the realm of politics. This research fuels further exploration and shapes future discourse on political communication strategies and their impact on electoral processes.

Appendix 1: In-Depth Interview Questions and the List of Interviewees

Interview Questions – CHP – academia

1. Can you define the CHP for us?
2. How would you describe CHP's political ideology?
3. Would you consider the CHP as a populist party?
4. Would you consider Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu as a populist leader?
5. Are you familiar with the term populist political communication? In your opinion was it one of the feature of Ekrem İmamoğlu's political communication agenda?
6. What can you say about the political communication strategy of the CHP?
7. In your opinion, what was CHP's main strategic goals in choosing the Istanbul mayor candidate for the 2019 local elections?
8. How would you describe Ekrem İmamoğlu's political communication strategy during the 2019 local elections period?
9. Do you think the polarising discourse that had been carried out during the campaign period had an effect on the Istanbul election results?
10. In your opinion, what has changed in terms of CHP's political communication strategy since the local elections in 2014?
11. In your opinion, what were the main differences between Ekrem İmamoğlu and Binali Yıldırım political messages?
12. Do you think the TV debate with Ekrem İmamoğlu was the right strategy for Binali Yıldırım's campaign?
13. In your opinion, how did Ekrem İmamoğlu win the election after 25 years of AKP rule in Istanbul?
14. Could we say that there is an Americanisation in political communication in Turkey? If so, in which way?
15. Could we say that there is a professionalisation in political communication area in Turkey?
16. In your opinion, what will be the future of political campaigning in Turkey?

Interview Questions – CHP – campaign team

1. Can you define the CHP for us?
2. For how long have you been a political consultant for the CHP?
3. How would you describe CHP's political ideology?
4. Would you consider the CHP as a populist party?
5. Would you consider Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu as a populist leader?
6. Are you familiar with the term populist political communication? Did you use it as a feature of Ekrem İmamoğlu's political communication agenda?
7. What can you say about the political communication strategy of the CHP?
8. What was CHP's main strategic goals in choosing the Istanbul mayor candidate for the 2019 local elections?
9. Why did you choose Ekrem İmamoğlu? How was the process?

10. Ekrem İmamoğlu ran his campaign against a really popular and powerful political figure from the AKP. What did you as a strategy to increase the political popularity of İmamoğlu against Binali Yıldırım?

11. How would you describe Ekrem İmamoğlu's political communication strategy during the 2019 local elections period?

12. What was your focus point throughout the campaign strategy?

13. Do you think the polarising discourse that had been carried out during the campaign period had an effect on the Istanbul election results?

14. What was your role in Ekrem İmamoğlu's campaign team?

15. Could you tell us about your experience in Ekrem İmamoğlu's campaign?

16. Different from other election periods, we saw Ekrem İmamoğlu more often than the party leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. Was it part of your strategy? Could we say that you carried out candidate-centered campaign?

17. In your opinion, what has changed in terms of CHP's political communication strategy since the local elections in 2014?

18. In your opinion, what were the main differences between Ekrem İmamoğlu and Binali Yıldırım political messages?

19. What kind of media tools have been used during the campaigning period?

20. Have you used traditional media as well as using Web 2.0 and if so, in what way?

21. Do you think the TV debate with Ekrem İmamoğlu was the right strategy for Binali Yıldırım's campaign?

22. What role did social media play during the Ekrem İmamoğlu's political campaigning period?

23. Have you used campaign and communication experts or academics while planning your political communication strategy? If so, in which way?

24. How many volunteers helped with your campaign?

25. What is the role of opinion polls in CHP's political communication?

26. Did you use a different strategy to get the attention from the educated young voters? If so, what was your strategy?

27. In your opinion, how did Ekrem İmamoğlu win the election after 25 years of AKP rule in İstanbul?

28. Have you been following Americanised campaigning trends while building your campaigning strategy, if so, what were the main tools you have used so far?

29. Could we say that there is a professionalisation in political communication area in Turkey?

30. In your opinion, what will be the future of political campaigning in Turkey?

Interview Questions – AKP- Campaign Team

1) For how long have you been an MP of the AKP?
2) Can you define the AKP for us?
3) Would you consider the AKP as an Islamist party? Why?
4) Are you familiar with the term political populism? Studies show that populism was a feature of AKP's political communication agenda, do you agree? Why?
5) Would you consider the AKP as a populist party?
6) Would you consider President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as a populist leader?
7) Is populist political communication part of the AKP's political campaigning strategy?
8) What can you say about the political communication strategy of the AKP?

9) What was AKP's main strategic goals in choosing the Istanbul mayor candidate for the 2019 local elections?

10) How would you describe Binali Yıldırım's political communication strategy during the 2019 local elections period?

11) What was your focus point throughout the campaign strategy?

12) Do you think the polarising discourse that had been carried out during the campaign period had an effect on the Istanbul election results?

13) What was your role in Binali Yıldırım's campaign team?

14) Could you tell us about your experience in Binali Yıldırım's campaign?

15) We saw President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan more often in the rallies than Binali Yıldırım during the first election election. What was the reason of this? Was it part of the campaign strategy?

16) What was the the reason of changning this strategy during the second election period in Istanbul?

17) In your opinion, what has changed in terms of AKP's political communication strategy since the local elections in 2014?

18) In your opinion, what were the main differences between Ekrem İmamoğlu and Binali Yıldırım political messages?

19) What kind of media tools have been used during the campaigning period?

20) Have you used traditional media as well as using Web 2.0 and if so, in what way?

21) Do you think the TV debate with Ekrem İmamoğlu was the right strategy for Binali Yıldırım's campaign?

22) What role did social media play during the Binali Yıldırım's political campaigning period?

23) Have you used campaign and communication experts or academics while planning your political communication strategy? If so, in which way?

24) How many volunteers helped with your campaign?

25) What is the role of opinion polls in AKP's political communication?

26) Did you use a different strategy to get the attention from the educated young voters? If so, what was your strategy?

Interview Questions – AKP – Academia

1. Could you introduce yourself?
2. How would you describe the AKP and CHP?
3. How would you define the current ideologies of the AKP and CHP?
4. In your opinion, can we characterise the CHP or AKP as populist parties, and why?
5. Do you think that Erdoğan or Kemal Kilicdaroglu could be considered populist leaders, and why?
6. Considering political campaigns in general, what are your thoughts on the AKP and CHP's political communication strategies up to now? How would you briefly assess them, and what are their most prominent features?
7. We frequently hear the term "populist political communication" in political communication. In your opinion, was the concept of populist political communication used by Binali Yıldırım or the CHP during the election campaign? Can you provide examples?
8. Looking at the election campaign strategies of the Imamoğlu and Binali Yıldırım, what were the most distinct differences?
9. What were the most significant message differences in the election campaigns of these two candidates?
10. In your view, was Binali Yıldırım the right candidate for the Istanbul local elections? Why?

11. Was Ekrem Imamoğlu the right candidate, and why?
12. Do you believe that the AKP used a polarising discourse during the elections? What do you think was the reason for this, and how do you think this discourse technique affected the election results?
13. Do you believe that the AKP has used a polarising discourse since its establishment? Or can we say that it started using this technique after a certain period? Why?
14. In your opinion, what is the fundamental message/strategy that the AKP uses during its political campaigns? (e.g., religion, othering, etc.)
15. What is the fundamental message/strategy that the CHP uses during its political campaigns?
16. In the 2019 Istanbul local elections, what were the primary strategies/messages used by the AKP candidate?
17. What were the main strategies/messages of the CHP candidate in the 2019 Istanbul local elections?
18. In your view, what changes have occurred in the CHP's political communication strategy since the 2014 elections?
19. In your opinion, what was the most significant factor that led to Ekrem Imamoğlu's election victory? Why and how did he win?
20. What factors do you think led to Binali Yıldırım's election defeat?
21. Do you think a successful political communication strategy was the main reason for the election victory, or was the election success a result of economic/political issues in society?
22. The AKP has a highly professional campaign team and an active organisational structure on the ground. Do you believe that this organisational structure has suffered any deterioration or disconnection from the centre during the 2019 elections? What do you attribute this to?
23. Can we talk about Americanisation in political communication/campaigns in Turkey? If so, in which aspects/fields?
24. Can we talk about professionalisation in the field of political communication in Turkey?
25. How do you see the future of political communication in Turkey?

List of the Interviewees	Date	Place
POA1	21/03/2021	Zoom
POA2	14/10/2021	Zoom
POA3	18/10/2021	Zoom
POA4	28/06/2021	Zoom
POA5	30/09/2021	Zoom
AC1	09/03/2021	Zoom
AC2	10/04/2021	Zoom
AC3	16/03/2022	Zoom
AC4	18/01/2021	Zoom
AC5	4/04/2021	Zoom
CAM1	20/01/2021	In person, Istanbul
CAM2	15/05/2021	Zoom

Appendix 2: Billboard Ads

Campaing ads – Ekrem Imamoğlu

"If there is Imamoğlu then there is a solution" (billboard ad, 2019)

"Decision is yours, Istanbul is yours" (billboard ad, 2019)

Some of his projects   *Istanbul is yours (billboard ad, 2019)*

(billboard ad, 2019)

"Everything will be great" (billboard ad, 2019)

"No one will be in silence, everybody will talk" (billboard ad, 2019)

"System of waste will end" (billboard ad, 2019)

"We are the great majority of this city" (billboard ad, 2019)

"We will reunite, we will reconcile" (billboard ad,2019)

"Justice will find its place" (billboard ad, 2019)

Campaign ads- Binali Yıldırım

"We did what we promised, we will do it again" (billboard ad, 2019)

"Istanbul is a love story for us" (billboard ad, 2019)

"Serving Istanbul is not a waste" (billboard ad, 2019)

"You need to work with your heart when you work for municipality" (billboard ad, 2019)

"Istanbul is a love story for us" (billboard ad, 2019)

"Istanbul is my love, Beykoz (district in Istanbul) is my passion" (billboard ad, 2019)

"Homeland affairs are matter of the heart" (billboard ad, 2019)
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan together with the candidate
from Beyoğlu district of Istanbul

Some of the YouTube ads

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fBLs2SqHWE – Binali Yıldırım ad
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvZHMP2OACU – Binali Yıldırım ad
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LL7y-XDQvzE – Binali Yıldırım projects
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfCyhWmfV0M – Binali Yıldırım projects
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YRGS90oo-k – Binali Yıldırım and his love for Istanbul
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcdWpq-xiX8 – His ferry travel with his wife
- Ekrem Imamoğlu with an elderly woman in Sultanbeyli street market, available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=be7ShFP8Kns

Appendix 3: Rally Speeches

Ekrem Imamoğlu – Rally Speeches

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrXChbEid5A - Bahçelievler Rally
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arg_rNXAqkc - Kağıthane Rally
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzUdxv5LOjs - 13 April
4. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TLO_SmqBhA - Ümraniye Rally - 19 June 2019
5. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NuxZZKv0uxU – Tuzla Rally, 12 June 2019
6. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJwiRoT3nFk - December 2018
7. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncsmuL8UfDg – Bağcılar Rally, 15 June 2019
8. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIczdmyu30E - 23 June 2019, Victory Speech
9. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_ycELOpas0 - Giresun
10. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dW9THySDQWY&t=20s – Victory speech on 31 March 2019
11. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KKm-2eRHjs - Esenyurt Rally - 10 June 2019
12. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXyYcsp6baY - Eyüpsultan 22 June 2019
13. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2PgZ7H2XhI - Kadıköy Rally 18 March 2019
14. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiAmdsFnxZY - Başakşehir Rally, 27 March 2019
15. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2aOGjcEYBM - Avcılar Rally 12 April 2019
16. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxnQ9kk8nEI - Sancaktepe Rally, 26 March 2019
17. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKsJ23DexEk - Üsküdar Rally 22 March, 2019

Binali Yıldırım and Erdoğan – Rally Speeches

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeUR_JalzVE Beylikdüzü Rally, 12 March 2019
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSyzU0VGWM0 - Beykoz Rally, 29 March 2019
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_a1lM-OAsM - Büyükçekmece Rally, 12 March 2019
4. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8zRpOhDeYY - Sancaktepe Rally, 5 March 2019
5. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zffG5hozHtA - Bahçelievler Rally, 20 June, 2019
6. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wo5j6cYc3-U – Ataşehir, 16 February 2019
7. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Ypstu_wRzU - Bağcılar Rally, 30 March 2019
8. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYzZC34sSeo – Kağıthane Rally, 30 March, 2019
9. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-R1QYzpwTIg&t=9s - Pendik Rally 29 March 2019
10. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asY3RwSxqbo&t=67s - Yenikapı Rally24 March, 2019
11. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ai4jHXYSP_k – Pendik Rally, 22 June 2019
12. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xZbJwis79Q - 19 June 2019
13. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cx4FEgL-Ai4 - 4 June 2019
14. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbJjTZmE5SU&t=37s – Ümraniye Rally, 29 March 2019
15. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sfs-RcTJc4I - 15 February 2019
16. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-tPGl8qRxQ - Bahçelievler rally
17. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iW9rbWUHgzg - Esenyurt Rally, 5 March 2019

AKP	CHP
Populism	Inverted populism
Religion	Love and unity
The use of political signs as a symbol of defiance	Local solution-oriented campaign
Fear appeals	Hope appeals
Personalisation of the campaign around the leader	Personalisation of the campaign around the candidate

The coding frame of the rally speeches

Appendix 4: Information Sheet

CITY UNIVERSITY
LONDON
EST 1894

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Mina TEVER. I am currently studying for a PhD degree at the Department of Journalism at City University London and as part of this course I am required to submit a dissertation.

The title of the study: AKP and CHP Political Communication Strategies during 2019 Istanbul Elections: Capturing the Urban Votes

Name of principal investigator and supervisor: Mina Tever – Dr Zahera Harb
We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep**.**

My dissertation will be about political campaigning in Turkey during the 2019 local elections in Istanbul, I will focus on the two main opposition parties, Justice and Development Party (AKP) and Republican People's Party (CHP), and conduct an interview with their political campaigners, social media managers and people from the academia in order to understand main features and differences of their campaigning techniques. **Apart from an in depth elite interview, I conduct textual analysis by using some of their political ads and qualitative content analysis of the rally speeches will also be used to understand the role of populism during the campaigning periods.**

What is the purpose of the study?
The thesis aims to study main features and differences of AKP and CHP's political communication strategies that had been used during the local elections in Istanbul on 31st of March and 23rd of June 2019. Drawing from the 2019 mayoral elections in Istanbul, this paper aims to show the path that AKP and CHP had followed by analysing main features and differences of their campaigning techniques. The research will answer this question by using Americanisation, professionalisation and populism as a theoretical framework.

The research aims to reveal the importance of the effective campaigning communication and political communication strategy that can be a significant determinant for the historical political success.

Why have I been invited to take part?
You have been invited to take part in this study because of your campaign experience during the ocal election 2019.

What will I have to do if I take part?
If you agree to take part, you will be asked to give an interview about political communication techniques that have been used during local election in Istanbul. The interview will last for approximately 15-20 minutes.

Do I have to take part?
Your participation in my study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time. You do not have to give a reason and no pressure will be put on you to try and change your mind.

What do I do now?
We will set a meeting with you to conduct the interview, it might be also Skype call depending on your availability. If you agree to take part, please complete and sign the consent form.

If you have any further questions, or you would like to know more about this study, please contact me at the details given below.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
You will be making contribution to knowledge.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?
All the information you give us **will be confidential** and used for the purposes of this study only. Data will be securely stored in password protected USB/laptop. The data will be destroyed after the completion of the dissertation**.**

The final dissertation will be seen by university staff and may also be accessed by other students in the future.

To ensure anonymity, you will not be identified at any point in the dissertation, unless you give your explicit consent.

If anything you said in the interview is quoted, it will be identified only by a letter.

What will happen to results of the research study?
The results of the research will be used to write my dissertation.

What will happen if I do not want to carry on with the study?
You are free to withdraw from the study without an explanation or penalty at any time.

Who has reviewed the study?
This study has been approved by City, University of London Department of Sociology Research Ethics Committee.

Further information and contact details
For further information about the study, please contact:

Mina Tever

Department of Journalism
City, University of London
Northampton Square
London EC1V 0HB

Data privacy statement
City, University of London is the sponsor and the data controller of this study based in the United Kingdom. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The legal basis under which your data will be processed is City's public task.

Your right to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in a specific way in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal-identifiable information possible (for further information please see https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/public-task/).

City will use your name and contact details to contact you about the research study as necessary. The only people at City who will have access to your identifiable information will be Mina Tever. City will keep identifiable information about you from this study for xxx years after the study has finished.

You can find out more about how City handles data by visiting https://www.city.ac.uk/about/governance/legal. If you are concerned about how we have processed your personal data, you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office (IOC) https://ico.org.uk/.

What if I have concerns about how my personal data will be used after I have participated in the research?
In the first instance you should raise any concerns with the research team, but if you are dissatisfied with the response, you may contact the Information Compliance Team at dataprotection@city.ac.uk or phone 0207 040 4000, who will liaise with City's Data Protection Officer Dr William Jordan to answer your query.

If you are dissatisfied with City's response you may also complain to the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.org.uk

What if there is a problem?
If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you should ask to speak to a member of the research team. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through City's complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is [name of project]

You can also write to the Secretary at:

██████████████

Research Integrity Manager

City, University of London, Northampton Square
London, EC1V 0HB
Email: █████████████████████

City holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you feel you have been harmed or injured by taking part in this study you may be eligible to claim compensation. This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Mina Tever

Appendix 5: Consent Form

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON
EST 1894

CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: AKP and CHP Political Communication Strategies during 2019 Istanbul Elections: Capturing the Urban Votes

REC Reference Number: ETH1920-2077

Name, position and contact address of Researcher: Mina Tever
PhD Student at the Department of Journalism, City University London

████████████████

Please tick as appropriate
        YES   NO

1. I have read and understand the project information sheet.   ☐   ☐

2. I agree to take part in the above study.   ☐   ☐

3. I understand this will involve **[specify as appropriate e.g. being interviewed; participating in a focus group; completing a survey etc]**   ☐   ☐

4. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.   ☐   ☐

5. I understand I will not be identified at any part of the dissertation.   ☐   ☐

6. I understand the information I give will be used for the purposes of this study only.   ☐   ☐

7. I understand that I may be quoted in the dissertation.   ☐   ☐

8. I would like my quotes to be anonymised.   ☐   ☐

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher file.

Bibliography

- Ahmad, F. (2003). The making of modern Turkey. London: Routledge

- Ahmadov, R. (2008). Counter Transformation in the Center and Periphery of Turkish Society and the Rise of the Justice and Development Party. Turkish Journal of International Relations, 7(2&3), p.15-36.

- Akçaoğlu, A. (2018). Zarif Ve Dinen Makbûl, Istanbul: İletişim

- Akcay, C. (2018). The Transformation of the Turkish State: From Kemalism to Erdoğanism. Springer.

- Albright, J. J. (2008). Partisans or independents? Evidence for campaign targets from elite interviews in Spain. Electoral Studies, 27(4), 711-722.

- Albright, J. J. (2008). Party supporters, swing voters, and the spatial theory of elections. Electoral Studies, 27(2), 279-291.

- AlRoy, G. (1970). Review of Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics, edited by G. Ionescu and E. Gellner. American Political Science Review, 64(3), 968-969. doi:10.1017/S0003055400131880.

- Anderson, C. & Berdahl, J. L. (2002). The experience of power: Examining the effects of power on approach and inhibition tendencies. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83(6), 1362-1377. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.83.6.1362

- Ansolabehere, S., & Iyengar, S. (1995). Going Negative: How Political Advertisements Shrink and Polarize the Electorate. Free Press.

- Anstead, N. (2016) A different beast? Televised election debates in parliamentary democracies. The International Journal of Press/Politics.

- Arat-Koç, S. (2018). AKP populism and its discontents: the 2017 referendum in Turkey. Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies, 20(4), 401-419.

- Arzheimer, K. & Evans, J. (2012). Geolocation and voting: Candidate–voter distance effects on party choice in the 2010 UK general election in England. Political geography, 31(5), 301-310.

- Aslanidis, P. (2015). Populism and neo-populism in Europe and America: Roots and trajectories. Cadmus, 3(2), 20-34

- Åslund, A. (2019). Russia's Crony Capitalism: The Path from Market Economy to Kleptocracy. Yale University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvgc61tr

- Ayoob, M. (2008). The Many Faces of Political Islam, Michigan: University Press

- Aytaç, S. E. & Öniş, Z. (2014). Varieties of populism in a changing global context: The divergent paths of Erdoğan and Kirchnerismo. Comparative Politics, 47(1), 41-59.

- Balta, E., Kaltwasser, C. R., & Yagci, A. H. (2022). Populist attitudes and conspiratorial thinking. Party Politics, 28(4), 625–637. https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211003304
- Black, I., Baines, P., Baines, N., O'Shaughnessy, N., & Mortimore, R. (2023). The Dynamic Interplay of Hope vs Fear Appeals in a Referendum Context. Journal of Political Marketing, 22(2), 143-171. DOI: 10.1080/15377857.2021.1892900
- Bagozzi, R. P., Gopinath, M., & Nyer, P. U. (1999). The role of emotions in marketing. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 27(2), 184-206. https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070399272005
- Banda, K. K., & Windett, J. H. (2016). Negative advertising and the dynamics of candidate support. Political Behavior, 38, 747-766.
- Barber, N. (2019). Populist leaders and political parties. German Law Journal, 20(2), 129-140. doi:10.1017/glj.2019.9
- Barr R. (2009). "Populists, Outsiders and Anti-Establishment Politics." *Party Politics* 15, no. 1: 29–48.
- Bar-Tal, D. (2001). Why does fear override hope in societies engulfed by intractable conflict, as it does in the israeli society? Political Psychology, 22(3), 601-627. https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00255
- Baykan, T., 2018. The Justice and Development Party in Turkey.
- Bennett, W. L. (2012). The personalization of politics: Political identity, social media, and changing patterns of participation. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, *644*(1), 20-39.
- Benoit, W. L. (2007). Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices (2nd ed.). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Benoit, W. L. (2015). Campaign Communication and Political Marketing. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Benoit, W. L. (2019). Political Campaigns and Communication: New Approaches, Technologies, and Insights (2nd ed.). Lexington Books.
- Benoit, W. (2009). The handbook of election news coverage around the world - Edited by Jesper Strömbäck & Linda Lee Kaid. Journal of Communication, 59(3), pp.E7-E8.
- Berg, B. L. & Lune, H. (2007). Qualitative research methods for the social sciences 6th edition. Pearson.
- Bernhard, W. (2012). Who are the rivals? The strategic dynamics of campaign competition between political parties. American Journal of Political Science, 56(2), 329-345.
- Besli H, Özbay Ö. (2010) R. Tayyip Erdoğan: bir liderin doğuşu. Istanbul: Meydan Yayıncılık.
- Bettencourt, B. & Sheldon, K. (2001). Social roles as mechanism for psychological need satisfaction within social groups. Journal of personality and social psychology, 81(6), 1131.

- Billig, M. (2015). Banal Nationalism. Loughborough University, UK.

- Bimber, B. (2014). Digital Media in the Obama Campaigns of 2008 and 2012: Adaptation to the Personalized Political Communication Environment. Journal of Information Technology & Politics, *11*(2), 130-150. doi:10.1080/19331681.2014.895691

- Blumler, J. and Kavanagh, D. (1999). The Third Age of Political Communication: Influences and Features, Political Communication, 16(3), pp.209-230.

- Bos, L., van der Brug, W., & de Vreese, C. (2013). An experimental test of the impact of style and rhetoric on the perception of right-wing populist and mainstream party leaders. Acta Politica, 48. https://doi.org/10.1057/ap.2012.27

- Boyd, CO. (2001) Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. In Munhall PL (Ed) Nursing Research: A Qualitative Perspective. Third edition. Jones and Bartlett, Sudbury MA

- Bozkurt, E. (2013). The AK Party: The Party of the Center Right, Conservative Democracy or Islamic Democracy? Insight Turkey, 15(2), 91-109

- Bracciale, R. & Martella, A. (2017). Define the populist political communication style: The case of Italian political leaders on Twitter. Information, Communication & Society. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328522

- Brader, T., Valentino, N. A., & Suhay, E. (2008). What triggers public opposition to immigration? Anxiety, group cues, and immigration threat. American Journal of Political Science, 52(4), 959-978.

- Brinkmann, S. (2007). Could Interviews Be Epistemic?: An Alternative to Qualitative Opinion Polling. Qualitative Inquiry, 13(8), 1116-1138. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800407308222

- Brinkmann, S. (2007b). The good qualitative researcher. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 4, 127–144.

- Brinkmann, S. (2014). Unstructured and semi-structured interviewing. The Oxford handbook of qualitative research, 2, 277-299.

- Bryman, A. (2008). Why do researchers integrate/combine/mesh/blend/mix/merge/fuse quantitative and qualitative research. Advances in mixed methods research, 21(8), 87-100.

- Bryman, A. (2011) Social Research Methods, Oxford: University Press

- Bryman, A., Bresnen, M., Beardsworth, A., & Keil, T. (1988). Qualitative research and the study of leadership. Human relations, 41(1), 13-29.

- Burgess, R.G. (1984) In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research, London: Allen

- Butler, D. and Ranney, A. (Eds), (1992), Electioneering: A Comparative Study of Continuity and Change, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

- Cacioppo, J. T. & Gardner, W. L. (1999). Emotion. Annual Review of Psychology, 50(1), 191-214. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.50.1.191.

- Cagaptay, S. (2017) The New Sultan: Erdoğan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey,

- Çağatay, S. (2017). The Politics of Gender and The Making of Kemalist Feminist Activism In Contemporary Turkey (Doctoral dissertation, Central European University).

- Caiani, M. & della Porta, D. (2010). The elitist populism of the extreme right: A frame analysis of extreme right-wing discourses in Italy and Germany. Acta Politica, 45(2-3), 131-151.

- Çakır, R. (1994). Ne Şeriat Ne Demokrasi. Istanbul: Metis Yayınları.

- Campbell, R. & Cowley, P. (2014). What voters want: Reactions to candidate characteristics in a survey experiment. Political studies, 62(4), 745-765.

- Candas, P. (2013) Religion–State Relations in Turkey since the AKP: A Changing Landscape? Evidence from Parliamentary Debates on the Alevi Matter, Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 33:4, 507-520, DOI: 10.1080/13602004.2013.866351

- Canovan, M. (1981). Populism. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

- Canovan, M. (1999). Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy. Political Studies, 47(1), pp.2-16.

- Cardano, M. (2020). Defending qualitative research: Design, analysis, and textualization. Routledge.

- Çarkoğlu, A. & Kalaycıoğlu, E. (2009). The Rising Tide of Conservatism in Turkey. London : Pegrave.

- Casey D, Murphy K. (2009) Issues in using methodological triangulation in research. Nurse Researcher. 16, 4, 40-55.

- Castaldo, A. (2018). Polarisation and authoritarianism in Erdoğan's Turkey. Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 18(3), 363-378

- Cizre, Ü. (Ed.). (2008). Secular and Islamic politics in Turkey: The making of the justice and development party. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Clingerman, F., & Ehret, V. M. (2013). Hope and fear: The theological side of framing environmental change. Ethics, Policy & Environment, 16(2), 152-155. https://doi.org/10.1080/21550085.2013.801187

- Coffé, H., & Theiss-Morse, E. (2016). The effect of political candidates' occupational background on voters' perceptions of and support for candidates. Political Science, 68(1), 55-77.

- Coffé, H., & Theiss-Morse, E. (2016). The personalized politics of leadership: Candidate perceptions among US voters. Political Science Quarterly, 131(3), 515-543

- Collier, D., & Collier, R. B. (1991). Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America. Princeton University Press

- Communication: A Review of Concepts, Operationalizations and Key Findings.

- Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2013). Conceptualizing Mediatization: Contexts, Traditions, Arguments. Communication Theory, 23. https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12019

- Cowley, P. (2013). The personalisation of politics in Britain: The impact of leader effects at the 2010 British general election. Political Studies, 61, 667-687.

- Çiçek, M.T. (2014) War and State Formation in Syria: Cemal Pasha's Governorate During World War I, 1914-1917, Abingdon: Routledge

- Dabbs, J.M.Jr. (1982) Making things visible, in Van Maanen, J. (ed), Varieties of

- Dacombe, R., & Parvin, P. (2021). Participatory Democracy in an Age of Inequality. Representation, 57(2), 145-157. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2021.1933151

- Dağı, İ. (2008). Turkey's AKP in Power. Journal of Democracy, 19(3), 25-30.

- Dağı, İ. D. (1998). Kimlik, söylem ve siyaset: Doğu-Batı ayrımında Refah Partisi geleneği. Imge.

- Dalton, R. J., & Wattenberg, M. P. (2002). Parties without partisans: Political change in advanced industrial democracies. Oxford University Press

- David White & Marc Herzog (2016) Examining state capacity in the context of electoral authoritarianism, regime formation and consolidation in Russia and Turkey, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 16:4, 551-569, DOI: 10.1080/14683857.2016.1242891

- de la Torre, C. (2010). Theorizing Populism: A Rejoinder to Margaret Canovan. Politics & Society, 38(2), 324-335.

- De la Torre, C. and Conaghan, C. (2006). The Hybrid Campaign Tradition and Modernity in Ecuador's 2006 Presidential Election, International Journal of Press/Politics, 4, pp.335-352.

- de Vreese, C. H., Esser, F., Aalberg, T., Reinemann, C., & Stanyer, J. (2018). Populism as an Expression of Political Communication Content and Style: A New Perspective. The International Journal of Press/Politics, 23(4), 423–438. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161218790035

- Demiralp, S. (2018) 'Making winners: urban transformation and neoliberal populism in Turkey', Middle East Journal, vol. 72, no. 1, pp. 89–108.

- Demiralp, S. and Balta, E. (2021). Defeating Populists: The Case of 2019 Istanbul Elections. South European Society and Politics, 26(1), 129-150.

- Denoeux, G. (2002) The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam, Middle East

- Denoeux, G. (2002). The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam, Middle East Policy, 9(2), pp.56-81.

- Denzin, NK. (1978) The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods. Second edition. McGraw-Hill, New York NY

- Denzin, N.K. (2012) Triangulation 2.0, Journal of Mixed Methods Research.

- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research.

- Dinçşahin, Ş. (2012). A symptomatic analysis of the Justice and Development Party's populism in Turkey, 2007–2010. Government and Opposition, 47(4), 618-640.

- Dinçşahin, Ş. (2012). Populism as a Strategy: AKP Years in Turkey. Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies, 14(3), 293-306. doi: 10.1080/19448953.2012.709611

- Doğan, T. (2022). Communication Strategies in Turkey: Erdogan, the AKP, and Political Messaging. I. B. Tauris & Company.

- Drake, P. (1978). Socialism and Populism in Chile, 1932–1952. University of Illinois Press.

- Duran, B. (2010). The Experience of Turkish Islamism: Between Transformation and Impoverishment. Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies, 12(1), March.

- Eligür, B. (2010) The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Epstein, R. (2019). How Trump won over white evangelicals. The Atlantic.

- Esen, B., & Gumuscu, S. (2019). Killing competitive authoritarianism softly: The 2019 local elections in Turkey. South European Society and Politics, 24(3), 317-342.

- Esen, B., and Gumuscu, S. (2020). Killing Competitive Authoritarianism Softly: The 2019 Local Elections in Turkey. Turkish Studies, 21(1), 1-26. doi: 10.1080/14683849.2019.1703647

- Esser, F. and Pfetsch, B., 2013. Comparing Political Communication, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Estache, A. and Garsous, G. (2012). The Political Economy of Public Investment in Local Governments. World Bank Research Observer, 27(1), 96-124.

- Estache, A., Garsous, G., & Seroa da Motta, R. (2016). Shared Mandates, Moral Hazard, and Political (Mis)alignment in a Decentralized Economy. World Development, 83, 98-110.

- Evans, J., Arzheimer, K., Campbell, R., & Cowley, P. (2017). Candidate localness and voter choice in the 2015 General Election in England. Political Geography, 59, 61-71.

- Farrell, D. M., LeDuc, L., Niemi, R., & Norris, P. (1996). Campaign strategies and tactics. In Comparing democracies: Elections and voting in global perspective. Sage Publications Ltd.

- Filc, D. (2015). The political sociology of the left–right divide. Stanford University Press.

- Filc, D. (2015). "Latin American Inclusive and European Exclusionary Populism: Colonialism as an Explanation." Journal of Political Ideologies 20 (3): 263–283.

- Finlayson, A., & Martin, J. (2008). 'It Ain't What You Say ...': British Political Studies and the Analysis of Speech and Rhetoric. British Politics, 3, 445-464. https://doi.org/10.1057/bp.2008.21.

- Fiva, J. H., & Halse, A. H. (2016). Local favoritism in at-large proportional representation systems. Journal of Public Economics, 143, 15-26.

- Fiva, J. H., and Halse, A. H. (2016). Does the personal touch matter? The effect of local candidate characteristics on electoral success. Political Science Research and Methods, 4(1), 161-181.

- Flick, U. (2009) An Introduction to Qualitative Research, London: Sage Publications

- Flick, U. (2014). The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis. SAGE Publications, Inc., https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243

- Franz Reiter & Jörg Matthes (2022) "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly": A Panel Study on the Reciprocal Effects of Negative, Dirty, and Positive Campaigning on Political Distrust, Mass Communication and Society, 25:5, 649-672, DOI: 10.1080/15205436.2021.1934702

- Fredrickson, B. L., & Branigan, C. (2005). Positive Emotions Broaden the Scope of Attention and Thought-Action Repertoires. Cognition & Emotion, 19(3), 313–332. doi: 10.1080/02699930441000238.

- Fredrickson, B. L., & Levenson, R. W. (1998). Positive emotions speed recovery from the cardiovascular sequelae of negative emotions. Cognition & Emotion, 12(2), 191-220. doi:10.1080/026999398379718

- Garzia, D. (2011). The personalization of politics in Western democracies: Causes and consequences on leader–follower relationships. The Leadership Quarterly, 22(4), 697-709.

- Geer, J. G. (2006). In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns. University of Chicago Press.

- Geer, J.G. (2006). In Defence of Negativity. Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Geertz, C. (1980). Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought. The American Scholar, 49(2), 165–179. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41210607

- Gibbs, G. (2007). Analyzing Qualitative Data. Sage.

- Ginsborg, P. (2013). The Politics of Everyday Life, Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing.

- Ginsburg, F., Abu-Lughod, L., and Larkin, B. (2002). Media worlds. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

- Gontijo, L. C. B., and Barbosa, R. S. (2020). Erdoğan's pragmatism and the ascension of AKP in Turkey: Islam and neo-Ottomanism.

- Göle, N. (2017). Re-enchanting Islamic Humanism: Implications for Turkish Politics. European Journal of Turkish Studies, 25.

- Graber, D. and Dunaway, J. (1980). Mass Media and American Politics.

- Green, D. P., & Gerber, A. S. (2019). Get out the vote: How to increase voter turnout. Brookings Institution Press.

- Grigoriadis, I. N. (2009). Trials of Europeanization: Turkish Political Culture and the European Union. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Gümrükçü, S. B. (2022). Populist discourse, (counter-)mobilizations and democratic backsliding in Turkey. Turkish Studies, 23(3), 407-429. https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2021.1999814

- Güneş-Ayata, A. (2002). The Republican People's Party. Turkish Studies, 3(1), pp.102-121.

- Gürsoy, Y. (2021). Moving Beyond European and Latin American Typologies: The Peculiarities of AKP's Populism in Turkey. Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 21(1), 39-60. doi: 10.1080/14683857.2021.1877961

- Hanioğlu, M. Ş. (2012). The historical roots of Kemalism. In Editor's Name (Ed.), Democracy, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey (pp. 32-60). Columbia University Press.

- Haselmayer, M. (2019). Negative campaigning and its consequences: A review and a look ahead. French Politics, 17, 355-372.

- Hawkins, K. A. (2009). Is Chavez Populist? Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative Perspective. Comparative Political Studies, 42(8), 1040-1067.

- Heinisch, R. (2003). Success in Opposition–Failure in Government: Explaining the Performance of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Public Office. West European Politics, 26(3), 91–130.

- Hellmann, O. (2017). "Populism in East Asia." In The Oxford Handbook of Populism, edited by C. Rovira Kaltwasser, P. Taggart, P. Ochoa Espejo, and P. Ostiguy, 161–178. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hermann, R. (2003). Political Islam in Secular Turkey. Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations, 14(3), pp.265-276.

- Hillbrand, M., & Young, J. L. (2008). Instilling Hope into Forensic Treatment: The Antidote to Despair and Desperation. Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, 36(1), 90-94

- Hochschild, J. (2009). Conducting Intensive Interviews and Elite Interviews. In: Lamont, M. & White, P. (eds), Workshop on Interdisciplinary Standards for Systematic Qualitative Research. National Science Foundation.

- Holbrook, T. M., & McClurg, S. D. (2005). The mobilization of core supporters: campaigns, turnout, and electoral composition in United States presidential elections. American Journal of Political Science, 49(4), 689-703.

- Houwen, T. (2011). The non-European roots of the concept of populism, Sussex European Institute. Working Paper No. 120, University of Sussex, Brighton.

- Huddy, L., Feldman, S., Lahav, G., & Taber, C. (2003). Fear and terrorism: Psychological reactions to 9/11. Framing terrorism: The news media, the government, and the public, 2.

- Huddy, L., Feldman, S., Taber, C., & Lahav, G. (2005). Threat, anxiety, and support of antiterrorism policies. American journal of political science, 49(3), 593-608.

- Huggins, C. (2014). Arranging and Conducting Elite Interviews: Practical Considerations. SAGE Research Methods Cases.

- Ingleby, M., & Wuthrich, F. M. (2020). The Pushback Against Populism: Running on "Radical Love" in Turkey. Journal of Democracy, 31(2), 24-40.

- Ionescu, G. (1969). Eastern Europe. In G. Ionescu & E. Gellner (Eds.), Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

- İsmet, P. & Uz, P. (2015) "Mağdur/Mazlumdan Mağrur/Muktedire 30 Mart Seçimleri", Düşünen Siyaset: Birikimler-II, Sayı:30, Aralık-2015, s: 69-106

- Jagers, J., & Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium. European Journal of Political Research, 46(3), 319-345.

- Kaddorah, E. Y. (2010). The Turkish Model: Acceptability and Apprehension. *Insight Turkey*, *12*(4), 113–129. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26331502

- Kaid, L. (2010). Handbook of Political Communication Research. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.

- Kalaycıoğlu, E. (2002). The Motherland Party: The Challenge of Institutionalization in a Charismatic Leader Party.

- Kalaycioglu, E. (1994). Elections and party preferences in turkey: Changes and continuities in the 1990s. *Comparative Political Studies, 27*(3), 402-424. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414094027003004

- Kaltwasser, C. R., Taggart, P. A., Espejo, P. O., & Ostiguy, P. (Eds.). (2017). The Oxford handbook of populism. Oxford University Press.

- Karakas, C. (2007). Islam and Laicism Between the Interests of State, Politics, and Society. Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF).

- Karpat, K. H. (1959). Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System. Princeton University Press.

- Kazin, M. (1995). The Populist Persuasion (Rev. ed.). Cornell University Press.

- Keltner, D. (2016). The power paradox: How we gain and lose influence. Penguin.

- Keyman and Lorisdağı Koyuncu. (2010). Kentler: Anadolu'nun Dönüşümü, Türkiye'nin Geleceği (Cities: The Transformation of Anatolia, The Future of Turkey). Istanbul, Doğan Kitapları.

- Keyman, E. (2010). Modernization, Globalization and Democratization in Turkey: The AKP Experience and its Limits, Constellations, 17(2), pp.312-327.

- Kirdiş, E. and Drhimeur, A., 2016. The rise of populism? Comparing incumbent pro-Islamic parties in Turkey and Morocco. Turkish Studies, 17(4), pp.599-617.

- Kirişçi, K., & Sloat, A. (2019). The rise and fall of liberal democracy in Turkey: Implications for the West. Foreign Policy at Brookings, https://brookings. edu.

- Kırhan C. (1963). Öğretmen Kubilay ve Uydurma Mehdi (Devrim Yıllarında Geçmiş Olaylar), Sıralar Matbaası: İstanbul.

- Kırhan C. (1963). Öğretmen Kubilay ve Uydurma Mehdi (Devrim Yıllarında Geçmiş Olaylar), Sıralar Matbaası: İstanbul.

- Köker, L. (2013). Modernleşme, Kemalizm Ve Demokrasi. İletişim Yayınları.

- Korkmaz, S. (2020). Could Turkey's opposition provide a model for the defeat of populist authoritarian rule.

- Koyuncu, B. (2014). Benim Milletim. İletişim Yayınları.

- Kühne, R., Schemer, C., Matthes, J., & Wirth, W. (2011). Affective priming in political campaigns: How campaign-induced emotions prime political opinions. International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 23(4), 485–507. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edr004

- Kvale, S. (1996) Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing,

- Laclau, E. (1977). Towards a theory of populism. Politics and ideology in Marxist theory, 143-200.

- Laclau, E. (2005). On Populist Reason. Verso.

- Laflafa. (2019) 'Ekrem İmamoğlu'nun Sultanbeyli semt pazarında teyzeyle komik diyaloğu

- LaMay, C., & Minow, N. N. (2008). Inside the Presidential Debates: Their Improbable Past and Promising Future. University of Chicago Press.

- Langer, A. I. (2010). The politicization of private persona: Exceptional leaders or the new rule? The case of the United Kingdom and the Blair effect. The International Journal of Press/Politics, 15(1), 60-76.

- Lau, R. R. (1985). Two Explanations for Negativity Effects in Political Behavior. American Journal of Political Science, 29(1), 119-138.

- Lau, R. R., & Pomper, G. M. (2002). Negative Campaigning: An Analysis of U.S. Senate Elections. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

- Lau, R.R., and G.M. Pomper. (2004). Negative Campaigning: An Analysis of Us Senate Elections. Lanahan: Rowman & Littlefield.

- Laustsen, L. (2017) Choosing the Right Candidate: Observational and Experimental Evidence that Conservatives and Liberals Prefer Powerful and Warm Candidate Personalities, Respectively. Polit Behav 39, 883–908. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-016-9384-2

- Lecheler, S., L. Bos, and R. Vliegenthart. 2015. "The Mediating Role of Emotions: News Framing Effects on Opinions about Immigration." Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 92 (4):812–38. doi: 10.1177/1077699015596338.

- Lee, R. M. (2008). David Riesman and the sociology of the interview. Sociological Quarterly, 49, 285–307.

- Lees-Marshment, J. (2017). Campaign Communication and Political Marketing. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics.

- Lees-Marshment, J. (Ed.). (2018). Political marketing and management in the 2017 New Zealand election. Springer.

- Leeuwen, E.S. & Vega, S.H. (2021). Voting and the rise of populism: Spatial perspectives and applications across Europe, Regional science policy & practice, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 209-219.

- Levitsky, S., and Loxton, J. (2013). Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in the Andes. Democratization, 20(1), 107-136.

- Lewis, B. (2002) The Emergence of Modern Turkey. 3rd ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press

- Lowenthal, L., & Guterman, N. (1970). Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of an American Agitator, Palo Alto.

- Lüküslü, D. (2016). Creating a Pious Generation: Youth and Education Policies of the AKP in Turkey. Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 16(4), 637-649.

- Maccoby, E. E., and Maccoby N. (1954). The interview: A tool of social science. In G. Lindzey (Ed.), Handbook of psychology (pp. 449-487). Cambridge Press.

- MacInnis, D. J., & de Mello, G. E. (2005). The concept of hope and its relevance to product evaluation and choice. Journal of Marketing, 69(1), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.69.1.1.55513

- MacInnis, D. J., & Chun, H. E. (2007). Understanding Hope and Its Implications for Consumer Behavior: I Hope, Therefore I Consume. Foundations and Trends® in Marketing, 1(2), 97-188. doi:10.1561/1700000005

- Marcus, G. E., MacKuen, M., & Neuman, W. R. (2011). Parsimony and Complexity: Developing and Testing Theories of Affective Intelligence. Political Psychology, 32(2), 323-336.

- Mardin, S. (2006) Religion, Society, and Modernity in Turkey, New York: Syracuse

- Markou, G. (2016). The defeat of inclusionary populism in Greece: what happens next. Retrieved April, 3, 2018.

- Marquart, F., Brosius, A., & de Vreese, C. (2022). United Feelings: The Mediating Role of Emotions in Social Media Campaigns for EU Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions. Journal of Political Marketing, 21(1), 85-111. https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2019.1618429

- Martins, R., and Lapa, T. (2018). The Importance of Political Communication in Election Campaigns. European Scientific Journal, 14(23), 246-260.

- Masoud, T., & Sasmaz, A. (2020, July 24). Istanbul's Hagia Sophia is a mosque again. Do Turkish citizens want Erdoğan to restore the caliphate? Washington Post.

- Mattes, K., and D.P. Redlawsk. (2014). The Positive Case for Negative Campaigning. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press

- Matthes, J., & Schmuck, D. (2017). The effects of anti-immigrant right-wing populist ads on implicit and explicit attitudes: A moderated mediation model. Communication Research, 44(4), 556-581.

- Maxwell, J.A. (2013) Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach, London: Sage Publications

- McAllister, I. (2007). The personalization of politics.

- McDonald, Matthew M., Wearing, Stephen, and Ponting Jess (2009) 'The nature of peak experience in wilderness', The Humanistic Psychologist, 37: 370–85.

- McDonald, Matthew M., Wearing, S, and Ponting, J. (2009) 'The nature of peak experience in wilderness', The Humanistic Psychologist, 37: 370–85.

- McKee, A. (2003). Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide (pp. 139-149). 127.

- McNair, B. (2003) An Introduction to Political Communication. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

- Mecham, R. Q. (2004) From the ashes of virtue, a promise of light: the transformation of political Islam in Turkey. Third World Quarterly, 25(2), 339-358.

- Meijers, M. J. & Zaslove, A. (2021) Measuring Populism in Political Parties: Appraisal of a New Approach. Comparative Political Studies, 54(2), 372–407. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414020938081

- Mény, Y. & Surel, Y. (2002) The Constitutive Ambiguity of Populism.

- Mikail, E. and Karabulut, A. (2017) The Political Developments in Turkey during Ataturk's Period. Open Journal of Political Science, 7, 511-523. doi: 10.4236/ojps.2017.74040.

- Miles, M. B., and Huberman, A. M. (1994) Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook. Sage.

- Moffitt, B. (2016) The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation. Stanford University Press.

- Moffitt, B. and Tormey, S. (2013) Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation And Political Style.

- Mols, F. & Jetten, J. (2016) Explaining the appeal of populist right-wing parties in times of economic prosperity. Political Psychology, 37(2), 275–292. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12258

- Morris, A. (2015). A practical introduction to in-depth interviewing. A practical introduction to in-depth interviewing, 1-160.

- Mudde, C. (2004). The populist Zeitgeist. Government and Opposition, 39(4), 542-563.

- Mudde, C. and Kaltwasser, C. (2014). Populism In Europe And The Americas. Cambridge University Press.

- Mudde, C. and Kaltwasser, C. (2017). Populism. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Mudde, C., & Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2013). Exclusionary vs. inclusionary populism: Comparing contemporary Europe and Latin America. Government and Opposition, 48(2), 147-174.

- Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. Government and Opposition, 39(4), pp.541-563.

- Mudde, C. (2017). Populism: A Very Short Introduction.

- Müller, J.-W. (2016). What is Populism? University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Nai, A. (2021). Fear and loathing in populist campaigns? Comparing the communication style of populists and non-populists in elections worldwide. Journal of Political Marketing, 20(2), 219-250.

- Nasr, S. V. R. (2005). The Rise of 'Muslim Democracy. Journal of Democracy 16, no. 2, 13–27

- Nasr, V. (2004). Islamic Political Identity in Turkey. Perspectives on Politics, 2(03).

- Naushirvanov, T., Rosenberg, D., Sawyer, P., & Seyis, D. (2022). How populists fuel polarization and fail their response to COVID-19: An empirical analysis. Frontiers in Political Science, 4https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.948137

- Negrine, R. (2008) The Transformation of Political Communication: Continuities

- Negrine, R. and Lilleker, D. (2002). The Professionalization of Political Communication. European Journal of Communication, 17(3), pp.305-323.

- Negrine, R. and Papathanassopoulos, S. (1996). The "Americanization" of Political Communication. Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, 1(2), pp.45-62.

- Negrine, R. and Stanyer, J., 2007. The Political Communication Reader. London: Routledge.

- Nelissen, R. M. (2017). The motivational properties of hope in goal striving. Cognition and Emotion, 31(2), 225-237. https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2015.1095165

- Neuendorf, K. A. (2018). 18 Content analysis and thematic analysis. Advanced research methods for applied psychology: Design, analysis and reporting, 211.

- Norris, P., & Kalb, M. (1997). Editorial. Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, 2(4), 1–3. https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X97002004001

- Norris, P. (2003). A Virtuous Circle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Norris, P. (2004). The Evolution of Political Campaigns: Eroding political engagement?. Cambridge.

- Norris, P., Curtice, J., Sanders, D., Scammell, M., & Semetko, H. A. (1999). On Message: Communicating the Campaign. SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446218587

- O'Donnell, G. (1998). Horizontal Accountability in New Democracies. *Journal of Democracy*, 9(3), 112-126.

- Oliver, J. E., & Rahn, W. M. (2016). Rise of the Trumpenvolk: Populism in the 2016 Election. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 667(1), 189–206. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716216662639

- Ongur, H. O. (2015). Identifying Ottomanisms: The Discursive Evolution of Ottoman Pasts in the Turkish Presents. *Middle Eastern Studies, 51*(3), 416-432. DOI: 10.1080/00263206.2014.976622

- Onis, Z. (1997). The political economy of Islamic resurgence in Turkey: The rise of the Welfare Party in perspective. Third World Quarterly, 18(4), 743-766. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599714740

- Ormrod, R., Henneberg, S. C. M., & O'Shaughnessy, N. J. (2013). Political marketing: Theory and concepts. SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473914827

- Owen, D. (2010). Hubris syndrome: An acquired personality disorder? A study of US Presidents and UK Prime Ministers over the last 100 years. Brain, 133(11), 3057-3069.

- Ozbudun, E. (2006). From political islam to conservative democracy: The case of the justice and development party in turkey. South European Society & Politics, 11(3-4), 543-557. https://doi.org/10.1080/13608740600856561

- Özbudun, H. and Özbudun, E. (2010). Islamism, Democracy, and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP by William Hale and Ergun Özbudun. Political Science Quarterly, 125(2), pp.349-349.

- Özdemir, H. (2015). 28 Şubat Süreci Arifesinde Ve Ertesinde İki Milli Görüş Partisi: Refah Partisi (Rp)-Fazilet Partisi (Fp) (Karşilaştirmali Bir Analiz). Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi, 20(2), 165-193.

- Özdemir, S. (2015). The AKP's Social Policies and the Making of an Islamist Populism. Turkish Studies, 16(2), 173-189.

- Özkan, N. (2019). Kahramanın Yolculuğu: İmamoğlu Kampanyası: Yeni Nesil Siyasetin Zaferi. Mediacat Kitapları.

- Öztay, O. N. (2022). Siyasal Iletişim: 31 Mart 2019 Yerel Seçimleri Özelinde Bir Değerlendirme. İletişim Çalışmaları Dergisi, 8 (1), 99-130.

- Palaver, W. (2019). Populism and religion: On the politics of fear. Dialog: A Journal of Theology, 58(1), 22-29. https://doi.org/10.1111/dial.12450

- Panizza, F. (2000). Beyond 'delegative democracy': 'old politics' and 'new economics' in Latin America. Journal of Latin American Studies, 32(3), 737-763.

- Pappas, T. S. (2018). How to Tell Nativists from Populists. Journal of Democracy, 29(1), 148-152.

- Parla, T., & Davison, A. (2004). Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey: Progress or Order?.

- Pascale, C. (2018). Textual analysis and social science: A case study of discourses of risk in U.S. media coverage of the fukushima daiichi nuclear disaster. In Sage Research Methods Cases Part 2. SAGE Publications, Ltd., https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526447135

- Pasquino, G. (2008). Populism and Democracy. In: Albertazzi, D., McDonnell, D. (eds) Twenty-First Century Populism. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230592100_2

- Patten, S. and Taggart, P., 2001. Populism. Labour / Le Travail, 48, p.334.

- Patton, M.Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. Health Sciences Research, 34, 1189–1208.

- Perloff, R. (2013). The Dynamics of Political Communication.

- Pitel, L. (2019). Istanbul elections: Why Turkey's Erdoğan suffered his worst election blow in years. The Independent.

- Plasser, F. and Plasser, G. (2002). Global Political Campaigning. Portsmouth: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated.

- Plasser, F., (2002). American Campaign Techniques Worldwide. Safundi, 3(1), pp.1-20.

- Poels, K., & Dewitte, S. (2008). Hope and self-regulatory goals applied to an advertising context: Promoting prevention stimulates goal-directed behavior. Journal of Business Research, 61(10), 1030-1040. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2007.09.019

- Pope, C. and Mays, N. (1995) Qualitative Research: Reaching the Parts Other Methods Cannot Reach: An Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Health and Health Services Research. British Medical Journal, 311, 42-45. Qualitative Research, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage

- Rabasa, A., & Larrabee, F. S. (2008). The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey (1st ed.). RAND Corporation. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg726osd

- Rahat, G., Schaefer, T. (2007) The Personalization(s) of Politics: Israel, 1949–2003, Political Communication 24, No.1 (29 January 2007), pp.65-80

- Rawnsley, A. (2010). The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour. Viking.

- Rayner, J. (2014). What About Winning? Looking into the Blind Spot of the Theory of Campaign Professionalization. Journal of Political Marketing, 13(4), pp.334-354.

- Reiter, F., & Matthes, J. (2022). "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly": A Panel Study on the Reciprocal Effects of Negative, Dirty, and Positive Campaigning on Political Distrust. Mass Communication and Society, 25(5), 649-672.

- Renwick, A., & Pilet, J. B. (2016). Faces on the ballot: The personalization of electoral systems in Europe. Oxford University Press.

- Rico, G., Guinjoan, M., & Anduiza, E. (2017). The emotional underpinnings of populism: How anger and fear affect populist attitudes. Swiss Political Science Review, 23(4), 444-461. https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12261

- Ridout, T. N., & Holland, J. L. (2010). Candidate strategies in the presidential nomination campaign. Presidential Studies Quarterly, 40(4), 611-630.

- Roberts, K. (2008). The Mobilization of Opposition to Economic Liberalization. Annual Review of Political Science, 11, 327-349.

- Rod, D & Phil, P (2021) Participatory Democracy in an Age of Inequality, Representation, 57:2, 145-157, DOI: 10.1080/00344893.2021.1933151

- Rohrschneider, R. (2002). Mobilization, social networks, and turnout: The German case. European Journal of Political Research, 41(1), 65-89.

- Rooduijn, M., De Lange, S. L., & Van Der Brug, W. (2014). A populist Zeitgeist? Programmatic contagion by populist parties in Western Europe. Party politics, 20(4), 563-575.

- Rossana Sampugnaro & Francesca Montemagno (2021) In Search of the Americanization: Candidates and Political Campaigns in European General Election, Journal of Political Marketing, 20:1, 34-49, DOI: 10.1080/15377857.2020.1869832

- Rovira Kaltwasser, C., & Van Hauwaert, S. (2020). The populist citizen: Empirical evidence from Europe and Latin America. European Political Science Review, 12(1), 1-18. doi:10.1017/S1755773919000262

- Sabato, L. 1981. The Rise of Political Consultants. New York: Basic Books.

- Şahin, O. (2021). How populists securitize elections to win them: The 2015 double elections in Turkey. New Perspectives on Turkey, 64, 7-30. doi:10.1017/npt.2020.34

- Sakallıoğlu, Ü. C. (1997). The Anatomy of the Turkish Military's Political Autonomy. Comparative Politics, 29(2), 151-166.

- Sampugnaro, R. & Montemagno, F. (2021). In Search of the Americanization: Candidates and Political Campaigns in European General Election. Journal of Political Marketing. 20. 1-18. 10.1080/15377857.2020.1869832.

- Savoy, J., & Wehren, M. (2021). Trump's and Biden's Styles during the 2020 US Presidential Election.

- Scammell, M. (2007) The Wisdom of the War Room: US Campaigning and

- Schattschneider, E. E. (1960). The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

- Schreier, M. (2012) Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice. London: Sage.

- Semino, E., & Masci, M. (1996). Politics is Football: Metaphor in the Discourse of Silvio Berlusconi in Italy. Discourse & Society, 7(2), 243–269.

- Serazio, M. (2014). The New Media Designs of Political Consultants: Campaign Production in a Fragmented Era. Journal of Communication, 64(4), 743-763. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12078

- Shirani-Mehr, H., Rothschild, D., Goel, S., & Gelman, A. (2018). Disentangling bias and variance in election polls. Journal of the American Statistical Association, 113(522), 607-614.

- Sıdal, S. (2022). Menemen Incident as a Result of 1929 Great Depression. The Journal of SDE Academy, 2(6), 58-87.

- Skocpol, T. (2012). Obama and America's political future. Harvard University Press.

- Somer-Topcu, Z., & Weitzel, D. (2022). Negative Campaigning and Vote Choice in Europe: How Do Different Partisan Groups React to Campaign Attacks?. Comparative Political Studies, 55(13), 2283-2310.

- Somer, M. (2016). Conquering versus democratizing the state: political Islamists and fourth wave democratization in Turkey and Tunisia. Democratization, 24(6), pp.1025-1043.

- Spears, N. E., Blankson, C., & Guzmán, F. (2012). Hope and fear in an advertisement context: Understanding how hope undoes fear. Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising, 33(1), 79-93. doi:10.1080/10641734.2012.675560.

- Stacey, K. (2023). "It was electrifying": The inside story of Labour's 1997 election landslide. The Guardian.

- Stanyer, J., Salgado, S. and Strömback, J. (2017). Populist Actors as Communicators or Political Actors as Populist Communicators.

- Stitzlein, Sarah M., 'Hope in America?', Learning How to Hope: Reviving Democracy through our Schools and Civil Society (New York, 2020; online edn, Oxford Academic, 19 Dec. 2019), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190062651.003.0001, accessed 13 July 2023.

- Stokes, J. (2003) How to do Media and Cultural Studies, London: Sage

- Stuckelberger, Simon. (2019). Mobilizing and Chasing: The Voter Targeting of Negative Campaigning – Lessons from the Swiss Case." Swiss Political Science Review, vol. 27, no. 2, 2019, pp. 225-244. First published online May 28, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1177/135406881985225.

- Swanson, D. and Mancini, P., (1996). Politics, Media and Modern Democracy. Westport (Conn.): Praeger.

- Taggart, P. (2004). Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe. Journal of Political Ideologies, 9(3), pp.269-288.

- Taş, H. (2015). Turkey – From Tutelary to Delegative Democracy. Third World Quarterly, 36(4), 776-791.

- Taşkın, Y. (2019). The Justice and Development Party (AKP). Authoritarianism and Resistance in Turkey: Conversations on Democratic and Social Challenges, 75-80.

- Thurmond, VA. (2001) The point of triangulation. Journal of Nursing Scholarship. 33, 3, 253-258.

- Tombuş, H. E. (2017). (Post-)Kemalist Secularism in Turkey. Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies, 19(1), 70.

- Torvik, R. (2009). Local political competition, strategic targeting and voter preferences for public goods. Journal of Public Economics, 93(3-4), 435-447.

- Tuğal, C. (2016). The Fall of the Turkish Model: How the Arab Uprisings Brought Down Islamic Liberalism. Verso.

- Tunstall, J. (2008). The media were american: U.S. mass media in decline. Oxford University Press.

- Turan, I. (2006). Old Soldiers Never Die: The Republican People's Party of Turkey, South European Society and Politics, 11, pp.559-578.

- Türk, H. Bahadir. (2018). "Populism as a medium of mass mobilization': The case of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan." International Area Studies Review. 21, no. 2: 150-168.

- Türk, H. (2014). Muktedir. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

- Üstün K. (1977). Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay, Çağdaş Yayınları: İstanbul.

- Valentino, N. A., Brader, T., Groenendyk, E. W., Gregorowicz, K., & Hutchings, V. L. (2011). Election Night's alright for fighting: The role of emotions in political participation. The Journal of Politics, 73(1), 156-170. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381610000939

- Vancil, D. L., & Pendell, S. D. (1987). The myth of viewer-listener disagreement in the first Kennedy-Nixon debate. Central States Speech Journal, 38(1), 16-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/10510978709368226

- Venturi, F. (1960). Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

- Verbeek, B., Zaslove, A. (2019). "Has Populism Eroded the Quality of European Democracy? Insights from Italy and the Netherlands." In Weyland, K., Madrid, R.L. (eds.), Published online by Cambridge University Press.

- Vergeer, M., Hermans, L., & Sams, S. (2013). Online social networks and micro-blogging in political campaigning: The exploration of a new campaign tool and a new campaign style. Party politics, 19(3), 477-501.

- Walicki, A. (1969). The Controversy over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists. Clarendon Press.

- Walter, A. S. (2014). Offensive Campaigning: New York Mayoral Elections from the Era of Fusion to the Age of Challenges. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Walter, A.S. (2014). Negative Campaigning in Western Europe: Similar or Different? Political Studies 62(51): 42–60.

- Webb, P. D., & Poguntke, T. (Eds.). (2005). The presidentialization of politics: A comparative study of modern democracies. Oxford University Press.

- Weber, C. (2013). Emotions, Campaigns, and Political Participation. Political Research Quarterly, 66(2), 414–428. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912912449697

- Weiss, M. (2016). From constructive engagement to renewed estrangement? Securitization and Turkey's deteriorating relations with its Kurdish minority. Turkish Studies, 17(4), 567-598.

- Wertz, F. J. (2011). Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry. Guilford Press.

- Weyland K. "Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics." Comparative Politics 34, no. 1 (2001):1–22.

- Weyland, K. (1996). Neopopulism and Neoliberalism in Latin America: Unexpected Affinities. Studies in Comparative International Development, 31(3), 3-31.

- Weyland, K. (2001). Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics. Comparative Politics, 34(1), 1-22.

- Weyland, K. (2021). Populism as a Political Strategy: An Approach's Enduring — and Increasing — Advantages. Political Studies, 69(2), 185–189. https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211002669

- White, D., & Herzog, M. (2016). Examining State Capacity in the Context of Electoral Authoritarianism, Regime Formation and Consolidation in Russia and Turkey. Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 16(4), 551-569.

- Wiles, P. (1969). A syndrome, not a doctrine: Some elementary theses on populism. In G. Ionescu & E. Gellner (Eds.), Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics (pp. 166-179). Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

- Wodak, R. (2013). 'Anything goes!'–The haiderization of Europe. Right-wing populism in Europe: Politics and discourse, 23-38.

- Wojczewski, T. (2020). Trump, Populism, and American Foreign Policy. Foreign Policy Analysis, 16(3), 292-311. https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orz021

- Wuthrich, F. and Ingleby, M., (2020). The Pushback Against Populism: Running on "Radical Love" in Turkey, Journal of Democracy, 31(2), pp.24-40.

- Van Aelst, P., Sheafer, T., & Stanyer, J. (2012). The personalization of mediated political communication: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings. *Journalism*, *13*(2), 203-220.

- Yabanci, B. (2016) "Populism as the Problem Child of Democracy: The AKP's Enduring Appeal and the Use of Meso-Level Actors." Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 16, no. 4 (2016): 591–617.

- Yabancı, B. (2022) Religion, Nationalism and Populism in Turkey under the AKP, Available at: https://www.mei.edu/publications/religion-nationalism-and-populism-turkey-under-akp. (Accessed: 14 March 2023)

- Yavuz, M. H., "Turkish Identity and Foreign Policy in Flux: The Rise of Neo-Ottomanism." Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies 7 (1998): 19–41.

- Yavuz, H. (2010). AK Parti. İstanbul: Kitap.

- Yavuz, M. H., & Özcan, N. A. (2019). 2019 elections in turkey: End of the erdoğan era? Middle East Policy, 26(2), 85-94. https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12423

- Yıldırım, D. (2009). JDP and Neoliberal Populism (in Turkish). In Ilhan Uzgel and Bulent Duru, eds., The JDP book: The Balance Sheet of a Transformation. Ankara: Phoenix Yayinevi.

- Yıldız, A. (2003). Politico-Religious Discourse of Political Islam in Turkey: The Parties of National Outlook, The Muslim World, 93(2), pp.187-209.

- Yilmaz, I. and Bashirov, G., (2018). The AKP after 15 years: emergence of Erdoğanism in Turkey, Third World Quarterly, 39(9), pp.1812-1830.

- Yılmaz, I., Barton, G. and Barry, J., (2017). The Decline and Resurgence of Turkish Islamism: The Story of Tayyip Erdoğan's AKP, Journal of Citizenship and Globalisation Studies, 1(1), pp.48-62.

- Yıldız, A. (2004). AK Parti'nin 'Yeni Muhafazakar Demokratlığı [The new conservative democracy of the AKP]. Liberal Düşünce, 9(34), 41-48.

- Yılmaz, Z. (2020). "Erdoğan's Presidential Regime and Strategic Legalism: Turkish Democracy in the Twilight Zone." Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 20 (2): 265–87. https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2020.1745418

- Yılmaz, I. (2021). The AKP's Authoritarian, Islamist Populism: Carving out a New Turkey.

- Yılmaz, İ. (2021). Creating the Desired Citizen: Ideology, State and Islam in Turkey. Cambridge University Press.

- Zafer, Y. (2017). The AKP and the spirit of the 'new' Turkey: imagined victim, reactionary mood, and resentful sovereign, Turkish Studies, 18:3, 482-513, DOI: 10.1080/14683849.2017.1314763

- Zhuravskaya, E., Petrova, M., & Enikolopov, R. (2020). Political effects of the internet and social media. Annual review of economics, 12, 415-438.

- Zürcher, E., (1993). Turkey: A Modern History, London: I.B. Tauris

Websites

- Adler, P., & Adler, P. (2001). The reluctant respondent. In Handbook of Interview Research (pp. 515-535). SAGE Publications, Inc., https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412973588

- Aksoy, M. (2021). *'Huzursuz muhafazakârlar'a ve genç seçmene dikkat.* Retrieved from https://www.politikyol.com/huzursuz-muhafazakarlara-ve-genc-secmene-dikkat/

- Akyol, M. (2015) *Erdoğanism.* Retrieved from https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/21/Erdoğanism-noun-Erdoğan-turkey-islam-akp/

- Altaş, M., Akan, A. K., Boztepe, A. Ş., Taşdemir, F., Toprak, İ., Çetin, F. S. (2023, May 16). *Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Hep söyledim yine söylüyorum, biz kazanınca bu ülkede kimse kaybetmeyecek*. AA. Retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/

- Aydın, S. (2022). *Turkey elections: Why the CHP has changed its stance on headscarves.* Middle East Eye. Retrieved from https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/turkey-elections-why-chp-has-changed-its-stance-headscarves

- Bacon Jr., P. (2016). *Hope and Change? Obama's Legacy at a Crossroads*. Retrieved from https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/president-obama-the-legacy/hope-change-obama-s-legacy-crossroads-n697691

- Çakır, R (2019) *Rövanşizm ne işe yarar?,* Retrieved from https://medyascope.tv/2019/12/17/rovansizm-ne-ise-yarar/

- Çalışkan, K. (2014, April 10). *Towards The Third CHP: An Anatomy of the Main Opposition in Turkey*. Retrieved from https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2014/04/

- Cherry, K. (2022). *Meaning and Color Psychology*. Verywell Mind. Retrieved from https://www.verywellmind.com/the-color-psychology-of-blue-2795815

- CNN. (2019). *Trump: Article II gives me right to do whatever I want*. Retrieved from https://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2019/07/23/rep-sean-maloney-trump-not-above-the-law-sot-ebof-vpx.cnn

- Cornwall, R. (2012). *Yes we can! The US election posters that won voters' hearts.* Retrieved from https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/yes-we-can-the-us-election-posters-that-won-voters-hearts-7939082.html

- Daubs, M. (2018). *Re: Content vs Textual Analysis?.* Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/post/Content_vs_Textual_Analysis/5b26b652cbdfd40d2a37d643/

- Diamond, J., & Scott, E. (2016). *Trump asks backers to swear their support, vows to broaden torture laws.* CNN. Retrieved from https://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/05/politics/donald-trump-florida-pledge-torture/index.html

- Dursun, S. (2018). *Gönül Belediyeciliği: Kimsesizlerin Kimsesi Olmaktır*. Gerçek Hayat. Retrieved from https://www.gercekhayat.com.tr/roportaj/gonul-belediyeciligi-kimsesizlerin-kimsesi-olmaktir/

- Enli, G. and Skogerbo, E., 2013. *Personalized Campaigns in Party-Centred Politics.* Taylor & Francis. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369118X.2013.782330?src=recsys

- Erciyas, S., & Baykal, A. (2018).*2004'ten 2019'a Yerel Seçimler.* Kriter Dergi. Retrieved from https://kriterdergi.com/dosya-ak-parti-ve-yerel-yonetimler/2004ten-2019a-yerel-secimler

- Fernandez, K. G. (2023). *How to Craft a Campaign Slogan. The Campaign Workshop*. Retrieved from https://www.thecampaignworkshop.com/blog/political-campaign/campaign-slogan

- Fredrickson, B. L. (2009, March 25). *Why Choose Hope? Psychology Today*. Retrieved from https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/positivity/200903/why-choose-hope

- Genc, K. (2019). *"Erdoğan's Way: The Rise and Rule of Turkey's Islamist Shapeshifter."* Foreign Affairs Retrieve from https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2019-08-12/Erdoğans-way

- Gumrukcu, T., & Altayli, B. (2023). *Turkey's main opposition elects Özgür Özel as new leader in run-up to local elections.* Reuters. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkeys-main-opposition-elects-ozgur-ozel-new-leader-run-up-local-elections-2023-11-05/

- Gumrukcu, T., Coskun, O., & Spicer, J. (2022). *New Istanbul mayor's star power could be a challenge for Erdoğan.* Reuters. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-election-Imamoğlu-analysis-idUSKCN1TQ1ZW

- Gürsel, K., (2020). *Koronaya Karşı "Ayasofya" Kartı*. Al-Monitor. Retrieved from *https://www.al-monitor.com/tr/contents/articles/originals/2020/05/turkey-unfolds-hagia-sophia-card-against-coronavirus-crisis.html*

- https://brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/afterpharaohs2010/13415.html

- https://chp.org.tr/chp-tarihi

- https://freeturkeyjournalists.ipi.media/

- https://www.birgun.net/haber/rabia-isareti-akp-tuzugune-de-girdi-160439

- https://www.ibb.istanbul/icerik/hizmetler

- https://www.indyturk.com/secim2023/

- https://www.takvim.com.tr/guncel/2019/03/30/50-gunde-102-miting-yapan-Erdoğan-kapanisi-istanbulda-yapti

- https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/g/graffiti-art

- https://www.yenisafak.com/secim/genel-secim

- Ibrahim, A. S. (2023). *Dreaming of a Caliphate.* World News Group. Retrieved from https://wng.org/opinions/dreaming-of-a-caliphate-1684841460

- Jaffrelot, C. (2019). *Class and caste in the 2019 Indian election–Why have so many poor started voting for Modi?* Studies in Indian Politics, 7(2), 149-160. Retrieved from https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/04/04/fate-of-secularism-in-india-pub-78689

- Judis, J. (2016). *Us v Them: the birth of populism.* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/oct/13/birth-of-populism-donald-trump

- Kirisci, K. (2019). *The Turkish local elections offer a glimpse of the future.* Brookings Institution. Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/03/28/the-turkish-local-elections-offer-a-glimpse-of-the-future/

- Kirişci, K., & Sloat, A. (2019). *The rise and fall of liberal democracy in Turkey: Implications for the West.* Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FP_20190226_turkey_kirisci_sloat.pdf

- Korkmaz, S. S. (2022). *Turkey: Opposition Strategies against Erdoğan's Authoritarian Populism.* Project Syndicate. Retrieved from https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/turkey-opposition-strategies-against-Erdoğan-authoritarian-populism-by-seren-selvin-korkmaz-2022-08?barrier=accesspaylog

- Lewis, P., C. Barr, S. Clarke, A. Voce, C. Levett, and P. Gutiérrez. (2019). "*Revealed: The Rise and Rise of Populist Rhetoric"*. The Guardian. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2019/mar/06/revealed-the-rise-and-rise-of-populist-rhetoric

- Lowen, M. (2017). *"Erdoğan's Turkey."* BBC. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/Erdoğans_Turkey

- Marzouki, N., & McDonnell, D. (2018). *'Us' and the 'Other': How populists continue to hijack religion.* Retrieved from https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2018/10/us-and-the-other-how-populists-continue-to-hijack-religion/

- Melimopoulos, E. (2018). *Mexico president-elect AMLO lost 2006 elections due to rigging*. Al Jazeera. Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/10/5/mexico-president-elect-amlo-lost-2006-elections-due-to-rigging

- Mueller, J. W. (2022). *Trump-Bolsonaro: Political Logic Behind the "Big Lie".* Project Syndicate. Retrieved from https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/trump-bolsonaro-political-logic-behind-the-big-lie-by-jan-werner-mueller-2022-09?barrier=accesspaylog

- Muslim Hands. (n.d). *What is Ramadan?* Retrieved from https://muslimhands.org.uk/ramadan/what-is-ramadan

- Phillips, D. (2019). *"Jair Bolsonaro: Brazil presidential front-runner stabbed at campaign rally."* The Guardian. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/06/brazil-jair-bolsonaro-far-right-presidential-candidate-stabbed

- Polat, S. (2019). *AKP'nin ilk Dışişleri Bakanı Yaşar Yakış: AK Parti'nin maruz kaldığı şey güç zehirlenmesi.* Politikyol. Retrieved from https://www.politikyol.com/akpnin-ilk-disisleri-bakani-yakis-ak-partinin-maruz-kaldigi-sey-guc-zehirlenmesi/ [Accessed 5 April 2023].

- Sabah. (n.d.). *Seçim Sonuçları.* Retrieved from https://www.sabah.com.tr/secim-sonuclari

- Saeed, S. (2017, April 18). *Turkish opposition tries to annul referendum result*. Retrieved from https://www.politico.eu/article/turkish-opposition-tries-to-annul-referendum-result/

- Serbestiyet, (2023). *KONDA müdürü Erdem: Erdoğan'ın kaybetme ihtimali yüksek*. Retrieved from https://serbestiyet.com/featured/konda-muduru-erdem-Erdoğanin-kaybetme-ihtimali-yuksek-123919/

- Strömbäck, J. (2009). *Selective Professionalisation of Political Campaigning: A Test Of The Party-Centred Theory Of Professionalised Campaigning In The Context Of The 2006 Swedish Election.* SAGE Journals. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/

- Thema Newsroom. (2019). *Ekrem İmamoğlu: The Greek Who Conquered Istanbul*. Retrieved from https://en.protothema.gr/ekrem-imamoglu-the-greek-who-conquered-istanbul/

- Toprak, B. (2005). *Secularism and Islam: The Building of Modern Turkey.* Macalester International. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl/vol15/iss1/9

- Ülgen, S. (2019). *Erdoğan's Loss in Istanbul Could Transform Turkish Politics*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jun/24/Erdoğan-istanbul-turkish-Imamoğlu-mayor-turkey-akp.

- Uras, U. (2023,). Who is Kilicdaroglu, Turkish opposition's presidential candidate? Al Jazeera. Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/6/who-is-kilicdaroglu-turkish-oppositions-presidential-candidate

- Victor, T. (2023). 10 Majestic Animals That Represent Freedom. Retrieved from https://a-z-animals.com/blog/majestic-animals-that-represent-freedom/

- Yeni, S. (2019). '*İmamoğlu o gece yaşananları paylaştı: zafer kelimesini sevmiyorum, yeni bir başlangıç*. Retrieved from https://yenisoluk.com/Imamoğluo-gece-yasananlari-paylasti-zafer-kelimesini-sevmiyorum-yeni-bir-baslangic
- Yılmaz, I. (2021). *"Erdoğan's Political Journey: From Victimised Muslim Democrat to Authoritarian, Islamist Populist."* European Center for Populism Studies. Retrieved from https://www.populismstudies.org/Erdoğans-political-journey-from-victimised-muslim-democrat-to-authoritarian-islamist-populist/