

## MODERNIZATION AND WOMEN'S IDENTITY IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

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### ABSTRACT

*There are numerous tools used by political communication as part of propaganda campaigns. Ascribing different perspectives to many phenomena ranging from fine arts to identity, modernism occasionally serves as a basis for those campaigns. The identity of the modern woman is used in political communication in order to reach out to female voters. CHP Retro, a social media phenomenon, started a debate on the role of modernization and women's identity within political communication through visuals that it developed for a propaganda campaign conducted through Twitter prior to the general election held in Turkey on June 7, 2015. Thus, this study will analyze those visuals and discuss the place of women's identity and modernization in political communication.*

*Keywords: Political communication, modernization, fine arts, women, identity.*

### SİYASAL İLETİŞİMDE MODERNLEŞME VE KADIN KİMLİĞİ

#### ÖZET

*Siyasal iletişimin propaganda çalışmaları kapsamında yararlandığı araçlar çok çeşitlidir. Sanattan kimliğe kadar birçok olguya farklı bakış açıları yükleyen modernizm, kimi zaman bu çalışmaların dayanak noktasını oluşturmaktadır. Siyasal iletişim çalışmalarında modern kadın kimliği kadın seçmenlere seslenmek adına kullanılır. Örneğin CHP Retro isimli sosyal medya oluşumu, 7 Haziran 2015 Türkiye Genel Seçimleri öncesi Twitter üzerinden yürüttüğü propaganda çalışmalarında hazırladığı görseller ile modernleşme ve kadın kimliğinin siyasal iletişim içerisindeki yerini tartışmaya açmıştır. Bu yüzden bu çalışmada söz konusu görseller incelenecek, kadın-kimlik ve modernleşmenin siyasal iletişimdeki yeri tartışılacaktır.*

*Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyasal iletişim, modernleşme, sanat, kadın, kimlik.*

#### INTRODUCTION

Campaigns involving political communication are of great importance in Turkey, as is the case in many other places in the world. We know that there were many influential and successful campaigns related to political communication in the past. Political parties and political actors, who seek votes in elections, may use a myriad of phenomenon with social importance, particularly as part of their election campaigns. Identity, women, peasants, and the working class are only a few of them. Stuck between identity-centered politics and class-centered politics, political communication is caught between conventional media and the media as

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a result of advances in communication technologies. Nonetheless, it has used phenomena with social importance, such as identity and women, as a propaganda tool. However, we must note at this point that current campaigns involving political communication are intensively carried out through social media.

This study will analyze a group named CHP Retro, which opened a Twitter account with the same name, and shared various visuals in order to spread election propaganda in favor of the Republican People's Party (CHP). Using the motto "*CHP for a better life for people, CHP for better days*," CHP Retro's visuals captured great attention and CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu said, "*This is a social media campaign. I know nothing about it*," in response to a question if the group had any links to the party (Accessed: <http://beyazgazete.com>, 19.02.2016). The themes of visuals shared by the group were mostly related to women, identity, economic development, secularity, modernism, the left, and the working class. This study only covers those focusing on women, identity, and modernism for the sake of limiting the scope of this study; other themes were excluded. Thus, this study, focusing on how the phenomena of women, identity, and modernization were used and blended in political communication, aims to analyze propaganda campaigns as part of political communication in the context of those phenomena. This study will make significant contributions to that field, parallel with the growing importance of political communication. Thus, visuals center on the themes of women, identity, and modernization, which CHP Retro shared in its Twitter account [https://twitter.com/chp\\_retro](https://twitter.com/chp_retro). (1) The period during which the analysis was conducted was not randomly selected and the actual date when the visuals to be analyzed began to be shared based on the Twitter account. Visuals representing the theme of this study, which were shared by 07.06.2015, when the June 7 election was held, were selected and analyzed.

## 1. POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND PROPAGANDA

One of the widely debated concepts today, political communication includes activities carried out by political parties and political actors on a wide spectrum, ranging from election campaigns to public relations (Çankaya 2008: 11-15). Aysel Aziz (2013: 3) concisely defines political communication as the use of specific modes of communication by political actors in order to convey their *ideological objectives* and policies to individuals and to *mobilize* voters. Wolton (1990: 9) debates the mission that political communication assigns to the media, indicating that messages conveyed through the media make significant contributions to relaying political communication to the masses. According to him political communication indicates to political leaders, journalists and public opinion interaction.

Gastil (2008: 63-64) argues that political communication describes more than the interaction between the government, media, and the public at large. According to him, political communication is a process of negotiation and debate with democratic and effective participation, rather than a group of activities. Zaller (1999: 111-113), for his part, says that contents in political communication are determined by politicians, attributing public interest in political communication to their desire to follow and to be informed about politics and the activities of politicians.

Hayes et al. (2011: 434-436) states that studies in the field of communication and politics focus on certain variables (e.g. political cynicism, political involvement, and candidates). Today, interest in political communication concentrates on the various political results of communication between individuals because new media platforms based on the Internet, an outcome of evolving communication technologies, allow concurrent and dialogical political communication, which knows no geographic bounds, and brings citizen voters together in common forums and denominators as political partnerships. The Internet, which can be described as the new public domain of political actions and communication, permit a kind of digital politics (Beus 2011: 34) on behalf of political parties and actors.

Brants and Katrin (2011: 9) say that the Internet, which has emerged as a major power, is a forum in which individuals can express and discuss their opinions and also serves as a key communication channel for politics in the context of political action and mobilization. The Internet changed the position of citizens, who had a passive role in conventional communication, and became a major channel in terms of political involvement and political awareness, so much so that many political parties and actors take advantage of the great influence of the Internet to conduct their communication campaigns online (personal and official accounts on social sharing platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, YouTube or personal/official websites, etc.). Emruli et al. (2011: 464) state that YouTube is a democratic forum permitting bidirectional political communication and discuss YouTube's role in political communication in the context of the Macedonian experience; based on the YouTube channels of political parties, they claim that many political parties have a YouTube channel, actually denoting that political parties are attaching great importance to the Internet's influence. Emruli et al. examined the YouTube channels used by a total of 13 political parties as part of their research and concluded that nine of those 13 political parties (69 %) had official video channels on YouTube whereas four (31 %) had no official video channel.

In their study entitled "Social Media and Political Communication in the 2014 Elections to the European Parliament," Nulty et al. (2015: 34-35) concluded that

Twitter was used by some politicians depending on their positions on the dimension of political competition against or in favor of the EU. If this is the case, one could claim that Twitter is used by politicians as a tool of political competition. At this point, it should also be noted that citizens use the Internet, experience online political learning, and display interactive political participation (political opposition, support). Thus, one could say that the Internet in general, and networks such as Twitter, Facebook, websites, and YouTube in particular contribute to the politicization of individuals. In the Turkish experience, the best example was witnessed during the Gezi Park protests, which were organized and spread through social media in 2013.

Political communication has assumed a totally new dimension as a result of noteworthy innovations in communication technologies and it is now being conducted in an effective and interactive fashion through new media. Defined by Bernays (1928: 20) as an intellectual effort and focused on manipulating the masses, propaganda, in the form of political propaganda, has become the greatest power in political communication since Hitler, so much so that we have witnessed the effect of propaganda during various election campaigns in the United States of America (USA) or during the Vietnam War. Thus, propaganda, which is generally believed to lead to negative perceptions, captures attention as many phenomena are used as tools within political communication.

With an undisputed leading role in fine arts, modernism and the identities it offers are used as a tool as part of political communication in today's world, called post-modernism or the "late modern age," as it is defined in Giddens' (2014: 292) sociology. Modern identity, the modern individual/woman, or the modern world's acceptance-rejection criteria help the concept of modernism exist in political communication.

## **2. MODERNISM AND MODERNIZATION**

Modernism emerged in Europe and put its mark on various periods. The word modern, which primarily means "new," sometimes coincides with the word "classic" (Şahindokuyucu 1997: 1-2). The age of modernism began with the Enlightenment and was later intellectually shaped by Newton, Kant, and Descartes. Political actors and events also played a role in the evolution of modernism, which was affected by various major events from the American and French revolutions, to world wars. Phenomena such as capitalism, democracy, science, and industrialization became contentious in parallel with modernization (Barrett 1997: 17). Shaped by enlightenment philosophers, it lays emphasis on individual's reasoning and is also aimed at reaching an objective, universal, and autonomous art (Sallan and Boybeyi 1994: 314).

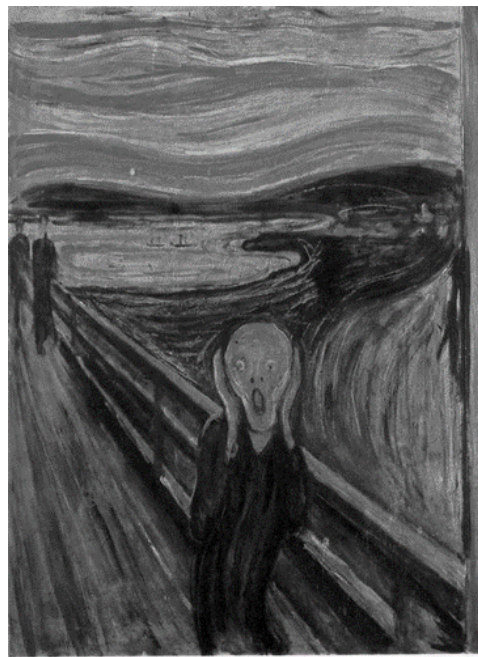
Modernism infiltrated into many phenomena, from daily life to fine arts over the years. Modernist art, for example, became popular among impressionists as a different way of interpreting the world (Childs 2008: 2) and captured attention

through various movements such as cubism, futurism, surrealism, pop art, and minimalism in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some painters, including Cézanne, Manet (see Picture 1), Chagall, Munch (See Picture 2), Dali, and Botero, made great contributions to modern art (Greenberg 1965). Modernism gained great momentum from 1890 through 1940 and became popular as a result of cultural movements in the 1950s (Williams 1989: 31-32).



**Picture 1.** Édouard Manet's Modernist Work *La Musique aux Tuileries*

*Music at Tuileries-1862* (Atsushi 2010: 71)



**Picture 2.** Edvard Munch's work *The Scream*-1893 (Azeem 2015: 52)

*Modernization* defines the lifestyle and values predicted by modernism and is conceptually different from modernism because modernization is the concrete form of modernism, which is an intellectual movement, and actually modernism in action. Modernization dates back to the French Revolution and the early phase of the industrialization drive in the United Kingdom (Touraine 2009: 49-50) because societies in which practices related to modernism flourished attempted to put things in order, rather than taking action; aimed to regulate trade and rules of barter; established public administration and the rule of law; and promoted books and criticism leveled at traditions, privileges, and prohibitions. Adhering to the past, modernism has hence become an argument for "restructuring" societies.

Giddens (2010: 10-20) says that modernization represents a system that started in Europe in the 17th century and rapidly spread to the rest of the world, adding that changes and transformation resulting from modernization are deeply felt by society. He believes that modern society is undergoing a constant change and has unique dynamics. According to Giddens (2010: 17-19), modernization is a way of organization and also a lifestyle. Anthony Smith (2011: 95) argues that societies undergo three different types of modernization. Modernization is the first type of social change while the second is modernization as an element of history. The third type is modernization as a transition from traditionalism to contemporaneity. It seems that modernization defines a group of instable processes during change and renewal in the course of history.

"Modern," as a word, initially meant "contemporary" in Turkish. The word "modern," which means *being contemporary and not being old* in English, generally denotes innovation and progress. In his book entitled "Ottoman Modernization," Kemal Karpat (2014: 9-10) says that modernization underwent a conceptual evolution in the Ottoman State and Turkey in the following sequence: *cedid (new), islahat (reformation), reform, devrim (revolution), asrileşme (becoming modern), and çağdaşlaşma (becoming contemporary)*.

It is assumed that modernization, the foundation stone of which was laid in Europe in the 16th century and began in the 17th century, started in the Ottoman Empire, the predecessor of the Republic of Turkey, during the rule of Selim III. Modernization became widely popular throughout the world in the 19th century and spread to the rest of the world under the West's monopoly. Karpat (2014: 75-79) says that the Ottomans were also affected by Western modernization as was the case for the Republic of Turkey. He notes that Selim III attempted to accomplish modernization in the Ottoman Empire in order to ensure centralization. According to Karpat (2014: 80-115), the Ottoman modernization was felt in the political and social domains because the instructors and uniforms of the modern army called *Nizam-i Cedid*, founded in 1793, were of French origin.

While Lewis (1993: 46) tells that the first attempts directed to westernization had started at the beginnings of 18th century, he continues that the responsible statesman of the first reform attempt was Damat İbrahim Paşa. Lewis (1993: 46-47) also mentions that, in this period, reforms on navigation and maritime had taken place. For instance, opening of a new mathematics school was one of these reforms (Lewis 1993: 51). According to Lewis (1993: 62-63), the decision of Selim III. primarily on establishing settled and permanent embassies at European capitals in 1792 and opening of the first embassy at London in 1793 are important in terms of westernization. This is because Selim III. wanted to be informed on recent developments, innovations and changes occurring in the west through these embassies. In Selim III.'s reform projects, military and maritime schools providing education on Artillery, fortification, maritime and sciences supporting those have been given weight on. Selim has mostly relied upon French assistance for these schools, and French officers have been assigned as teachers and instructors. Obliging French language for all students and establishing a library consisting of nearly 400 European books have also been important steps (Lewis 1993: 60).

Lewis (1993: 51-52) says that the most important technical innovation was typography alongside reforms on military field; and states that with the machines and types brought from Europe after the first Turkish printing house being opened, with the help of a number of experts from Germany and some other European countries, the first book had been published in 1729. Niyazi Berkes (2014: 41-65) points out that military reforms as well as printing also played a role in the Ottoman modernization. In addition, New Ottomans have made significant efforts in order to develop modern printing.

Hilmi Ziya Ülken (2013: 10), who addresses that the first contact of Turks with the West had started with them settling in the Mediterranean basin, thinks that the west had effect also on the development of modern sciences in Ottoman Empire. For instance, İshak Hoca, who contributed a lot to mathematics, had occupied himself with all branches of mathematics and published works that military education was in need of. After the Tanzimat, while modern mathematics has been developing with Vidinli Tevfik Paşa, modern medicine has started with the establishment of *Tıphane-i Amire* (Ülken 2013: 17-18). According to Ülken (2013: 18) Mahmut II. has given a significant importance on also medicine along with the engineer schools within the scope of the reforms left unfinished after Selim III. In fact, he has assigned Mustafa Behçet Efendi for the courses of new schools established under the name of *Tıphane* in *Vezneciler*. It should not be forgotten that Mustafa Behçet Efendi is the founder of modern medicine history. As Ülken states (2013:27), the first modern government offices have been established during Mahmut II.'s period. According to Ülken (2013: 23) in the period of Selim III. and Mahmut II., modernization movements of

especially which have started in government offices are one of the most important stages in Turkish modernization.

Şerif Mardin (2013: 30-35) says that modernization witnessed among the Ottoman elite was women-oriented. He believes that important publications about women's freedom served as a proof of that postulate, adding that Şinasi's *Şair Evlenmesi* was an important example in that regard. Roles assumed by Ahmet Mithat Efendi and Fatma Aliye regarding the representation of women were also crucial. Mardin (2013: 30-61), however, argues that the Ottoman modernization continued in the form of replicating the West. *Bihruz Bey*, a character in *Araba Sevdası*, was an important example denoting that modernism was associated with emulating the West and snobbery.

Lewis (1993: 51) also mentions that the European fashion started by Turkish Embassy in Paris had its reflections as in a lesser scale of European style fashion in İstanbul. French gardens and decorations and furniture have become fashionable in Ottoman courts and courtiers in a short notice, and western influence has also shown itself in architecture.

## 2.1. Identity and Modernization

A phenomenon of individual as well as social attribution, identity has been the center of many debates for a long time. Emphasizing being a "good person" and a "good citizen" in ancient Greek philosophy, identity emerged when people questioned who and what they were and shaped by the trio of science, reason, and the universe, parallel with the evolution of the rational mind (Özdemir 2001: 108-109). Presumed to be a complex and vague concept, it is still a contentious issue in the current post-modern age. Identity, which also shapes social relationships in daily life (Neisser 1993: 10-11), also manifests itself in the form of individual practices as well as social movements (Stryker et al. 2000: 215-217) and takes advantage of modernism and modernization. It can be put forward that the identity shaped by visions and outcomes of modernity had been interpreted as a social construction tool.

Modernism is also regarded as a project, as noted by Anthony Giddens (2010: 157-161). This project focuses on building identity and influencing lifestyles. As also indicated by Giddens (2014: 130-134), modernism, moving on the globalization platform, transformed individual identities by means of modernization and forced individuals to make a choice in terms of selecting an identity and to opt for the one which is modern. However, it forced trust and interpersonal relationships into a pragmatic form and assigned a more important and serious meaning to the concept of risk, unlike many other periods. In the modern world, risk has become more dangerous than ever and its mere existence created danger even if technical and specialist knowledge is not actually



implemented. Offering a concrete example, Giddens (2014: 60-65) says that modern information and techniques can cause humanity to suffer great calamities. Modernism based on absolute truth was frequently criticized because of its contribution to global policies and capitalism. Consequently, post-modernism, which offers criticism to "reason" and "meta" narratives, and is interpreted as the era that followed modernism (Sallan and Boybeyi 1994: 314), emerged as a concept. The concept should not be understood as following modernism chronologically because post-modernism is the antithesis of modernism and can even be called "anti-modernism" (Barrett 1997: 17). Unlike modernism, postmodernism argued that diversity and different perspectives should be developed within numerous phenomena from daily life to fine arts. Post-modernism, like modernism, is a complex concept and its definition has come under scrutiny. Brann (1992: 4), for instance, ponders what post-modernism is and wonders if postmodernism is an art or philosophy. Lyotard (2013: 9-11) claims that postmodernism is a revolt against to modernism. According to him postmodernism is the critique of modernism. After all the vagueness of post-modernism continued while modernism had yet to be understood (Jencks 2009). Ritzer and Stepnisky (2014: 637-639), pointing out that Lyotard had described the modern knowledge as a rebuttal for metanarratives and postmodern knowledge as grand narratives, state that, within this context, postmodern society theory, in general, was a rebuttal for all grand narratives specific to meta narratives. The two colleagues, stating that the postmodernity was a historical period following the modernity and the postmodernizm was the differentiation in modern culture artifacts, mention that also the postmodern society indicates a different mentality which is different from the modern society. To them, postmodernity contains the things replacing the modern by drawing attention to a new historical period and new cultural artifacts (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2014: 637-639). Nevertheless, Aslan and Yılmaz (2001: 93) also state that postmodernism can be interpreted as a *project of uprising against modernism*. Ritzer (2000: 210-212) points out that modernism which lost its magic, has built as postmodern by new consumption tools.

## **2.2. Modernization Creates the Modern Woman**

Growing technological capabilities and economic growth in Europe in the 17th century paved the way for the age of modernization around the world (Aslan and Yılmaz, 2001: 93). The literature on modernism, a concept mostly attributed to fine arts, comprises more than arts. The "gist of modernism," which affects lifestyle and culture, "*is an attempt to firmly establish its own doctrines in its own jurisdiction in a disciplined manner*" (Greenberg 1965: 1). Modernism initiated the process of modernization through values and principles it offered and goes to great lengths in the interest of forming and shaping social identities (Wendt 1994: 395), for modernism aims at creating modern individuals and life for a modern world.

Modernism forced individual, ethnic, national, gender, and other identities to change and transform based on its criteria. These identities faced the option to adapt to what is modern, and women's identity has been one of the types of identity that modernization is focused on. In fact, modernization and similar movements and many innovations started spreading in the Ottoman Empire as a result of Tanzimat, the starting point of westernization, and women were affected by those movements. Intellectuals adhering to modernization attempted to shape women's identity. Male writers reflected this perception of new and modern roles ascribed to women in their articles, novels, or plays (Çakmak 2011: 75).

Modernism has expressed itself through women, particularly the phenomena of clothing and lifestyles. Forced to become modern as a result of innovations in clothing, women placed greater attention on their appearance and clothes and made modern touches. Widely known as Western modernism, this modernization necessitated reforms in clothing style through women, although it was mainly based on democracy, technology, and culture. In many societies women confused modernization with Westernization and borrowed a great deal from the West. In fact, Westernization and modernization are not the same. Modernization means acquiring what is modern, whereas Westernization means adopting the Western culture. As Ziya Gökalp (2014) stated, only the modern aspects of the West should be adopted rather than everything that it comprises, and thus efforts should be made to accomplish modernization in the interest of social benefit underpinned by science, education, and social progress.

Policies centered on women and the importance attached to women's representation in the Ottoman Empire was also inspired by feminism, which became popular in the second half of the 19th century. These movements also affected women's movement in the Ottoman Empire and they initially manifested themselves in the form of policies putting women at the center in the field of education. Midwives from European countries organized courses at the School of Medicine in 1842 and it was one of the first initiatives aimed at educating girls (Avcı 2007: 15). Feminism, in its modern meaning, attempted to develop the social role of the women by the help of women movements (Çiçek et al. 2015: 277). Feminist discourse, which foresees the women's role and rights in society, defended women's self-realization and to recognize the phenomenal field (Eliuz 2008: 177).

Women began expressing their opinions through the press after the Tanzimat period and the articles of female writers legitimized not only the ontological, but also ideological existence of women (Çakır 1996: 22–25). Various periodicals for women were published during the period, which began with Tanzimat, and also comprised the Second Constitutional Monarchy in the Ottoman Empire.

Women's positions were questioned as a consequence of the Westernization drive. Women's illiteracy and traditional status were cited as the social backwardness in a certain period. Women's social role, for instance, was discussed in *Kadınlık Gazetesi*, as was the connection between women's social status and social backwardness (Yıldırım and Seyhan 2015: 59). Women's magazines, which rapidly proliferated during the Second Constitutional Monarchy, were also influential in terms of women's representation. According to the findings of a study conducted by the Bibliography Committee of Women's Works Library (1993), a total of 38 women's magazines in Turkish were published between 1869 and 1927: *Aile, Âlem-i Nisvan, Âsâr-ı Nisvan, Âyine, Bilgi Yurdu Işığı, Çalıküşu, Demet, Diyaner, Erkekler Dünyası, Ev Hocası, Firuze, Genç Kadın, Hanım, Hanımlar, Hanımlar Âlemi, Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete, Hanımlara Mahsus Malumat, İnci/Yeni İnci, İnsaniyet, Kadın (İstanbul), Kadın (Selanik), Kadınlar Âlemi, Kadınlar Dünyası, Kadınlık/Kadın Duygusu, Kadınlık Hayatı, Kadın Yolu/Türk Kadın Yolu, Mehasin, Musavver Kadın, Mürüvvet, Parça Bohçası, Seyyale, Siyanet, Süs, Şükûfezar, Terakki, Türk Kadını*, and *Vakit Yahud Mürebbi-i Muhadderat* (Aydın 2009: 148).



Picture 3. Women's Publications (Zaman Newspaper, 2013)

*Hanımlara Mahsûs Gazete* was one of the most important publication with its 612 publications from 1895 to 1908. The newspaper's lead writer and editorial staff were generally women. Important writers were Nigâr Bint-i Osman, Makbule Leman, and Münire Hanım. The newspapers' article subjects were problems of women and family in Ottoman society (Şeyda 2006: 280-281). Nigâr Osman, whose real name was Nigâr Bint-i Osman Lady was born in 1856 in Istanbul. Her poems encouraged women as part of writing and publications. Nigâr Osman was an important intellectual. She wrote important articles about women and men in *Servet-i Fünun*. She became a modest name of feminism term in Ottoman Empire

(Ahmad 2000: 91-93). Makbule Leman who was one of these woman writers also called attention to women's education with her writings (Karaca 2013: 5).

Understandably in the Ottoman Empire women expressed their presences and thoughts effectively by utilizing the press, they shared their ideas and opinions about male-female relationships and family with the public. In the Tanzimat period writers such as *Namık Kemal*, *Şinasi*, and *Şemsettin Sami* also remarked on women education with their writings in Ottoman Empire (Karaca 2013: 2). Tanzimat, which has been defined as "the westernization, started as military and technical, taking a political-legal form" by Hilmi Ziya Ülken (2013: 27), is one of the most efficient periods of modernization movements in Ottoman Empire.

In the first propaganda poster of *Milli Mücadele* (National Independence Movement) displayed in Samsun City Museum (see Picture 4), the importance given to the women draws attentions. While photos of Atatürk and his 13 fellow soldiers are seen in the poster on which title "*Halaskaran-ı İslam*", which means "*İslam Kurtarıcıları* (Saviors of Islam)" in modern Turkish, is written; in the middle part of the poster, the picture of a woman draws attention, of who is wearing a dress made of the Turkish Flag, holding a dagger in her right hand and pointing the borders of *Misak-ı Milli* (National Pact) with her left hand. The woman picture, which is also expressed as which was representing the homeland of Turks, can be interpreted as to be an indicator of the importance given to women during *Milli Mücadele* period (www.cnnturk.com, 29.05.2015):



**Picture 4.** The first Propaganda Poster of National Independence Movement

(www.cnnturk.com, 29.05.2015)

The Republic assigned roles to women as an outcome of modernization. Acun (2007: 110-111) says that women idealized by the Republic had four main characteristics: *professional, social, mother-wife, and feminine woman*. In her research, Acun (2007) examined posters, various visual materials, and national lottery tickets with women-related themes in the history of the Republic and noted that the Republic attempted to create a modern woman with those designated characteristics.

According to Koçer (2009: 140), women's magazines assumed an educative and enlightening role after the foundation of the Republic and contributed to the creation of the "new woman" as part of the modernization project. Both the Republic's government and Atatürk were of the opinion that the women's modernization drive should first aim at changing their appearance and be carried out slowly, which brought about a silent change of clothing and modernization. The Trabzon municipality prohibited women from wearing chadors in the city center, and the beauty contest *Miss Turkey*, which was organized by *Cumhuriyet* newspaper in 1929, and similar projects were the first and major examples of the modernization drive in the Republic (Vatandaş 2015: 160-161).

While the *Ankara Beer* poster, of which we would easily remember from 1930s, emphasizes on modern men and women in Early Republic period, Republican People's Party (CHP), which had been ruling Turkey as the single party since 1925 before the 1946 elections, had been speaking to the voters in the first multi-party elections with the election poster drawn by İhap Hulusi Görey; and on the poster, togetherness of modern and traditional men-women (see Picture 5) had been emphasized (Alkan 2015: 102-103).



Picture 5. CHP's Poster (Alkan 2015: 102-103)

Koçer (2009: 140) analyzed women's magazines published between 1950 and 1960 in her research entitled "*The Era of Democratic Party, (1950-1960) Women's Image in Women's Magazines*" concluded that women's magazines published in that period characterized by the transition to democracy in Turkey remained indifferent and insensitive to women's intra-familial and public roles. She says that women's magazines could not have a pluralistic tone in this period when the country switched from a single-party regime to a multi-party regime and those magazines caused women to lose ground social life, according to her findings.

When we review the study of Er (2012) examining the ideology of the republic in the posters designed by İhap Hulusi Görey of which title is "*Semiotical Study on Republic Period Posters Designed by İHAP Hulusi Görey*", we understand that the republic saw new western and modern objects for modern women, and that it aimed modernization not only for apparels but also objects (See. Picture 6 and 7).



**Picture 6 and 7.** İhap Hulusi Görey's Designs (Er 2012: 126-128 cited from Merter 2008: 40 & 94)

Women and their identity, which the modernization phenomenon attempted to shape both during the Ottoman Empire and the Republic, was also reflected in political communication based on female voters' desire for the modernization of the political parties and actors (2). In various election campaigns, women were portrayed as workers, mothers, and wives while most of them characterized them as a gender that had to modernize. Political communication included various methods and promises focused on female voters, but usually overlooked women's representation in politics. Bozatay and Kutlu (2014: 153) examined women's political representation in the Çanakkale province in connection with

the local elections on March 30, 2014, and claim that the elections did not reflect a positive picture, in terms of the nomination and election of women, adding that the limited representation of women in politics is related to other forms of gender hierarchies. The duo proposed that strategies such as *gender mainstreaming* should be developed in order to find a solution to the issue of women's representation while emphasizing the need for gender-oriented approaches.

### 3. ANALYSIS

Semiotic analysis, the method used in the current study, is used in various communication-centered studies. Focused on the relationship between the signifier and the signified, semiotics will facilitate the reading of a text based on denotation and connotation, with reference to Barthes. Barthes (2016) says that semiotics is interested in all meaning strings, indicating that semiotics is a tool for reading a text. Barthes (2016: 87) describes a semiotic analysis as follows:

A semiotic analysis introduces us to both a string of connotations and the meta-language of the analysis applied, aside from the string examined and the denotation language that mostly assumed it. It can be said that society, holding the denotation plane, focuses on the signifiers of the stream being examined, whereas the semiotician focuses on the signified components of the same stream. In other words, the semiotician performs an objective analysis in the face of a world that naturalizes or conceals the signifiers of the first stream with those of the second stream.

With the shortest and the best known definition, semiotics is the science of signs. Semiotics, which studies on texts or the sorts belonging to mass communication instruments as "sign systems", contains study of many elements used for communication such as words, images, flowers, music etc. Semiotics, as an instrument which is directly related to the culture, fundamentally varies from the traditional criticism (Olgundeniz and Parsa 2014: 97). Bayat et al. (2013: 357) examined how a text is handled in a semiotic analysis, which treats the text as a closed structure, *and said that all non-text factors should be excluded from the analysis, adding that the text had a specific structure within itself.*

Roland Barthes (2016: 15) believes that semiotics, which he considers the primary method of ideological criticism in terms of its future, efforts, and program, made serious progress since 1956. First mentioned in Saussure's Course in General Linguistics, semiotics is based on the sign, signifier, and signified. The plane of signifiers constitute the plane of expression, while the plane of the signified represents the plane of content and reflects ideology (Barthes 2016: 27-47). Barthes says that the objective of semiotics, based on linguistic communication, denotation, connotation, and rhetoric is "*to identify and demonstrate the functioning of signification streams other than language in line with the design of all kinds of structural events aimed at creating a blueprint of issues observed*" (Barthes 2016: 87).

While basing semiotics on linguistic communication, denotation, connotation, rhetoric, and ideology, Barthes attempts to understand the relationship between the signifier and the signified and how this relationship makes sense. In fact, signification is an analysis of denotation and connotation. According to Barthes (2016: 84-85), denotation-connotation analyze meta-language, while the latter ensures that ruling structures are understood and myth is the meta-language of the modern world. Thus, the analysis is based on denotation and connotation, and the relationship between CHP Retro and the image of the modern woman that it portrays will be examined.

The following retro visuals, which were devised by CHP Retro for the general election held in Turkey on June 7, 2015, will be analyzed using the semiotics method to understand modernization and how women's identity is presented as part of the study.

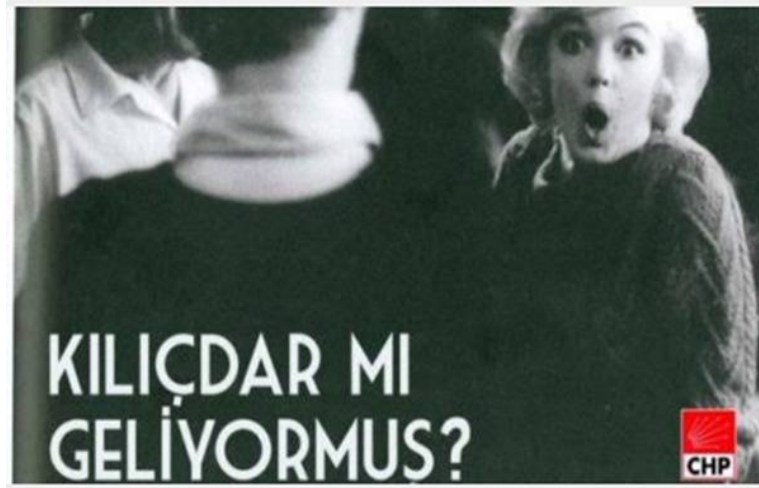
The first retro visual to be examined contains the slogan "WE ARE COMING ALONG NICELY" as the linguistic message. Below is the picture of a woman with modern clothing, including a hat, with a rowboat in the background, characterizing the elements and structure of the image within the bounds of denotation. A CHP logo in red and white is seen on the bottom right-hand side of the visual. The woman signifier in the visual signifies beauty, pleasure derived from modernism, self-confidence, and freedom anaphors. Peace and happiness are the myths emphasized in the context of meta-language in the visual (Visual 1). This visual conveys the message that a modern woman should vote for the CHP. CHP Retro also stressed that CHP was full of vigor ahead of the elections.



**Visual 1.** WE ARE COMING ALONG NICELY (GÜZEL GELİYORUZ)



The second retro visual to be analyzed as part of the study uses the slogan "IS KILIÇDAR COMING?" as the linguistic message and shows a woman who is surprisingly staring at two people facing her in the context of the elements and structure of the picture, based on a denotation. A CHP logo in red and white is seen on the bottom right-hand side of the visual. The blonde and modern signifier of the visual, who captures attention as an iconic element, denotes various metaphors, including beauty, modernism, and loyalty to the political leader because the person called Kılıçdar is actually CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. Excitement, enthusiasm, and happiness myths represent the meta-language of the visual (Visual 2). CHP Retro used this visual in order to demonstrate that even the name of the CHP leader makes people feel excited, while portraying the women as a modern and enthusiastic individual.



**Visual 2.** IS KILICDAR COMING? (KILIÇDAR MI GELİYORMUŞ?)

Another retro visual with the slogan "NOT TOMORROW, CHP IS GOING TO HOLD A RALLY" as the linguistic message shows a red and white CHP logo on the bottom right-hand side. The signifier in the visual is a woman who is smiling while speaking on the telephone. A look at the elements and structure of the picture, based on a denotation, shows that the woman is wearing modern clothes. With her dress and the necklace, the woman symbolizes modern touches, while the painting on the wall also has modern traits. Excitement and happiness resulting from the CHP's rally signified by the female signifier are the anaphors (Visual 3).

The visual depicts the enthusiasm of the modern woman, who will attend the CHP rally, and her happiness, while planning her schedule by taking account of the event to be organized by the political party that she supports.



**Visual 3.** NOT TOMORROW, CHP IS GOING TO HOLD A RALLY (YARIN OLMAZ CHP MİTİNGİ VAR)

The following retro visual, which uses the slogan "THEY ARE CONVERGING ON KARTAL SQUARE" is the linguistic message that shows the red and white CHP logo on the upper left-hand side with two female signifiers, one sunbathing on a beach with ships in the background and the other holding an umbrella. These signifiers constitute the elements and structure of the image based on denotation. Female signifiers denote various anaphors, including the identity of a modern women wearing modern clothes, modern CHP voters, happiness, and freedom (Visual 4).

The myths of excitement and enthusiasm are used in conjunction with the slogan in the visual in the context of meta-language. CHP Retro draws attention to a rally that the CHP would probably organize at Kartal Square, while emphasizing an enthusiastic and free modern woman.



**Visual 4.** THEY ARE CONVERGING ON KARTAL SQUARE (KARTAL MEDYANI'NA GELİYORLAR)

The last retro visual to be analyzed in the study is the visual with the slogan "MAY 9" as the linguistic message (Visual 5). The phrase "May 9" used in the visual is very important to the CHP because the fourth convention held on May 9, 1935 was the last one attended by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Atatürk's following remarks made at the convention are important (3) (Accessed: <http://www.ataturktoday.com>, 01.03.2016):

Our achievements in the cultural and social fields since the last convention have clearly delineated the national character of the Republic of Turkey. With its new alphabet, national history, and scientific, musical, and technological institutions, the modern Turkish society, consisting of men and women enjoying equal rights, was recently created.



**Visual 5.** MAY 9 (9 MAYIS)

Unlike the other visuals, the CHP logo was used and positioned in a different fashion. The signifier in the visual is a modern woman with make-up with six arrows symbolizing the CHP's principles (republicanism, populism, nationalism, secularism, statism, and revolutionism) on the right-hand side and a crescent and star at the top. These are the elements and structure of the image. The metaphors in the visual include the modern women's identity, an elegant and stylish pro-CHP woman, and loyalty to the CHP's past. Yellow arrows stretching from one side of the female signifier and the crescent and star denote the rally representing the bright future in the context of the meta-language. CHP Retro drew attention to the pro-CHP woman's modern and principled stance with this visual, signifying the last convention attended by Atatürk.

## CONCLUSION

It is obvious that modernism has changed and transformed identities like many other things in the world. Modern women's identity presented during the

modernization process is important to understand the transformation in the female figure, one of the key dynamics of the social order. We have seen in this study that the female figure, backed by modernization, can be used as a propaganda tool in connection with political communication. Making frequent use of traditional forms of communication and aiming at influencing voters and getting their votes, political communication employs propaganda campaigns mostly through the new media and can interactively reach out to voters. Conducting political communication through new media platforms rather than traditional methods (i.e. election campaigns, opinion polls, one-one-one interviews, rallies, etc.) did not cause political communication to abandon its modernist policies. Political communication still relies on modernist practices.

The group called CHP Retro, which was the focus of this study, conducted the CHP's interactive political communication campaign via social media and caused a sensation through the retro visuals it shared and the messages it conveyed prior to the Turkish general elections on June 7, 2015. Taking advantage of the benefits offered by advances in communication technologies, CHP Retro conducted a modernist propaganda campaign by sharing its visuals embellished by various themes through its Twitter account. It was modernist because modernization was the theme emphasized in numerous visuals shared by CHP Retro and modern female voters adapted themselves to modernization. The visuals are generally colorful, drawing attention to the CHP's excitement and enthusiasm and the fervor of modernism. Colors like gray and black, which may be associated with pessimism and negativity, were used for creating a purely retro effect in the visuals. CHP Retro also took care to put the red and white CHP logo in all visuals.

In conclusion, the analysis showed that CHP Retro reached out to female voters through these lively visuals. One could say that CHP Retro conducted a political communication campaign particularly targeting female voters based on modernist values and the image of modern women depicted in the visuals. CHP Retro took advantage of a clothing modernism by means of its visuals and also suggests that female CHP voters should be modern and well-groomed individuals with their clothing, stance, and values.

## ENDNOTES

(1) The CHP Retro account analyzed in this study was closed and reopened in April. It started sharing visuals late in March and early April and resumed sharing on 25.04.2015 through the new account. This can be confirmed by the fact that CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu's response to questions about CHP Retro in 16.04.2015 was highlighted in print and electronic media.

(2) We should also state that, on the other hand, traditional Turkish women within the context of apparels had also been emphasized with the topic of

regional Turkish women's apparels and headwears on the commemorative stamps named Turkish Women' Appeals and Turkish Women's Headwears which was put into circulation as 2th series of year 2001 by PTT Müdürlüğü (Directorate of Post, Telephone and Telegraph) and which was about regional women's apparels and headwears in many regions such as Afyon, Balıkesir, Kars and Tokat. Some of the commemorative stamps can be accessed on these links: <http://pulhane.com/KatalogSayfalari/k200102.html>, <http://pulhane.com /Katalog Sayfalari/k199812.html>

(3) The full text of the speech delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on September 9, 1935 is available in a book at the CHP Library (Accessed: <http://www.ataturktoday.com>, 01.03.2016).

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