

Cumhurbaşkanı Demirel'in vefatının Türk mediasında temsili: Uluslararası ve ulusal gazeteler arasında bir karşılaştırma

Representation of the death of President Demirel in Turkish media: A comparison between international and national newspapers

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Öz

1950'lerde demokrasiye geçtiği dönemden itibaren Türk politikası büyük oranda parti politikasına ve özellikle de parti liderine odaklanmıştır. 1946-1960 arasında temel siyasal yapı iki-parti sistemine dayalıdır ve bu durum 1960 askeri müdahalesi tarafından dönüştürülmüştür. Bu dönem Demokrat Parti lideri Bayar'ın süresinin sonudur. 1962'de Demirel 1961'de kurulan AP'ye (Adalet Partisi) katılmıştır. DP geleneğinden olan ve gelecek vadeden genç politikacının katılmından sonra Demirel'in olumlu imajı onun liderliğine katkı sağlamıştır. Bu nedenle AP'nin lideri olarak onun kariyeri 1964'te başladı ve o siyasal alanda on yıllar boyunca kaldı. Birkaç kez Başbakan ve 1993-2000 arasında Cumhurbaşkanı olan Demirel Türkiye'nin önemli siyasal figürlerinden biridir. Sakinliği, komikliği ve kurnazlığı ile ünlüydü. Bazı nedenlerle Türk toplumu tarafından ona "baba" lakabı takılmıştır. Aklında modern gelişmiş ve zengin bir ülke vardı. Son derece uzun bir siyasal kariyeri olduğu için milyonlarca insan ve farklı kuşaklar tarafından sevildi ve sayıldı. 17 Haziran 2015 tarihinde ölümü Türk toplumu için üzüntü yarattı. Bu çalışma Demirel'in vefatı haberini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada, ölümünden bir gün sonra 18 Haziran 2015 tarihli ulusal ve uluslararası ve siyasal yelpazenin ortasında anaakımda yer alan gazeteler incelenmiştir. Cumhurbaşkanı'nın vefatı haberi çeşitli uluslararası ve ulusal gazetelerde farklı açılardan sunulduğu için bu çalışmada söylem analizi yöntemi benimsenmiştir. Bu çalışmada, ana akım gazeteler siyasal iktidarı destekleyen ve desteklemeyen olarak ele alınmıştır. Bu gazetelerin Demirel'in vefatını nasıl sundukları ilk sayfalarındaki manşetler ve fotoğraflar aracılığıyla araştırılmıştır. Bu nedenle onların öne sürdüğü siyasal söylemin analizi bu çalışmanın temel araştırma alanı olacaktır. Ayrıca, uluslararası gazetelerin bu haberi nasıl sundukları ulusal gazetelerle karşılaştırılarak irdelenmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Demirel, Siyasal alan, Söylem, Gazeteler

Abstract

Turkish politics has largely been concentrated on party politics, particularly focused on the leader of the party, since the transition to democracy in the 1950's. The main political structure was based on a two-party system between 1946 and 1960, which was transformed by the military intervention of 1960. This was the end of the term of Bayar, the leader of Democratic Party. In 1962, Demirel joined the JP (Justice Party), built in 1961. Following his participation in the JP as a young and a promising politician from the DP tradition, his positive image contributed his leadership. Therefore, his career as the leader of JP started in 1964 and he remained in the political area for decades. Demirel, Prime Minister for a couple of times and President between 1993 and 2000, was one of the most important political figures in Turkey. He was famous for his calm, humorous and witty character. He was given the title "father" by the Turkish society due to several reasons. He had in his mind a modern, developed and prosperous country. He was loved and respected by millions of people and different generations since he had an extremely long political career. His death on 17 June 2015 created grief among the Turkish people. This study aims at investigating the news, death of Demirel. National and international newspapers from the mainstream newspapers published on the day after his death, 18 June 2015 is examined in this study. The method chosen for the study is discourse analysis since the death of the President is represented by presenting the news through different lenses by a variety of international and national newspapers. In this study, mainstream national and international newspapers are examined in order to carry out a research to explore how they express the death of Demirel on the headlines and pictures of their first pages. Therefore, an analysis of the political discourse that they assert will be the main research area of this study.

Keywords: Demirel, political sphere, discourse, newspapers

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1. Introduction

Born in 1924 in a village of Isparta, Süleyman Demirel, an engineer, was a successful politician who entered in the political arena in 1961 and became the leader of the Justice Party (JP) in 1964. One year later, in 1965, he became the youngest Prime Minister of Turkey. Before becoming President in 1993, he led the country as a Prime Minister seven times. In his political career lasted nearly 50 years, he was successful in gaining the sympathy of Turkish people because of his entertaining and modest character. The most possible reason why he gained the admiration of the Turkish society was that he was always an ordinary man of the street. In other words, the way he talked and acted was like a regular person, which made him loved and respected. That is the reason why he was given the title “father”, which connotes a personality that loves, cares and protects. During the difficult periods in the country, he was addressed by the vast crowds who used to ask his protection and help in the massive meetings.

When he died on 17 June 2015 at the age of 91, Turkish public felt great sorrow. That is the reason why this paper investigates how Turkish newspapers and news agencies reflected this news and it compares them with the way the international newspapers and news agencies reflected his death. The method chosen in this research is discourse analysis. Therefore, newspapers and news agencies from the different spectrum of the political arena in Turkey will be analyzed initially and then they will be compared with the major international newspapers and news agencies.

Teun Van Dijk is a renowned writer who discussed the method discourse analysis by underlining its critical character. According to him critical discourse analysis is:

A type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality (2005: 349)

Having its principles back in the 1930's from the Frankfurt School, discourse analysis was developed by the academicians from different fields such as psychology, linguistic and education in the 1970's (Calhoun, Wodak). Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-80) summarize the main tenets of critical discourse analysis as follows:

1. Critical discourse analysis addresses social problems
2. Power relations are discursive
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture
4. Discourse does ideological work
5. Discourse is historical
6. The link between text and society is mediated
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
8. Discourse is a form of social action.

As a method of research, critical discourse analysis investigates mainly how specific discourse structures are installed in the reproduction of social dominance and whether they are part of a conversation or a news report or other contexts. Hence, the academicians focusing on critical

discourse analysis will refer to the words such as "power," "dominance," "hegemony," "ideology," "class", interests," and "reproduction". Thus, this paper examines both the Turkish and international newspapers by concentrating basically on such words. In order to understand the discourse implied in national newspapers, the way the news given about the death of President Demirel in national newspapers is initially analyzed and then the same news is compared with the way some international newspapers gives so that the discourse between the two can be compared and contrasted. Within this context, the 4th statement of Fairclough and Wodak, Discourse does ideological work, will be considered while analyzing the headlines and pictures on the newspapers.

2. National media

In this section, the news of the death of President Demirel presented in Turkish Newspapers and News Agencies is analyzed. In order to examine how Turkish newspapers and News Agencies present the death of President Demirel on 18 June 2015, they are ordered by regarding a range of different political stand. In fact, instead of the ones from right, center and left of the political spectrum, the order chosen in this research is the newspapers and agencies defending the political establishment, which means the political party leading the country since 2002, the Justice and Development Party and the others representing the center but taking their place in the opposition camp. Thus, initially, the way the news is presented by Anadolu Agency, one of the news agencies supporting the leading political party, the JDP, is examined. Subsequently, the same news is analyzed in two similar newspapers, Sabah and Yeni Şafak.

Anadolu Agency, an agency administered and led by the state officials and one of the major source for the Turkish newspapers to collect news, presents the death of President Demirel by referring mostly to the feelings of the recent President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Davutoğlu. The headline of the news gives the message:

“Erdoğan pays tribute to Turkey's ex-president Demirel”

In addition, the sub-head says:

“Former Turkish president Süleyman Demirel will be remembered for the tasks he undertook and his role in Turkish politics, says President Erdoğan”

In the same page in the Related News area the headline is:

“Davutoğlu offers condolences over Demirel's death”

The pictures presented on the first page are the pictures of the recent President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Davutoğlu together with the ex-president Demirel. Thus, both the headlines and pictures put emphasis on the ex-leader of the JDP, the President Erdoğan and the recent leader Davutoğlu.

A newspaper from the mainstream political stand, Sabah, shows a similar attitude and refers to the sorrow of recent the President Erdoğan and the Prime Minister Davutoğlu. The headline of the news states:

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“Erdoğan and Davutoğlu offer condolences over Demirel’s death”

There is only one picture regarding the news and there is the ex-president Demirel and his wife and this is the picture taken on the last day of his Presidential office.

Another newspaper from the center, *Yeni Şafak*, emphasizes the sorrow of both President and Prime Minister, and give a similar headline:

“Turkish leaders offer condolences over Demirel's death”

Moreover, the sub-head underlines the same message:

“The Turkish President and Prime Minister offered their condolences over the death of former Turkish president Süleyman Demirel”

The picture on the first page of the newspaper giving this new is similar to the one of the Anadolu Agency. It shows the picture of both leaders, Erdoğan and Demirel.

The way another news source in Turkey, Cihan News Agency, presents the news is different than Anadolu Agency since it is a private agency which is not directed by the state officials. Cihan news does not mention anything about the state officials and gives only the news in its headline:

“Flags lowered to half-staff in Taksim over death of Demirel”

The agency shows only one picture which is related to the headline of the news. The picture shows the flag on the sky in Taksim square in Istanbul.

A newspaper representing the center but in the opposition camp, *Zaman*, tells nothing about the feelings of the current President or Prime Minister. It only present the news in its headline:

“Turkish nation mourns death of ex-President Demirel”

In the picture above the page there is the picture of President Demirel and his wife.

Below the page, there are news about Demirel. The headlines of the news presented about Demirel mention nothing about current President or Prime Minister. They give news only about Demirel himself. For instance the headlines of the news about him are mainly what he did in his political career:

“Demirel remembered for tolerance of dissident views”

“Turkey’s baba bids farewell”

“Turkey’s former President Süleyman Demirel dies at age 91”

Another newspaper of the center representing opposition, *Hürriyet*, shows a similar attitude to Cihan New Agency and *Zaman*. It does not give any word or picture about the current President or Prime Minister. It only gives the news and it simply tells the death of President Demirel in the headline:

“Former Turkish President passes away”

Moreover, there is only one picture in which Demirel plays chess.

As a result, the news agencies and the newspapers of the center show different attitudes and discourse while given the news which is the death of ex-President Demirel. The ones supporting the current politicians present the news by stressing the declarations of the current President,

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Erdoğan and Prime Minister, Davutoğlu and by putting their pictures taken with Demirel. Thus, such newspapers prefer to underline their roles and their statement in their discourse.

Other news agencies and newspapers representing the center but in the opposition camp do not use the announcements of the current President and Prime Minister and give only the news: ex-President passes away. In addition, they do not show the pictures of the leaders, but they only give the pictures of Demirel and his wife.

3. International media

In this section, two newspapers from the USA, the New York Times and the Washington Post, two newspapers from England, the Guardian and Independent, one source from a non-Western origin, Al-Jazeera is analyzed in terms of the way they presented the event that announce the death of the ex-President Demirel.

The New York Times presents a quite similar discourse to the newspapers of the center in Turkey supporting the governing forces in the country. As they preferred to use the name of the President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Erdoğan in the headline of the news and to present them in the pictures together with the ex-President Demirel, the New York Times also presents a picture in which Demirel and the ex-President of the U.S.A. Bill Clinton are together during his visit to Ankara in 1999. However, the headline of the New York Times is different than such national newspapers in that it does not give the name of any state official such as the President:

“Suleyman Demirel, Seven Times Turkey’s Prime Minister, Dies at 90”

The Washington Post, on the other hand, shows a different attitude than the New York Times. It only gives the name of the ex-President and in the picture of the news, there is only Demirel, which is a similar discourse provided by the national newspapers representing the center but in the opposition camp. The headline of the Washington Post is:

“Suleyman Demirel, stalwart of Turkish politics, dies at 90”

One of the British newspapers, the Guardian, underlines an unfortunate political fact in Turkey, the military interventions, in its headline while presenting the news of the death of the ex-president Demirel. The headline says:

“Suleyman Demirel dies: Turkish leader was ousted by military twice”

Moreover, the sub-head stresses the political success of Demirel by underlining the number of times he became the Prime Minister. The sub-head states:

“Demirel, who was prime minister seven times and president from 1993 to 2000, has died in hospital, reports say”

In the picture of the news, there is the figure of Demirel his wife and nobody from the political arena.

Another British newspaper, the Independent, has a similar discourse in its headline when compared with the American newspapers the New York Times and the Washington Post. It does not give any name regarding the political arena. The headline announces:

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“Former Turkish president Suleyman Demirel dies in hospital aged 90”

Similarly, the sub-head states:

“Served as Prime Minister nine times”

The picture given in the news is the only the picture of Demirel with his famous hat, a significantly popular symbol of his political life representing his power and freedom.

A news channel from a non-Western origin, Al-Jazeera, gives more space to the news of the death of Demirel. The heading of the news is neutral and seems to give no political message while announcing:

“Former Turkey president Suleyman Demirel dead”

Similarly, he sub-head states:

“Demirel served as prime minister several times in the 1960s and '70s before becoming president from 1993 to 2000”

Nevertheless, the political discourse is provided by three pictures presented in the news. In the first picture there is Demirel in the middle of the crowds during a political gathering and he is holding his hat, his famous political tool representing his power and victory. In the second picture there is Demirel and an officer from the Turkish military. In this picture, there is the political discourse emphasizing the military coups in Turkey. In the third picture, there is Demirel and his wife.

As a result, the international media seems to be more objective while presenting the news of the death of ex-President Demirel. The only political discourse that they underline is military take-overs in Turkey. Different from the national media, they do not add the condolence of their current political leaders. Furthermore, they do not present pictures including the figures of their political leaders along with Demirel.

4. Conclusion

The political arena in Turkey is mostly concentrated on the leaders of the political parties. The ex-President Demirel, who had been on the political arena for more than 50 years, affected many of the recent political, economic and social structures in Turkey. He became the Prime Minister seven times and he was the President of the country between 1993 and 2000. During his political career he emphasized the modern and secular characteristics of the Turkish State. During his presidency, he highlighted the impartiality of the president. He explained that impartiality did not mean that the president would keep silence in state matters. Rather, he would act in accordance with the Constitution and the democratic-secular character of the Republic (1999: 70)

He contributed enormously on the political arena by his humor and modesty. He emphasized the importance during his political career. According to Demirel, democracy could not be defined as a system other than nation's self-rule (Demirel, 1977: 42). He consistently underlined the importance of freedom of speech in a democratic rule. One of his sayings is always remembered along with his political stand (Donat, 2005: 10): “Roads will not be worn away by walking provided that aggression, violence and guns would not come into the picture.”

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Thus, this study aiming at highlighting the death of the significant political leader and its representation on both Turkish and international media analyzes the newspapers and news agencies. The result found in this analysis is that the death of this important leader is presented by including a political message, a discourse, especially by the national media. Since the method chosen in this study is discourse analysis, the first pages of the newspapers are researched and it is found that the national newspapers and news agencies of the center political stand presented the news differently.

The ones supporting the current leading political party, the JDP, used the words and pictures of the President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Davutoğlu in their first pages. Nonetheless, the ones which are opposing the leading party used only the pictures of Demirel and gave only the news in their headlines. Moreover, the international media presented a similar attitude in general while giving the news, the death of Demirel. As a result, it is possible to declare that there are differences between the national and international media while presenting this news. Moreover, there are differences among the national newspapers and news agencies in terms of the political discourse that they present.

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