

PERCEPTIONS OR EXPECTATIONS ON THE RESULTS OF ELECTION AND POSSIBLE AFFECTS THEREOF ON ELECTORATE BEHAVIOR

Orhan GÖKÇE¹

Electorate behavior preserves its actuality in the agenda of political and social sciences. The question of which political factors affect electorate behavior is one of the most frequently researched issues of recent years. Particularly the gradual weakening of party loyalty of the electorates directed the academic circles to new pursuits on what the factors affecting electorate behavior are.

In our study, it is attempted to underline an issue which is included in the theories and approaches related to electorate behavior and considered a factor that affects the electorate preference but which has not attracted the public attention so far. This is the question of *perceptions or expectations on the results of election and possible affects thereof on electorate behavior*. In general the elements known as “wishful thinking” dominate in the existing researches on creating expectation. Accordingly the electorates perceive the chance of the leaders or parties they support to be elected as different from it is in reality or believe that their parties have higher chance. This is not much surprising. But it is a reality that this detection does not base on scientific empiric researches.

The perception or expectation with regard to the results of an election means determination of which party to vote by the electorates is shaped according to the expected results of election. If this is correct, namely if the electorates determine their preferences of political party not only according to the leader or the party but also according to their expectation with regard to the results of the election as well, then it may be assumed that the researches and analyses (results of public researches) on voting behaviors of electorates before the election have determining role in the creation of expectations about the results of election. Undoubtedly, expectations with regard to the results of an election do not arise in the same way in all electorates and are not determining in voting behaviors of all electorates. Demographic profiles political interest and knowledge of the electorates make an effect increasing or decreasing the impact degree of expectations with regard to the results of an election.

In this study, the issue of the effect of the expectations with regard to the results of the election designed under the results of public researches for local elections of 30th March 2014 on electorate behaviors is discussed. In this context the prior purpose of the study is detecting what the criteria that direct and affect the expectation with regard to the results of the election are and explaining the correlation between them and demographic profiles of the electorates.

¹Prof. Dr., Selçuk University Konya, Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences, Department of Public Administration

1. INTRODUCTION

Our subject is the question of role and effect of the expectation for the results of election on voting preference or voting behavior. Here how the expectation is created before the election, which factors play what roles in the creation of the expectation shall not be discussed. It is already not quite possible to discuss these issues due to time and space restriction. For this reason, here the issue of the role and effect of the expectation for the results of election on party preference should begin to be started.

Rational preference approach and social psychological approach, two of the theoretical and empirical approaches to electorate preference assess expectation for the result of election as a factor which affects electorate preference directly (see Downs, 1957; Huber et. al., 2009; Bartels, 1985)². In this context we base on the basic assumption that expectation for the result of election affects electorate preference. This assumption should be clarified further and concretized. This assumption contains the following two partial propositions under the basic views of the two theories regarding electorate behavior. First one of these is tactically voting of the electorate under the theory of rational preference and in this context strategy of the expectation to prevent wasting of vote is functioning as *wasted vot*. The other is the fact that expectation triggers the function of *Bandwagon* effect in social-psychological dimension. Since the subject has been discussed by scientific researches recently both in Turkey and in Europe, there are no solid and valid data on those propositions yet (see Huber et. al., 2009:561). For this reason this study is nothing but a small contribution trial.

The subject of the research shall be examined on the basis of the data of certain field or public opinion researches performed for electorate preference before the Local Elections realized in Turkey on 30th March 2014. Here a brief explanation on why research data regarding 2014 election are based on is made.

2. A DIFFERENT ELECTION: LOCAL ELECTIONS OF 30th MARCH 2014

Four political parties are represented in the parliament in Turkey. Those parties are: Justice and Development Party, the party in power (AK Parti), Republican People's Party (CHP), the main opposition party and Nationalist People's Party (MHP) and Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). Distribution of votes of those parties according to the results of 2011 General election is as follows.

AK Parti:	49.95%
CHP:	25.94%
MHP:	12.98%
BDP:	6.58%

AK Parti which is the party in power came to the power for the first time in the Immediate General Elections made in November 2002 receiving 34.5% of the votes and has preserved power since that date. Furthermore it has increased its votes both in the two general elections and in the two local elections made after this election. Even it is frequently expressed that *AK Parti* came to the position of a dominant party.

What underlies the success of AK Parti is the fact that it received support of intellectual fractions which could not find what they expected, the fractions excluded from political and social life, Islamic-religious and conservative fractions (Gökçe et.al., 2002). One of the groups within the Islamic and religious fraction which

² For theoretical and empirical approaches to electorate preference see Gökçe et. al., 2002; Akgün, 2002; Kalender, 2005.

AK Parti collaborated with is the Gülen cemaati (Gülen community) (since then GC) or the “service movement” in their own words which is powerful in the fields of the media and the bureaucracy. AK Parti liquidated the “official ideology based on authoritarian secularism and Turkish nationalism and the army which deems itself as the guard of that ideology” mostly in collaboration with this group. Collaboration between AK Parti and GH was shaken before 2011 General election and mutual loss of trust was in question as a result of this. And from early 2012 relations namely the collaboration between the two groups ended. The community did not accept the unilateral attempt of GC that desires to gain more power in New Turkey and to settle and seize the politics arena for ending its collaboration with AK Parti, the party in power and its attitude of not opening area in politics and bureaucracy depending on this process as easily as accepted. The GC reacted this situation strictly. Because acknowledging this move of the government means for the community restricting its power in political, social and economic field and giving up having voice. For this reason GC almost waged war against the government and particularly Prime Minister Erdoğan using all means it had. GC has many TV Channels broadcasting on national scale and many newspapers. Furthermore fields including security, jurisdiction and education have been monopolized by them. Use of social media is quite widespread in this group. This group has more than 200 schools (primary school and high school) in Turkey and in all over the world and additionally they have universities and hospitals in Turkey. Briefly this group has a very broad media and social network.

This group started the plan of fall of the government and particularly finishing Prime Minister Erdoğan in political terms approximately four months before 2014 local elections. It started a broad negative campaign against Prime Minister Erdoğan via its own media and receiving the support of the media of the opposition groups as well and declared clearly to be a “party”. And it called the members and supporters of their own group not to vote for AK Parti and support CHP and MHP depending on the conditions and the environment. And using the media it tried to create the expectation that AK Parti would lose the election, CHP and MHP would increase their votes and as a consequence of this AK Parti would lose its legitimacy and leave the power. And this caused 30th March 2014 elections to cease to be a local election and to wrap itself in atmosphere of a general election in another context and even transform into a war of life and death in the view of some people. For this reason it was considered that this election was very convenient and suitable for our research.

3. RESEARCH DATA

Public researches performed by certain institutions before the election make up the basis for the analysis herein. Those researches were selected since they were shared by the companies with the publicity both on their own web pages and through the media³. One of these is the study performed by KONDA Research company before the election⁴. And the other is the pre-election survey study performed by Cihan News Agency associated to GC media⁵. Besides these studies our own observations are in question in environments where results of both researches are discussed. However these observations were not observations performed for scientific purposes but they merely aim at having an overall opinion on the effect of public research results on the process of expectation creation.

3 There are public research companies which undersigned extremely consistent researches in terms of stipulating election results in Turkey. These include ANAR, A&G, Konsensus, Sonar, Genar. Konda Research Company has been preferred since all data of this company are published in its web page. The survey of Cihan News Agency has been preferred since it is highly popular among the members and supporter of GC.

⁴ Konda Research Company shared its survey with the publicity on 22nd-23rd March 2014. For the relevant survey see. www.konda.com.tr/tr/raporlar.php

⁵ Here, the survey which was performed by Cihan News Agency and the results of which were shared on 3rd February 2014 through Zaman newspaper is taken into consideration (Zaman Newspaper, 3rd February 2014).

Following those general information, we may turn back to our main subject and discuss the propositions respectively.

4. STRATEGIES OF PREVENTING THE VOTES TO GO TO THE DRAIN

In order to effects of expectations on electorate preference with respect to rational preference or tactical voting, we will try to analyze it with the example of call of the community to the conservative fraction particularly including its own members and supporters to vote for or support *CHP* and *MHP*. Voting for or supporting CHP and MHP may have the following two explanations for the electorate rationally (Huber et.al., 2009:575). The first one of this is that if the electorate does not think that the chance of CHP and MHP for being elected is very high he/she may be worried about his/her vote goes down to the drain. In such a case the electorate may begin to support CHP and MHP more and work for them in order to prevent his/her vote to go down to the drain. Because the electorate wishes that the candidate he/she supports has the chance against AK Parti candidate at the least. If this argument of *wasted-vote* is valid, then we may say expectation has effect on the preference of the electorate.

The second logical explanation likely for the electorate may be the attempt to select any candidate against the candidate of AK Parti without making any discrimination between parties. In this case, the expectation of the electorate before the election that the candidate supported against the candidate of AK Parti in the case they act in collaboration. And there should be tendency for collaboration both in a particular electorate group and in the political parties for this purpose. Consequently if the electorate has an expectation that the candidate of CHP or MHP has a chance against the candidate of AK Parti in that region, then electing the candidate of CHP or MHP may be a rational preference. In other words, if the electorate does not want the candidate of AK Parti to win but thinks that the candidate of CHP or MHP may have a chance when he/she supports him/her, it is highly probable that he/she votes rationally or tactically. However if the electorate thinks that the candidate of CHP or MHP has not much chance, it is probable that he/she will prefer the candidate of the party which he/she has always preferred or identified with or the powerful candidate.

In the Konda research the electorate was asked: "When you go to polls which one of the following will you vote for?" 11% of the electorate chose the option of "I will vote for another party tactically despite it does not represent me". The proportion of those who say that he/she will vote tactically does not seem to be high. However when expressed in figures this proportion corresponds to approximately 6 000 000 votes. This is a very high number and a value that may affect the fate of the election in some places.

In logical or tactical voting, the chance of the candidate of the party in power or the candidate of the opposition to be elected has a directing function. What is determinant in this process is the expectation for the result of the election. The electorate builds an expectation for the result of the election on the basis of the expectation created in the public perception and prefers to vote in the light of this. We may conclude from this determination that the expectation for the result of the election is effective on the voting behavior.

5. BANDWAGON EFFECT

Unlike rational preference approach, social-psychological approach assumes that expectation for the result of the election has direct effect on electorate preference. The electorate base on their expectation on party preference without any rational or tactical computations and vote in the light of this expectation. In this scope the most known and recognized approach in the literature is the *bandwagon effect* approach. According to this, the electorate supports the candidate or party which he/she considers will win (Huber et.al., 2009:578). It is considered that the two following issues have effect on this behavior form. First one is the desire of the electorate to be with the winner and the strong. Another issue is the tendency of the electorate to be attuned to the majority perception which is closely related to the former.

The highest concern of individuals in social-psychological terms is being excluded and left alone (Noelle-Neumann, 1980). For this reason individuals and the electorate observe their environment both through their own

eyes and through the eyes of the media and have opinion about the issues discussed in their environment. The issues discussed and opinions related to them provides clues about which issue may be defended using which idea without being afraid and abstaining. The issues discussed easily are generally the issue adopted and defended by the majority. In this case the electorate thinks that the majority does not make a mistake. This is the perception of majority or social atmosphere for the electorate. Expectation about who will win is created according to the majority view perceived by the electorate and this expectation guides the electorate about whom to support or vote for (Schmitt-Beck, 1996). And the effect of the media, public opinion and public meetings arise exactly at that point. Strength, milieu and atmosphere for the majority is created via and by means of those instruments.

Majority of the researches suggesting validity of the Bandwagon-effect are Anglo-Saxon originated (Gimpel/Harvey, 1997; Nadeau et al., 1994; Lanoue/Bowler, 1998). In these countries structures of political parties are different. There are generally two big parties and these become active before presidential election. After the presidential election, the voice of parties are not heard frequently. The case is quite different in countries having multi-party systems. In this case the question of whether *Bandwagon-effect* is valid for multi-party systems arise.

It is possible to assume Bandwagon effect may be valid for multi-party systems. That is, in any case there is a party and block in power and against it there is an opposition block. This being the case the question of which block (power or opposition) will win the election arise. And this question may only be answered from the perspective of the electorate. From the point of view of the electorate the party he/she supports may be the “winner” regardless of its size or chance to gain the political power. The electorate may support any party that lacks high number of supporters. This party may have not received more than 1% of the votes. Increasing its votes up to 1.5% or 2% may be deemed as “winning” for that party. So winning does not necessarily mean coming to the power. Opposition parties in Turkey “which may be deemed big” increase their votes by two points and say they concluded the election with success. Winning is relative. In order to clarify this issue we may look through the surveys performed before the election more carefully.

6. THINGS EXPERIENCED BEFORE THE ELECTION AND THE EFFECT THERE OF ON FICTION OF EXPECTATION

The issue of how the operation made against the AK Parti power and particularly against Prime Minister Erdoğan on 17th December 2013 and the events following it will affect the rate of votes of AK Parti was an issue particularly wondered by almost everybody. According to the results of researches performed particularly by certain institutions opposing the government including Cihan News Agency AK Parti lost votes and CHP and MHP began to advance. For this reason many institutions tended to investigate who will be damaged at the highest by the operation made on 17th December 2013 against the government. Some institutions expressed the claim that the looser would be AK Parti while Konda research argued that probable loss of vote for AK Party would not be very high and would not affect the government much. As a result of the polarization that had occurred, those results namely those two results were not found to be convincing by certain fractions.

In order to check this question we asked “do you trust the government?” in one research we performed before 17th December and “Who will win the elections in your opinion?” in another research. Approximately 55% of the electorate answered the question about trusting the government “yes” (TİAV, 2013). And approximately 59% of the electorate answered the question about who will win the elections as AK Parti/AK Party or “Tayyip Erdoğan”. The proportion of those who said CHP will win is 22% and the proportion of those who said MHP will win was 11% and the proportion of those who said BDP will win is approximately 4%. The balance 4% is shared among other small parties (Gökçe, 2012 ve 2013).

More than half of the electorate have a clear idea about the winner of the election. When we add the answers to the question about which political leader the electorate find more reliable to this proportion, a very high majority of the electorate thinks that the winner and the loser is determined in advance in fact. And consequently the

distribution of expectations for the election results indicates which party will benefit from this situation. With regard to the local election of 30th March 2014, half of the electorate think the probable winner of the election was AK Parti, to clarify Prime Minister Erdoğan and 25% think the winner will be CHP and 13% think the winner will be MHP. The role of content with the government, hope for the future, benefit expected in economic terms, briefly perception of past-present and argument for the future on this basis is significant for the expectation or perception. Approximately 55% of the electorate is content with the current status. This percentage includes those who think economic conditions went worse in the past and at present. Half of the electorate believed economic conditions would go better in the future (for details see <http://bit.ly/yerel> 2014 #Verican). Satisfaction with the government, belief that economic conditions would go better, level of trust to the leader are factors which create *Bandwagon* effect to the benefit of AK Party. In other words as long as the perception of current status is positive and the trust to the leader is high, support of the electorate to AK Parti will not decrease much. Furthermore the chance of the party perceived by the electorate as strong and ahead in the competition to win the election is estimated to be higher (Gökçe/Bulduklu, 2012).

Finally we will discuss briefly about the question of whether there is any difference between those interested in politics and those who are not in terms of *bandwagon-effect* and then the issue of why the expectations of the GC members for the election results did not realize shall be discussed briefly.

It is possible to detect the following issues in this regard.

- i) It is expressed that there is not a big difference between those interested in and knowledgeable about politics and those who are not for those who want to be with the winner or the strong (Huber, et. al., 2009:581).
- ii) It is a popular perception in the literature that those interested in and knowledgeable about politics usually fail to estimate the political atmosphere and environment correctly (Tetlock, 2005)
- iii) There are serious concerns about whether the electorate who are identified with a particular political party, vote ideologically or included in a particular religious group build a correct and consistent expectation for the election results and vote correctly depending on this (Dolan/Holbrook, 2001). The electorate who are identified with a particular candidate or party estimates the chance of that candidate or party usually much higher than it is. This is generally named as *wishful thinking* (see Babad, 1997; Schoen, 1999).
- iv) If the party which any electorate will vote is defined and no other party is an alternative the criteria of being interested in and knowledgeable about politics has no significance and meaning (Huber, et. al. 2009).

In the light of those arguments, it is possible to explain why survey results of Cihan News Agency claiming before 30th March that AK Parti would lose votes was so effective on the creation of expectation of a particular group for election results.

According to the election survey of Cihan News Agency publicized through Zaman Newspaper the anticipation for vote distribution of parties is as follows. And Konda's estimations are given next to these values.

	Cihan	Konda	Official election result
	%	%	%
AK Parti:	36.4	46.0	45.6
CHP:	28.8	27.0	27.8
MHP:	20.5	15.0	15.2
BDP:	7.4	7.0	4.2
Other	6.1	5.0	7.2

The estimation of Metropol agency is greatly parallel to the estimation of Cihan News agency. More than 10 agencies in Turkey other than this agency estimated vote rate of AK Parti over 42 percent. Survey results of Cihan News agency differ greatly in AK Parti and MHP. GC members and supporters made the results of this survey published in Zaman newspaper the basis for their voting preferences and on the basis of these expectations they believed that vote rate of AK Party would regress down to 30%. How was it possible?

The Community seems to have a structure open for communication and dialogue. However this is not the case in reality. The GC has a structure close to outsiders and which does not trust others and consequently excludes others according to Carl Schmitt's friend-enemy equation. In this context there is no inquiry in the community, there is kowtow. In other words a very strong tie and obeying is in question among the members of the community. This means: Expectation or perception environment and atmosphere created by the top management of the community and expectation derived from this is imposed on the members and supporters through the social network as if it is real and correct and as a result a general perception and atmosphere is created among the members of this group. Since the community members act inside their narrow environment all the time and since all talk about the same thing, they are convinced that their own perception is the general perception of all and as a result a reality different from the reality is build. Top management of the community is aware that idea market atmosphere is more effective than everything else. However top management of the community usually forget the fact that the GC is a close box and the ideas they build and offer are only valid inside them. And for this reason the expectation created is far from reality and falsified. Another point to be taken into consideration is that in communities where group ties are strong, generally use of the media bodies close to them or belong to them as source of information is preferred. This being the case, an expectation directed with the function of political objective arises. As a matter of fact since GC members are close to any alternative source of information whether they are interest in and knowledge about politics or not they merely based on pre-election survey results of Cihan News Agency for their expectations and thus both they believed and they made people around them believe that AK Party would receive votes around 30% to 35%. Since this group has communication and relation with those who belong to them, they are convinced after a while that they are strong and the idea atmosphere created among them is a general situation and in the end their expectations are not responded.

CONCLUSION

Analysis suggests that the expectations of the electorate for the results of the election are perverted by many factors. This perversion may be true for all electorate group regardless of their level of education, interest in and knowledge about politics. Furthermore expectation for the results of the election are observed to be more effective to the benefit of the party in power and the leader with whom emotional ties are built all the time. Creation of expectation for the result of the election in electorate who vote ideologically and who feel that they belong to a certain group does not occur much rationally. A particular section of the electorate adopt the strategy of tactically voting. These are generally the electorate who do not behave ideologically and who do not strictly feel that they belong to a certain group. The electorate who behave ideologically and act in an area boundaries of which are drawn by a particular group are easily affected by the idea market created by their own media just as the electorate having no interest in and knowledge about politics.

In the light of all these arguments, we have the undeniable fact that the expectations created for the election results through various instruments before the election have role and effect on electorate preference. In this study we tried to confine ourselves with a quite general explanation. The issue needs to be researched in more detail and more systematically.

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