

Relationship between Political Parties-Voters in Turkey: Voter Behaviour in 24 June Elections

DOI: 10.26466/opus.611056

*

Fatih Ertugay*-**Damla Mursül****

* Doç. Dr, Sivas Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, İİBF, Merkez / Sivas / Türkiye

E-Mail: fertugay@hotmail.com

ORCID: [0000-0001-8469-4393](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8469-4393)

** Dr. Öğretim Üyesi, Nuh Naci Yazgan Üniversitesi, İİBF, Kocasinan / Kayseri / Türkiye

E-Mail: dkabakusak@nny.edu.tr

ORCID: [0000-0002-1445-5693](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1445-5693)

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the data utilized from a field study done just before the 24 June elections which was referred as an extremely important milestone in Turkey's policy and witnesses to many innovations. There are two aspects to be analyzed. The first aspect of the situation is that 24 June elections were the first elections of the new Presidential system of Turkey and that legal political party alliance fact was faced for the first time and that the Turkish political parties entered the elections via alliances. By the way the second aspect which has to be discussed is that how was the attitude and support of the voters to the alliances, and the impact of the social media campaigns, especially the enough-continue campaign, on the voters during the election campaign. Besides, this study examines the effects of domestic-foreign policy developments, leadership case, ideologies of political parties and social identity on 24 June elections. Semi-structured interview technique was used as working method with 30 participants who supported different alliances in three different cities Kayseri, Kırklareli and Erzurum.

Keywords: 24 June elections, social media, make-break campaign, Turkey's policy, voter behaviour,

Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler ve Seçmen İliřkileri: 24 Haziran Seçimlerinde Seçmen Davranışları

*

Öz

Çalışma, Türkiye siyaseti açısından son derece önemli bir dönüm noktasını işaretleyen ve pek çok açıdan yeniliklere sahne olan 24 Haziran seçimlerini, seçimin hemen öncesinde yapılan bir saha arařtırmasının da verilerinden yararlanarak analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Hükümet Sistemi’ne geçişin ilk seçimi olması, yasal zemindeki ittifak olgusunun ilk kez karşımıza çıkması ve partilerin bu ittifaklar çerçevesinde seçime girmeleri meselenin bir boyutunu oluştururken; seçmenin bu ittifak olgusuna yaklaşımı ve desteęi, seçim sürecindeki sosyal medya kampanyalarının, bunlar içinde de özellikle tamam-devam kampanyasının seçmen nezdinde nasıl karşılık bulduęu gibi tartışmalar meselenin dięer boyutu olarak bu seçime özgü analiz edilmesi gereken konulardır. Çalışma bu konuları analiz etmenin yanı sıra, 24 Haziran seçimlerinde, iç-diř politik gelişmeler, liderlik olgusu, parti ideolojisi ve toplumsal kimlik konularının seçimlere ne türde ve ne yönde etki ettięini de incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma yöntemi olarak yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat teknięi kullanılmış, Kayseri-Kırklareli ve Erzurum üçgeninde farklı ittifakları destekleyen 30 katılımcıyla görüşülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 24 Haziran seçimleri, sosyal medya, tamam-devam kampanyası, Türkiye siyaseti, seçmen davranışı.

Introduction

General elections held on June 24(2018) in Turkey has been one of the milestones of history of Republic. Milestones throughout the called history can be listed as: 1950 elections as the beginning of a very important transformation and multi-party political life, elections held on 3rdNovember 2002 as the second longest stable period of Republican history and lastly elections on 24thJune as transition to a new government model and a new relationship between politics and voters. One of the main reasons why these elections are milestones has been indicated that when developments in Turkish political system and politics are taken into account, a more direct relationship between politics and voters may be built and guardianship on Turkish political system and the effects of guardian-like institutions are expected to be lessened. On the other hand, we need to emphasize that the importance given by left or right wing populations to elections in Turkey differ depending on the period and their ideological position. For example; contrary to 1950 and 2002 elections determined as a milestone for multi-party political life and change in center-periphery relations, Turkish leftist political movement regarded two elections in Turkey's political history significant: Firstly, 1965 elections through which Workers Party of Turkey achieved to have 14 seats in the Assembly and secondly 1977 elections through which Republican People's Party (CHP) had its highest votes throughout its own history with 42% percent voting rate and during which winds of Karaoğlan¹ were blowing (Kiriş and Gül, 2007, p.91-116; Esmer, 2008, p.69-85; Ayata, 1995, p.79-88).

When viewed from the perspective of political discussions and processes in Turkey, elections of June were not ordinary elections where only

¹Usage of "Karaoğlan" (in Turkish) (Swarthy Man-suggestible in English- with black flat cap seems sincere and unflinching in the public eye) as a lexical item spread when an old woman said it referring to Bülent Ecevit before 1973 elections during Sivas tour of CHP. Having functioned as an important discourse for CHP's campaign, Karaoğlan began to be used as a new and different aspect of public relations and communication in Turkish politics as well as "left of centre" as of 1965. Representing a new discourse in Turkish politics, "Karaoğlan" discourse was an important drive for workers, peasants and slum-dwellers not normally having a place in CHP's sociological base to vote for it. For an exemplary work about the subject, see: Esmer, G. T. (2008). Propaganda, Söylem ve Sloganlarla Ortanın Solu. Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 10 (3), 69-85.

legislation and execution were determined, which made its actual importance clear and salient. When considered from this view, elections of June were actually about how to finalize a long-term discussion in Turkey. Thanks to these elections, a discussion about government model since 1990s whether Turkish people would be ruled with parliamentary system or presidency has reached its *final point* for now. With the help of elections on 24thJune, legal results of Constitution Referendum in 2014, which set forth the transition to the new government model, were put into practice. Thus, instead of double-headed executive power model which arises from legislation and answers to it again, one of main features of classical parliamentary system, a single-headed executive power that is directly elected by public opinion and responsible to people of that country have become active.

On the other hand, elections on 24thJune differed from other elections due to this highly-charged process arising from its critical importance. Social media and its campaigns were one of the most important sources where this tension was experienced. Having felt a high level of tension, both sides competed sharing different kinds of pieces, videos and *capses*. Another different aspect we altogether experienced during these elections was the alliance phenomenon that has never been encountered before throughout Turkish political life. Two sides as People's Alliance and Nation Alliance emerged and campaigns were carried out through these alliances. Thus, voters had their opinions and made their decisions depending on the positions of parties in both alliances. Lastly, difference preferences of voters and differing election campaigns emerged due to separate ballots used for legislative elections and executive elections and separate voting for each president.

One of the aims of this study is to analyze elements that affect preferences and decisions of voters by also using face-to-face interview data. Secondly, the effect of social media shares on voters' opinions will be evaluated by also using interview data. And lastly, we will analyze the evaluations of voters about the process and the possibility whether to associate these evaluations with election results or not after assessing election process, campaigns and discourses. Throughout this research, qualitative research method was used and relevant data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 30 people living in Kırklareli, Kayseri and

Erzurum and also materials from social media used in the interviews were also utilized.²

New System New Facts: Alliances and Shifting Voters

The discussion around presidency has been put on political agenda from time to time in Turkish politics by especially politicians and leaders in the right or center of political spectrum. With the support of Devlet Bahçeli, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been the one to realize this project, behind which thoughts and demands of some politicians from Necmettin Erbakan to Alparslan Türkeş from Turgut Özal to Süleyman Demirel stand. Erdoğan first mentioned his ideas about presidency in 2003, when he was still Prime Minister. Following constitutional change after referendum on 21 October 2007, for the first time in our history, election of President by people's votes became possible and following the referendum on 16 April 2017, necessary legal base was constituted for transition to presidential government (Turan, 2018, p.42-91). Doubtlessly, coup attempt on 15 July 2016 and following Emergency State had a great effect on the way to systemic change. General elections that planned to be made on November 2019 were transferred and made on 24 June 2018 and internal and external threats were presented as the rationale for the decision of earlier election date. A great and significant change was made in election system on 13 March 2018 and from then on, parties had the right to enter elections by building alliances. Thus, parties with possibility not to pass electoral threshold were provided opportunity for having seat in the assembly, which led to abolish electoral threshold partly or completely (de facto), a conflict of Turkey's democracy for too long (Göksel, Çınar and Yörük, 2018, p.99-124). This presidential system welcomes us as system based on party chair, where people choose their own president. AKP (Justice and Development Party) set out with the motto "Powerful Assembly Powerful Government" in June elections depending on both systemic change and the fact "alliance", one of the first practices within the new system. This

²These cities were selected in accordance with their location in Turkey. Kırklareli (at West) for Nation Alliance and Erzurum (at East) for People's Alliance. Kayseri is in the centre of Turkey, allows many immigrant from near of far cities. Its population over 1 million, which makes it highly representative for us. Also researchers live in Kayseri, which makes it easy to carry out interviews.

fact called “alliance” indicates a new state for Turkish politics with this dimension and legal infrastructure. There has been a political climate where ideological transitions between parties happen for too long, however this new fact has a probability to create a new political atmosphere. For example, parties in People’s Alliance have close relations with each other politically but those in Nation Alliance have less similarity in their political lines.

Alongside, voters have confusion in the face of this very new situation in Turkish politics. Within both alliances, we have individuals who regard alliance both negative. One of the reasons about the confusion on this issue is the very new Presidential Government System and an unforeseeable new period depending on this and also unknown elements about emerging political portrait after these alliances.

“Different opinions co-exist, which is not so good. No vision but darkness here. Besides, there are some problems about voters. But this is good in that more parties will be in the assembly and political power can be controlled more than now.”(C-1)

“To me, alliance is something opportunist. Time will show pros and cons of this project, but the most important thing here is many more parties will enter into assembly. That’s good.”(M-2)

But we must emphasize that participants to vote for Nation Alliance assign a different meaning to “alliance”. From this perspective, such an alliance has a good chance vis-a-vis AKP, concretized in the personality of Erdoğan and had the political power for too long. Thus, the higher possibility of success belonging to such an alliance vis-a-vis a dominant party who has the political power for too long but rules the country badly is directly reflected in the support of “alliance”. For example; after a participant stated that he/she regarded alliance something positive, he/she also emphasized that “someone strong” must struggle against “bad rulers of AKP” and voiced his/her expectations from the alliance that way. It can be seen in participants’ expressions “If there would be a good environment, no alliance would be necessary. We would not be in such a dire situation at the end of 16 years. Now, this alliance is fresh blood. It may end the reign of *one man*.”(M-4)

General View of Election

AKP and MHP (Party of Nationalist Movement) went to elections under the name of *People's Alliance* while CHP (Party of Republican People), İYİ Party and SP (Felicity Party) did the same under the name of *Nation Alliance*. Apart from these two, VP (Patriotic Party), HÜDA PAR (Independent Dawah Party) and HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) participated in the elections with their own parties. And also BBP (Great Unity Party) declared its support for People's Alliance; while DP (Democrat Party) made this declaration for Nation Alliance and 8 parties in total participated in the elections. Vote rates of political parties in general elections held on 24th June are as follows:

Table 1. Voting Rates of Political Parties

Political Parties (Alliances)	Percent	Number of Chairs
<i>People's Alliance</i>	53.66	344
AKP	42.56	295
MHP	11.10	49
<i>Nation Alliance</i>	33.94	189
CHP	22.65	146
İYİ Party	9.96	43
SP	1.35	0
HDP	11.70	67
VP	0.23	0
HÜDA PAR	0,31	0
Independent Candidates	0,15	0
Total		600

Source: Supreme Election Council of Turkey

When viewed the results of election, People's Alliance had the highest votes with an amount of 53.66% followed by Nation Alliance with 33.94%. Apart from these two alliances, the only party that passed the electoral threshold and had seats in the assembly is HDP with 10%. Patriotic Party, Independent Dawah Party and independent candidates could not pass the threshold and have representative authority in the assembly.

Table 2. Voting Rates of Presidential Candidates

Candidates	Percent	Number of votes
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	52.59	26.324.482
Muharrem İnce	30.64	15.336.594
Meral Akşener	7.29	3.649.233
Selahattin Demirtaş	8.40	4.205.219
Temel Karamollaoğlu	0.89	443.766
Doğu Perinçek	0.20	98.926

Source: Supreme Election Council of Turkey

In Table 2, you can view the distribution of 50.189.930 valid votes into presidential candidates. According to these results, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won the election for Presidency with 52.59% voting rate.

In the final analysis, we encounter such a table when compared to general elections of previous period:

Table 3. Voting Rates of Political Parties (Comparatively in 2015 and 2018 Elections)

Political Parties	2015		2018	
	Voter rates (%)	Number of chairs	Voter rates (%)	Number of chairs
AKP	49.32	317	42.56	295
MHP	12.03	40	11.10	49
CHP	25.56	134	22.65	146
HDP	10.56	59	11.70	67
Independent Candidates	2.53	0	0.15	0

Source: Supreme Election Council of Turkey

According to Table 3, AKP had more votes and seats in previous general election on 1 November 2015 while MHP, CHP and HDP had less votes and seats compared to 2018 elections. Independent candidates could not have seat in the assembly just like this one. Unlike 2015 elections, İYİ Party had seat in the assembly in its first election as a new political entity while SP could not enter into assembly under the roof of Nation Alliance on 24th June.

Internal and Foreign Political Developments

One of the most important factors affecting the elections in terms of internal politics is discussion about immigrants living in the country. While

mentioning foreign political developments below, this issue will also be handled. Another issue is the discussion around new government model. People's Alliance both supports this new government model as a political entity and stand behind this alliance with its voter base. The support of voters is reflected in election results (Table 1) and also show itself in the meetings held before the elections. However, Nation Alliance has an exact opposite position and negative attitude about Presidential System and both general heads of parties, their spokesmen and president candidates declared that if they won the elections, they would have taken necessary steps for returning to parliamentary system.

Another issue debated hotly during this election process was FETÖ and Emergency State. Just like other issues, alliances and parties differed in their views for this matter, either. While People's Alliance emphasizes that struggle with FETÖ must be sustained as it has been and thus Emergency State is a requirement, Nation Alliance points to some methodological changes and differences even if the parties and candidates agree with the struggle against FETÖ itself.³ They especially stress "political aspect" of this struggle and mention that interrogations on this issue are not examining each and every relational aspect. As to Emergency State, they have demanded and voiced the necessity of immediate abolishment and earnestly stated that elections must not be held under these circumstances. We need to note that announcements and emphases of both sides had echoes in their own voter bases. Supporters of Public Alliance point to necessity of extraordinary measures due to extraordinary circumstances while supporters of Nation Alliance argue that these circumstances are actually exaggerated and used for reshaping political order reflect the association between discourses of parties and candidates and voters' opinions.

Participants that declare their support for People's Alliance make a linear association between foreign political developments and their own preferences. In accordance with this declaration, when events experienced

³Devlet Bahçeli, general head of MHP as one of main components of People's Alliance makes such sentences: "Politics must be cleared of FETÖ. And pro-FETÖ people must not be in the politics. Before destroying FETÖ and PKK, Emergency State must not be abolished", while Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, general head of CHP as the great component of Nation Alliance, says "First thing to do in the morning of 25th June will abolishing Emergency State", Yurt Newspaper, (2018). Accessed on 20th August 2018 from <http://www.yurtgazetesi.com.tr/gundem/cumhur-ittifaki-na-bir-darbe-de-bahceli-den-h98030.html>; CNN Türk, (2018). <https://www.cnnturk.com/video/turkiye/kilicdaroqlu-ilk-ismiz-ohali-kaldirmak-olacak>.

in Turkey's neighbor regions and especially southern frontier are considered, a strong and nationalist government is required, which is the rationale for their support to People's Alliance. For example; two of the participants declared the reasons for their support to People's Alliance and criticized National Alliance making these sentences: "If not, Turkey will be nothing but a submissive country...I will vote for whom not to divide Turkish Republic"(C-3); "New projects impress me, I want to see an innovative, contemporary Turkey, which is not foreign-dependent and be oppressed by powerful states..."(C-5). In other words, one of the main reasons for their support to People's Alliance is on the one hand firm stand and attitude and on the other internal political developments associated with foreign ones. But then, as stated above, FETÖ and other regional developments have a direct effect on the decisions of People's Alliance voters: "We only consider the survivability of our country, you see we have some bad examples like Syria, Lebanon, Egypt or Arab Spring. I take all these into account as someone that worked there. Erdoğan made so many mistakes in this People's Alliance thing. I have some questions in my mind. But he knows FETÖ very-well. Diamond cuts diamond ultimately"(C-6). And a very important amount of People's Alliance supporters, not all of them, find it positive to host war-weary people especially Syrian people fleeing from civil war in their country mentioning the negative attitude of Europe on this issue and feel proud of their hospitality.

Supporters of Nation Alliance also stated that foreign political developments affected their own preferences. In contrary to supporters of People's Alliance, participants that support Nation Alliance regard it negative for Turkey to be involved in regional problems and have issues with regional and other international actors and claim the isolation as the best way for Turkey, which means that Turkey must begin procedures immediately for Syrian immigrants to return to their own country. When viewed from these perspectives, both sides are motivated by internal and foreign developments to a certain extent and this motivation affects their preferences of voting. However, motivation of both sides seems inversely correlated. In other words, a different interpretation for same developments changes the preference and decision of a voter. While supporters of People's Alliance go for existing foreign political tendencies (even though

the extent of support varies) and demand them to continue, supporters of Nation Alliance tend for the exact opposite.

Relationship with the Leader

Candidate of People's Alliance, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, is generally acceptable figure for the whole alliance.⁴ However, approaches of its own voter base and MHP voters to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan strictly differ. For its own voter base, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, beyond being head of a political party, is a charismatic and path-breaking leader, with which they identify themselves, "author of a new story", a leader "who must be followed" despite changing conditions. Within this perspective, loyalty of voter base to their leader is beyond a sense of belonging to a party; their general tendencies and preferences are shaped by their relationship with the leader. In a research conducted by KONDA on May 2018, 46% of AKP voters revealed that they preferred AKP mostly because of its leader (Uncu, 2018, p.26). On the other hand, results emerging from another survey carried out by SONAR fixed that Muharrem İnce is the second-highest vote-receiver leader of CHP after Bülent Ecevit (1977) (Sputnik News, 2018).

The strong relationship between voters and political leader is directly reflected in election results on 24thJune. Votes given to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan were 10 points more than the votes given to his own party. In other saying, a votershare of 7% who went for AKP in previous parliamentary elections changed their vote in general elections while still voting for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as president, whom they regarded as a natural-born leader. Consequently, voters that had built a strong relationship with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as leader in power for 16 years reflect this relation in the elections of 24thJune.

However, the issue is a bit different for Nation Alliance. Nation Alliance did not go to elections with only one presidential candidate just like People's Alliance. Each party comprising the alliance participated in the

⁴As a result of a research conducted between 2010-2016 and through social media, Erdoğan is regarded as the most critical and important actor of Turkish politics and his official social media accounts of Presidency rank the third and shape political agenda of the country. For this study, see: Irak, D., and Öztürk, A. E. (2017). Redefinition of State Apparatuses: AKPS's Formal-Informal Networks in the Online Realm. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 1(20), 439-458.

elections with its own candidate and the alliance was restricted to legislative elections. Along with this, main strategy of Nation Alliance was to extend the election to second round. Each party supported its own candidate in the first round, but if the election extended to second round, the candidate with the highest vote in Nation Alliance would have been supported vis-a-vis the candidate of People's Alliance. In other words, ally parties that gathered together for legislative elections shaped their idea of alliance for presidency in accordance with possibility of a second round. One of the most important reasons behind this is oppositional voices in their own bases about parties that point to a common candidate and party leaders after choosing a common candidate in previous presidential elections. Another reason is the difficulty for parties within Nation Alliance to reach a consensus on the candidate and persuade their own voters since they do not base on similar social columns and ideological background. Because of all these reasons, Nation Alliance could not nominate a single candidate for voters. Thus, the advantage of single candidate that People's Alliance had could not be utilized by Nation Alliance.

Even though this is the bare case for Nation Alliance, Muharrem İnce, being the candidate of CHP, achieved to build a strong bond with voters and had a voting rate much higher than its own party. He was the most attractive candidate due to his performance and speeches and ultimately received 8% higher votes than its own party (See: Table 1 and 2). Thus, we can argue that he strongly communicated with his own base. So many reasons about the difference of votes given to his party and his own personality exist, however one of the most important ones is the idea of avoiding Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to be elected as president again and realizing this project in at least second tour. Thought of people about his very-well performance in arenas, in spite of the fact that he was an oppositional leader, gave a different kind of hope to voters of Nation Alliance for the second tour. Another point to be noted is that: It is too early to argue that Muharrem İnce, who competed for the first time, built a relationship with his own voters similar to that of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who have been in power for 16 years and won so many elections. However, this amount of 30% revealed that Muharrem İnce had important responses in voters who do not go for People's Alliance. Even though Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu had a really high amount of voting (38.44%), nearly eight points more than Mu-

harrem İnce, in previous presidential elections held in 2014 vis-a-vis Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, it is important to remember that İhsanoğlu had been the candidate of an alliance where MHP is also a member, while Muharrem İnce was the candidate of his own party, CHP.

Social Media and Make-Break Campaign

Social media has become apparent as a propaganda tool and public discussion milieu with the help of recent elections in Turkey. Especially during and following coup attempt on 15 July 2016, social media gained importance in terms of mobilizing and leading society. Especially Twitter can start hot topics by gathering so many followers in a quite short time and mobilize mass of people (Esen and Gümüşçü, 2007, p. 59-73). Generally, this is not limited to some countries or elections. For example; Facebook was really influential with its 9 million users in presidential elections of USA and other social networks like Facebook increased the participation in protests of both Arab Spring happened in Middle East and London youth riots in Summer 2011 by mobilizing individuals (Carlisle and Patton, 2008, p.883). Expressing that social media decreases costs and also abolishes boundaries between lay people and political actors, Benkler (2006) and Jenkins (2006) state that social media is mostly used by young people in our day and appears as one of the most effective ways to follow and join in current politics.

Social media has been intensely used by supporters of both Alliances in 24 June elections, just like last four or five elections. We need to note an important point here: What really matters is not social media ads and campaigns of candidates and parties but shares of populations and voters that support different alliances and candidates (we will focus on some of them) and relevant interpretations and opinions. Even though social media was used intensely in previous elections, it gained a distinctive feature in these elections: Make-break shares on social media popped-up after the announcement of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, one of the candidates and already president, on 8 May 2018 in AKP group meeting that emphasized "What chose me as Mayor of İstanbul, Chairman of AKP, Prime Minister and President has been my nation up to now. If they say 'break it', we will step aside" (CNNTurk, 2018).

High rates of #tamam (break it) hashtags and relevant tweets in social media and correspondent reactions like #devam (make it) to these by Erdoğan's supporters (Amerika'nın Sesi, 2018) created a serious competition in social media and brought an election race into view. In the following days, this rapidly rising campaign of "make it or break it" in the social media witnessed many interesting shares and comments. While supporters of Erdoğan or People's Alliance sent such tweets like "Life MAKES itself", "MAKE IT hashtags are used for nearly 1.5 million. The thing is not tweeting for 1 million but got 25 million votes on one's own, which can only be achieved by one person" (Timeturk, 2018), supporters of Nation Alliance shared tweets like "It's been just a few hours since nation has said 'BREAK IT'," "I'm so ready to say 'break it' in every language. 'Tamam' in Turkish, 'enough' in English, 'voltooi' in Afrikan, kompletni in Czech language, 'calengkap' in Indonesian..." (Listelist, 2018). Both sides stated that either this campaign of "make it or break it" or other comments on social media did not influence their own opinions and decisions. Moreover, when they faced some kind of accusations arguing that their own opinions were only lies or distortions, their opinions got stricter and sharper and they felt anger:

"[Social media] will affect too less, I guess. Everybody made their own mind considering other factors. Social media makes people take sharper decisions and have negative feelings for the opposite sides."(M-1)

"When I see negative comments about my candidate, I feel more motivated about voting my own candidate. Positive shares do not influence my thoughts so much."(C-1)

"Shares of both sides do not influence my position. The words like "Those not voting AKP are traitors, they are not national" make me feel anger and I want to react to it. This is what shapes my opinion and determines color of my vote. I think these comments on social media do not affect people's preferences."(M-2)

Having said that social media campaigns and shares during election period have no power to determine, shape or change voters' preferences and only serve to sharpen existing decisions and create a greater distance between social groups. On the other hand, our interviewees stated very same opinions about *capses* on social media, which we showed them. For them, these *capses* and shares never influence themselves and they regard

all these negative. They emphasized that there are some distortions to a certain extent and these shares do not reflect the truth:

“These pictures are meaningless to me. When it is for our candidate, it makes us happy but does not reflect reality. Meaningless stuff, some lies.”(M-1)

“We are not critical on ourselves but the second picture here feels not realistic and does not influence me... So, the possibility of a distortion influences me easily and immediately. I become angry. I wish there were more realistic stuff for both sides.”(C-1)

Ideological Narrative of Parties

When we evaluate the case in terms of various parties and both alliances, we can witness the appearance of some minor differences. The basic point for parties that compose People’s Alliance is the differentiation of ally parties with regard to the relationship between ideology and voters. AKP, the greatest ally of People’s Alliance, theoretically emerged as a cadre party rather than an ideological catch-all party above all, however it evolved into an ideology party *to a certain extent* afterwards. In the meantime, when last elections are taken into consideration, both pre-election evaluations and election results once more revealed that party leadership had more effect on the relationship between party and voters than that of ideology. Moreover, AKP had no salient ideology compared to other main parties within the system. AKP had a kind of ideology composed of such thoughts and movements that Anatolian nationalism, conservatism and Islamism expressed by concepts like developmentalism, indigenouslyness and nationalism.⁵

MHP, other great party of the alliance, and BBP, the small one hereof, are saliently ideology parties compared to AKP. Thus, the relationship between these parties and their voter bases are determined completely by ideologies. Both parties are based on nationalism. The difference between them is more salient Islamic attitude of BBP. In spite of this, main emphases of nationalist voters are generally similar to each other: *Survival of*

⁵ We can also mention such components of this composite ideology on discourse level: *New Turkey, Turkey is at peace with its history, Turkey as active agent in his region, powerful Turkey etc.*

homeland, patriotism, flag, azan, unity and solidarity, struggle against terror and strong Turkey shine out among all other concepts. Voters of MHP who want to vote for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as president candidate in June elections especially emphasize these concepts. Voters of MHP handle the result of this election and the future president as a matter of survival:

“Our red line as Nationalist Movement Party is the struggle against terror, the most important promise for us. We will make alliance with the ruling party not to repeat all these mistakes made up to now and then Turkey will keep going with a strong assembly and a strong president. People’s Alliance is an umbrella for those feeling the same when mentioned homeland, nation, state, flag and azan...The meaning of People’s Alliance is not European but Turkish union. There is no Kurdish issue according to People’s Alliance but an issue of PKK and terror since the people who got influenced and damaged by terror mostly are Kurds. And peace will not appear if we come to table with HDP and PKK and appease but blossom when we put an end to terror.”(C-3)

Another point that brings voter bases within People’s Alliance together in terms of ideology and thoughts is their perception about rival parties. It is possible to argue that voters of People’s Alliance have generally negative thoughts about especially CHP and İYİ Party. CHP, the greatest party of Nation Alliance, is frequently mentioned by its actions and policies during Single Party period. This period is defined as a period of oppression, discrimination and exclusion by voters of People’s Alliance and CHP is evaluated within the framework of these concepts, either. In other words, CHP has a very negative ideological baggage in the eyes of People’s Alliance voters.

“I think Nation Alliance is a tasteless alliance made by CHP, where Atatürk supporters and nationalist people become minority, with İYİ Party and SP just to take some leaves from right-wing voters. They share no common ground and idea. They have no common declarations. The only thing they did together is trying to discrown.”(C-3)

Voters of Nation Alliance (when considered in accordance with CHP and İYİ Party find the common ground of Atatürkism-Kemalism and when evaluated ideologically, they define themselves with concepts like *progressiveness* and *modernness*. That is why those voting for Nation Alliance and finding the common ground of Atatürkism lay stress on these

basic points generally. In other saying, if we put Felicity Party, the smaller one of the alliance, aside, it would not be wrong to argue that Nation Alliance functioned as an umbrella for left or right-winged Kemalism:

“If CHP, which has forgotten the difference between opposing to rulers and opposing to the state itself, goes back to real Kemalist thought and struggle against terrorist organizations that try to destroy our republic, the voting rate of it will increase in today’s Turkey.” (M-7)

“Things that will determine my vote when I goto the polls: Republicanism, statism, revolutionism, nationalism, populism and secularism. We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal. We will follow his footsteps until we die.”(M-8)

“People’s Alliance is the alliance of those trying to preserve their own power. It is superannuated. Now, it is time to change and renew. Nation Alliance, especially İYİ Party, is the one to promise and bring innovation to our lives. The future of Turkey lies in this alliance. Atatürk is the common ground of this alliance, which will lead us to somewhere better and bright.” (M-1)

Effects of Identity Politics

People in Turkey have identities that both emphasize differences and boundaries among them and shape their attitudes and perspectives. Formation of these identities and senses of belonging have a certain kind of historicity. In addition to social, cultural and economic relations, some conjunctural and historical differences especially dichotomy of Ottoman-Republic influence the formation and shaping of these identities. Thus, different identity perceptions and relevant differences in perspectives, relations built both between these identities and parties that represent them are reflected in their owners’ political preferences and vote decisions (For a detailed study; Abramowitz and Saunders, 2006, p. 175-187).

For example; while a participant who thinks voting for People’s Alliance points to one of the sources of identity differences saying that “People’s Alliance is based on a fund of knowledge and cultural values and planned to move accordingly. Nation Alliance aims to save the day acting on a ninety-year-memory.”(C-4) another participant to vote for Nation Alliance indicates another aspect of the called identity difference express-

ing words like "What actually determines my decision is Turkish people's being at peace with Republican values. Our Republic was founded on secularism. Now, some people deny it. This is what distinguishes us from them: secularism. Being a secular citizen or not. I support progressiveness against reactionaries."(M-3) While voters of Nation Alliance talk about factors that affect their own voting decisions, they make more secular evaluations and explain their identities with such categories as secularism and progressiveness as above and compare positive and negative stuff accordingly. Contrarily, voters of People's Alliance distinguish their own group from others and compare and contrast what is positive and negative while going to a voting preference:

"We had so many troubles in previous times just like 28th February. Those who are in opposition now were once in power and they made us experience so bad things. I'm afraid we will suffer the same if they have the power. I, at least, want my own children not to live this way."(C-1)

"Nation Alliance insults our national and sentimental values and pursues a mud-slinging policy instead of doing something functional, which gives me the impression that these men cannot and must not rule the country."(C-3)

Interestingly, while voters of Nation Alliance act upon the concept called progressiveness, voters of People's Alliance use the word and concept "old" when defining Nation Alliance. Both supporters of People's Alliance and Nation Alliance put an emphasis on concepts like *new and innovation*. Stating that they represent the *new* and their rivals symbolize the *old*, participants assume that their own in-group belong to the *new* and thus functions better than other group with the help of this old-new dichotomy. Thus, they ascribe the *new*, as a positive dimension, to their own social group "They want to reverse everything, they say it. They say nothing about future and new things"(C-1), "This country needs fresh blood" (M-9).

There are positive emphases and implications that address sentiments of people. What comes into focus here is the comparison that becomes effective: More positive features compared to others are given out with a more inward-oriented reference. Second is the negative and pejorative manner that focuses on external words. Both these strive to sustain solidarity, continuation and close relationships within the group and become successful to a certain extent.

“While People’s Alliance has better projects for both country and Turkish nation, I’ve witnessed that Nation Alliance has nothing good or positive idea or discourse for this nation, which made me think they would harm the country. Tayyip Erdoğan tries to do his best for his country and nation and struggles to make it a better country constantly. Sentences of Nation Alliance like “We will destroy and burn them all” have come to the fore throughout the campaign.”(C-2)

“Some strong people must stand against them. People’s Alliance is an alliance of those trying to preserve their own powers. A fresh blood and a new breath are always good. We must say enough and look ahead.”(M-1)

“I regard it insincere for a political party ruling the country for 15 years to set out with the motto of innovation in each campaign. To me, discourses of Nation Alliance is more credible.”(M-7)

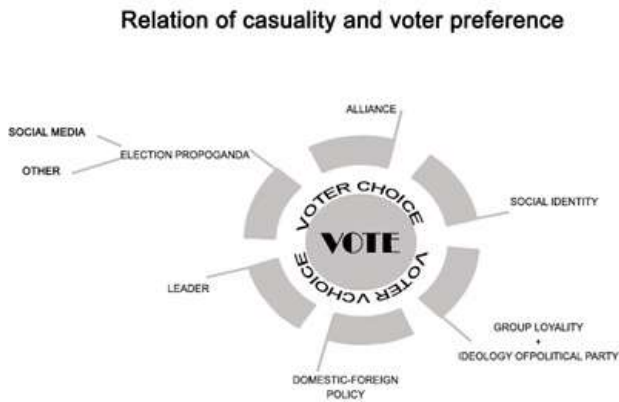


Figure 1. Relation of casuality and voter preference

Discussion

When relations between parties and voters in Turkey are considered, we need to argue that elements which affect voter behaviors or shape their opinions are determined by certain umbrella concepts. Throughout this study, election period of 24 June and factors that affect voter preferences are tackled within the frame of some basic determinants such as Turkey’s conditions, developments in the country and relations of Turkey with

neighbor countries, political climate and its reflections on identity politics, ideological stances of political parties and views of voters on leaders in the center of politics vis-a-vis these called stances. Social media that triggered the dynamics of electoral period witnessed an important campaign that reveals the attitude of voters.

The campaign of “make it or break it” left a mark on the supporters of both People’s Alliance and Nation Alliance, however meant nothing serious for the decision of voters. Moreover, the campaign is witnessed to have reinforced the existing negative ideas about the other (rival) and sharpened the existing opinions. From this view, it was observed that social media did not have such a big effect on people’s decisions, which became clear previously, that to change them as well as being an important tool for mobilizing masses and revealing their reactions. Apart from all these, we need to note this party ideology and identity difference is still one of the most important determinants just like in previous elections. Even though voters criticize their own parties and candidates to a significant extent, they do not change their voting behavior due to identity preferences, expectations and relevant worries.

Kaynakça / References

- Abramowitz, A.I., and Saunders, K. L. (2006). Exploring the Bases of partisanship in the American Electorate: Social Identity vs. Ideology. *Political Research Quarterly*, 59 (2), 175-187.
- Ayata, A. G. (1995). Türkiye’nin demokratikleşme sürecinde ortanın solu hareketi. *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi*, 50 (3), 79-88.
- Benkler, Y. (2006). *The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*. Boston: Yale University Press.
- Carlisle, J. E., and Patton, R. C. (2013). Is social media changing how we understand political engagement? An analysis of Facebook and the 2008 presidential election. *Political Research Quarterly*, 66(4), 883-895.
- Cumhur İttifakı’na bir darbe de Bahçeli’den. (2018). *Yurt Newspaper*. Accessed on 20th August 2018 from <http://www.yurtgazetesi.com.tr/gundem/cumhur-ittifaki-na-bir-darbe-de-bahceli-den-h98030.html>
- Esen, B., and Gümüüşçü, Ş. (2007). Turkey: How the coup failed. *Journal of Democracy*, 28 (1), 59-73.

- Esmer, G. T. (2008). Propaganda, söylem ve sloganlarla ortanın solu. *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 10(3), 69-85.
- Göksel, T., Çınar, Y., and Yörük, S. (2018). İttifaklı seçim sistemi ve sandalye dağıtım mekanizmalarının temsilde adalet açısından sayısal analizi: Türkiye örneği. *Turkish Studies*, 13 (4), 99-124.
- Irak, D., and Öztürk, A. E. (2017). Redefinition of State Apparatuses: AKPS's Formal-Informal Networks in the Online Realm. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 1(20), 439-458.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Kılıçdaroğlu: İlk İşimiz OHAL', Kaldırmak Olacak (2018). *CNN Türk*. Accessed on 20th August 2018 from <https://www.cnnturk.com/video/turkiye/kilicdaroglu-ilk-isimiz-ohali-kaldirmak-olacak>.
- Kiriş, H. M., and Gül, H. (2007). Türkiye'de 1965 sonrası genel seçimler ve siyasal partiler bağlamında solda yaşanan gelişmelerin bir çözümlemesi. *Toplum ve Demokrasi*, 1(1), 91-116.
- Listelist. (2018). Erdoğan'ın 'milletim tamam derse kenara çekiliriz' açıklamasına Twitter'dan 31 Cevap. Accessed on 1st October 2018 from <https://listelist.com/milletim-tamam-derse-kenara-cekiliriz/>.
- Seçim Yarışı 'Tamam mı?-Devam mı?' Kampanyalarıyla Twitter'a Taşındı. (2008). *Amerika'nın Sesi*. Accessed on 1st October 2018 from <https://goo.gl/NV5uua>.
- Son dakika... Erdoğan: 'Milletimiz 'devam' derse devam ederiz, 'tamam' derse saygı duyarız'. (2018). *CNNTurk*, Accessed on 1st December 2019 from <https://www.cnnturk.com/video/turkiye/son-dakika-erdogan-milletimiz-devam-derse-devam-ederiz-tamam-derse-saygi-duyariz>.
- Sonar anketinden: İnce oyunu yüzde 10 yükseltti. (2018). *Sputnik News*. Accessed on 25th September 2018 from <https://sptnkne.ws/hGwX>.
- Supreme Election Council of Turkey (YSK). (2018). *Cumhurbaşkanı Seçimi ve 27. Dönem Milletvekili Genel Seçimi Sonuçları*. Accessed on 20th August 2018 from <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/>.
- Twitter'da #Tamam-#Devam Çekişmesi. (2018). *Timeturk*. Accessed on 1st October 2018 from <https://www.timeturk.com/twitter-da-tamam-devam-cekismesi/haber-894827>.

Uncu, B. A. (2018). KONDA Seçmen kümeleri: AK Parti seçmenleri. *KONDA Araştırma ve Danışmanlık* 26. Accessed on 25th September 2018 from http://konda.com.tr/wpcontent/uploads/2018/05/KONDA_SecmenKumeleri_AkParti_Secmenleri_Mayis2018.pdf

Kaynakça Bilgisi / Citation Information

Ertugay, F. ve Mürsül, D. (2020). Relationship between political parties-voters in Turkey: Voter behaviour in 24 june elections. *OPUS-International Journal of Society Researches*, 15(21), 34-55. DOI: 10.26466/opus.611056