

## A Review of Psychological Factors in Voting Behaviour after Terror Attacks

### Terör Saldırıları Sonrası Oy Verme Davranışındaki Psikolojik Faktörlerin İncelenmesi

Gönderilme tarihi/received: 03.07.2020

Kabul edilme tarihi/ accepted: 04.09.2020

İnceleme Makalesi / Review Article

Emre LALE<sup>1</sup>

Tolga GİTMEZ<sup>2</sup>

#### Abstract

In the last thirty years, different countries have been struggling with different terrorist organizations and a variety of their methods. Even though the effects of terrorist attacks are in plain sight for our daily lives, those incidents can have a deep impact on the institutions of democracies, such as election. This paper aims to collect different pieces of information from the literature on terror attacks and election results and tries to interpret what factors might explain the change in the election results. The existing literature present cases from Spain, Turkey, Israel, Peru and France. After reviewing those cases, election results and the contexts the attacks took place we argue that different models of voting and rally-round-the-flag effect can be used to explain why incumbent parties may gain support after terror attacks, whereas different emotions can moderate the decreasing support for incumbent parties.

**Keywords:** Terror Attacks, Election Results, Rally-round-the-flag Effect, Voting Models, Voting Behaviour.

#### Öz

Son otuz yıldır, birçok ülke farklı terör örgütleri ve metotlarıyla mücadele etmektedir. Terör saldırılarının günlük hayatımıza etkisi kolayca görülebilse de, bu saldırıların seçimler gibi demokrasinin unsurları üzerinde derin bir etkisi olabilir. Bu çalışma, terör eylemleri ve seçim sonuçları üzerine bulguları derlemeyi ve olası değişimleri açıklamaya çalışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Mevcut bulgular, İspanya, Türkiye, İsrail ve Fransa'da gerçekleşen vakaları sunmaktadır. Bu vakaların bağlamlarının, seçim sonuçlarının ve farklı oy verme modellerinin incelenmesinin ardından *bayrak etrafında toplanma* etkisinin görevdeki partilere artan desteği açıklayabileceğini öne sürüyor ve farklı duyguların görevdeki parti üzerindeki olası etkilerini tartışıyoruz.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Terör Saldırıları, Seçim Sonuçları, Bayrak Etrafında Toplanma Etkisi, Oy Verme Modelleri, Oy Verme Davranışı.

<sup>1</sup> Lisans öğrencisi, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Ankara, E-Mail: emrelale.35@gmail.com. ORCID No: 0000-0001-6379-7270.

<sup>2</sup> Lisans öğrencisi, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Ankara, E-Mail tolga.gitmez@hotmail.com. ORCID No: 0000-0002-0189-868X.

## Introduction

News have been mentioning terror attacks for the last decade very frequently, especially of those undertaken by Islamic terrorist organizations. Nevertheless, the idea of terror itself can be traced on a broader course, since the Jewish Zealots of the early days in the history to the recent ascension of Islamic State in Syria (ISIS) (Shaffer, 2019). Due to its political nature, however, terrorism has evolved into different methods in time and can be interpreted in many different meanings (Radil & Castan Pinos, 2019). This division therefore makes it quite challenging to come up with a definition of terrorism which can be used to classify certain actions. The contradiction in the literature is still present, though. For example, Cuban American extremism in 1970s is labelled as “terrorism” and “counter-revolutionary act” by different scholars (McPherson, 2019). Crenshaw (2000) argues that it is not very easy to define what terrorism is and draws attention to the fact that it is “political, rhetorical and pejorative”. Nevertheless, the author spots the difference between communal violence and terrorism by comparing the target audiences and their ultimate goals. Indeed, terrorist organizations like ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) and PKK (Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan) target particular individuals like high-level bureaucrats and public meetings to gain concessions from the government (Dugan et al., 2008; Yegen, 2018). Yet, this point brings us to the methodological aspect of terrorism. Those politic and symbolic actions can be performed with the use of various methods and this makes it even more difficult to categorize terrorist actions (Crenshaw, 2000).

Still, academics tried to define terrorism as a phenomenon on its own. Keen (2006) suggests that legitimacy and terrorism should be thought together and proposes that conscious militaristic and psychological actions to legitimize goals can be defined as terrorism. Similarly, Enders and Sadler (2020) highlight the intended use violent means to obtain influence on political matters. Another definition is made by Cooper (2001), implying the significance of seizing “control over other human beings” by using coercion. In addition, Goodwin (2017) points out that many definitions of terrorism consist of “lethal or nonlethal violence and deliberation for political change”.

Democracies, as the extensions of states have been targets of terror attacks, too. By definition, democracy relies on the political participation of the people. By way of explanation, voting and voters become crucial to the democratic systems. The question of how people vote has been on the scope of the psychologists and political scientists for a long time. In particular, there have been different approaches to the issue. The earliest attempts to explain voting behaviour as a dimension of political psychology have been Sociological Model, Psychosocial Model and Rational Choice Theory (Berelson et al., 1954; Campbell et al., 1960; Downs, 1957; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). They are still considered as fundamental approaches for the intriguing question of voting and hold a significant place for themselves in the literature (Antunes, 2010). Despite not being one of the most prevalent theories of voting behaviour, Affective Intelligence Theory also provides important aspects of electoral choices which are emotions and cognition (Marcus et al., 2000,).

As cited in Antunes (2010) the basic principles of the Sociological Model of voting are explained in three important publications: Personal Influence (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955), The People’s Choice (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944) and Voting (Berelson et al., 1954). The theory is build upon the suggestion that individuals are affected by their groups to form their electoral choices. Voting procedure, according to the theory, strictly reflects the one’s groups’ choice and people vote for their group rather than their personal interests. According to the theory, the important feature of the voting behaviour is to protect group cohesion, and in that sense, reasoning about the political environment turns out to be out of use.

Unlike Sociological Model of voting, important aspect of the Psychosocial Model is the feeling of affection to the parties. The Psychosocial Model has its own roots attached to the work of Campbell, Miller and Stokes, whose book is named *American Voter* (1960) (Campbell et al., 1960, as cited in Antunes, 2010). The theory claims that voting behaviour is closely associated to a durable bond between the parties and voters. Rather than simply following the group's interest, partisanship becomes salient and people vote for their loved parties. Moreover, the theory suggests us that even if people vote for another party in one election, eventually, they are very likely to return to the party that they are affiliated with for the following elections. The theory revolves around the partisanship and enduring relationship is the core idea of Psychosocial Model.

Rather than partisanship in Psychosocial Model, Rational Choice Theory focuses on reasoning. Rational Choice Theory is based on the work of Anthony Downs' book named "An Economic Theory of Democracy" (Downs, 1957, as cited in Antunes, 2010). Foundational assumption of this theory is that people are rational beings and they vote for their personal interest. Therefore, the process of assessing the promises of the parties leads an individual to the decision of vote. In short, individuals tend to maximize their gains by cognitive means and the party that provides the best of interests would get the highest share of the votes.

Affective Intelligence Theory is based on the work of Marcus et al. (2000) the book named "Affective Intelligence and Political Judgement". The theory suggests that it is our emotions trigger different effects on voters and they push the people to seek information, be active in political world and motivate them to participate in elections. Eventually, voters would decide on their choices by the information that they have gained as a consequence of the emotions. Anxiety and enthusiasm anchors electoral choices and cognitive load on the decision (Marcus & Mackuen, 1993).

Academics who are interested in political psychology have been observing the phenomenon of terrorism and voting behaviour for quite some time as it is argued above. Interdisciplinary studies become more salient since the terror attacks in New York on September 11, 2001 (9/11) (Staniland, 2015). It is widely accepted that 9/11 caused a fundamental change in terrorism and still bears significance in terms of its results (Brodeur, 2018). "Post 9/11" era and its impact on multifaceted issues such as attitudes of Muslim people, media, student performances and counter-terrorism politics has been subject to papers from different academic origins (Bailey et al., 2019; Heath-Kelly & Strausz, 2019; Korstanje, 2020; Lin, 2020). In other words, scholars have been studying the behaviour of targeted population and voting behaviour has been no exception. To demonstrate, it is argued that different armed organizations' violent acts might have an impact on voting behaviour (Gallego, 2018). Other studies in the United States of America suggest that leadership trait of a presidency candidate plays a more pivotal role for the decision-making process of voting (Merolla & Zechmeister, 2009). This finding is still significant in the literature and as it will be discussed, existing papers about the link between terror attacks and election results mostly mention the leadership as one of the key factors under different situations. Type and the timing of terror attack can also significantly alter voting behaviour (Bali, 2007). However, it should be noted that those actions require an active strategic phase and reflect the characteristics of the terrorist organization (Gallego, 2018; Kydd & Walter, 2002). To demonstrate, Palestine-based terrorist organizations tend to become more frequent after concessions are gained by the illegal-armed groups. In response, voters may choose to support right-wing parties in Israeli context (Berrebi & Klor, 2008). Longitudinal studies before 9/11 also support the idea that ongoing terror attacks are likely to give rise to a change in power (Gassebner et al., 2008). Other than directly changing the results of elections, terrorist violence may significantly affect the turnout rates in elections (Joshi & Mason, 2008). Boko Haram and its actions are also contributed to the then-incumbent government to lose the general elections in 2015, which is now known as "Talakawa" effect in the literature (LeVan, Page, & Ha, 2018).

Particular case studies about terror attacks and voting behaviour, however, are quite rare in the literature. This is not very surprising though, it would be extremely unethical to organize a terror attack and measure particular factors related to voting behaviour. Existing and relevant cases in the literature consists of Kıbrıs (2011), where the author examined PKK terror's results on 1990s' Turkish elections on a regional basis. A similar study has been conducted for Peruvian context as well (Birnir & Gohdes, 2018). Vasilopoulos et al. (2019) compared two poll results collected before and after the attacks that took place in one night in Paris, 2015. Their work is particularly interesting, since they concluded that our emotions may trigger different responses in voting behaviour. Getmansky and Zeitzoff (2014), on the other hand, proposes that even a mere threat of terrorist attack can have implication for voting process in people. Armed-group violence and its results on elections in Colombia have also been examined by academics (Gallego, 2018). Finally, Bali (2007) deeply investigated how the election results in 2004 can be explained in the light of Al-Qaeda terror attack in Madrid Train Station only four days prior to the elections. Those cases and their distinct characteristics will be thoroughly discussed in the following parts of the paper. This paper aims to explain the increasing support for the incumbent parties by rally-round-the-flag effect and the decrease in approval rates by the help of aforementioned voting models. Firstly, we will be conducting an in-depth literature review by including the papers that establish a clear link between terror attacks and voting behaviour. Then, we will discuss the implications of rally-round-the-flag effect and support the model with other theories from the social psychology literature and lastly, we will try to understand why rally-round-the-flag does not appear on all cases.

## **1. Impact of Terror Attacks on Local Vote Share**

Terror attacks might affect a country in different ways, whether be it the direct loss of individuals and families or in terms of economics (Berrebi & Klor, 2007; Gaibullev & Sandler, 2009). One of the key aspects where terror can influence is the results of the elections (Bali, 2007). Voters are active participants and show reactions to the bloody attacks. In literature, some cases interest themselves with the question of how these reactions are formed in district level with relevance the issue of terrorism. There are different types of relevance of the voters in relation to terrorist attacks and some of them are place of the perpetration, number of casualties and threat of the terrorist attacks (Birnir & Gohdes, 2018; Getmansky & Zeitzoff, 2014; Kıbrıs, 2010). We wanted to show different cases which examine the terrorist attacks and their impacts on localities vote share in relation to their relevance to the incidents.

### **1.1. Case of Israel (2001-09)**

The first case examines the effect of terrorism threat. Getmansky and Zeitzoff (2014) put their scope on the Israeli voters. The main question of the paper is that how the mere threat of terrorist attacks, rather than actual incidents, would affect the voters at the risk of being the victims. Researchers made their analyses based on the range of rockets in southern of Israel, geographically proximal where the rockets are launched from Gaza strip by terrorist organizations. Their assumption was the districts within the range of the rockets would vote for right-wing parties as they felt threatened by the fact that probability of being victims of the perpetrations. In this direction, results revealed that vote share of right-wing parties has been increased 2-6 percent at the localities that are within the range of rockets (Getmansky & Zeitzoff, 2014).

The case of Israeli context reflects an important aspect of the issue. The anxiety and fear of being target of the attacks is enough to elicit the process of becoming less concessive and clearly can be seen

the effect of two theories that is mentioned which are Rational Choice Theory and Affective Intelligence Theory (Vasilopoulos et al., 2019). The same processes could be applied for the even in the absence of the direct confrontation with the terrorists' incidents. As we have mentioned in the introduction, terrorists main aim is to elicit fear and since the fear is one of the strongest emotions among many of them, it would not be a shock to bond affection and cognition together in the literature. Our contribution to that case is highlighting the web of Rational Choice Theory that is along with the Affective Intelligence Theory. We will see the same phenomenal explanation for two other cases that are case of Peru and Turkey. The explanation of cases will be combined.

### **1.2. Case of Peru (1990)**

The second case defines the electoral results of Peru that is held in 1990. The work of Birnir and Gohdes (2018) investigates the effects of insurgency and party that has ties with the insurgent group which held responsible from violence on the electoral choices. The insurgent group is Sendero Luminoso. The insurgent group declared war on government in 1980 and, their guerrilla warfare took place in the Andes. Civil population was the target of the violence that comes from both of the agents (government and insurgent group). Most of the people who lives in Andes are affected from the terrorism. Since, insurgent group resides in the Andes, the peasants and villagers are the most of affected groups because of the pressure, brutalism from the terrorist group and violence from the government. The insurgent group took advantage of civil war and they were brutal. It is estimated that seventy thousand people were killed or disappeared between 1980 and 2000 because of the conflict between government and insurgent group. Insurgent group had a tie with a political party (IU) (Birnir & Gohdes, 2018). In the article it is claimed that at the risk of losing vote share, the party which has bonds with the insurgent group still determined to participate in the elections. The reason for that is even if they lose vote share in localities where the violence happens, the nationwide results would undermine the incumbent party's vote share in general. Birnir & Gohdes (2018) support the hypotheses and IU (insurgency party) lost %10 vote share at district level which violence occurred however, there was not significant effect for incumbent party at district level. Nevertheless, incumbent party was the highest punished party at national level.

### **1.3. Case of Turkey (1991-95)**

Last case is extracted from the work of Kıbrıs (2011). In the paper, the 1991 and 1995 general elections of Turkey in terms of how terrorist attacks of PKK affected the vote share of political parties is investigated. PKK is an active terrorist organization that resides in the Turkey's south eastern borders. Their attacks mostly perpetrated around that area however, some of the incidents took places in big cities. The assumption Kıbrıs (2011) is that the higher the district has terror martyrs, the higher punishment of the government and higher vote share for right-wing political parties would be there. The author starts by mentioning "terror martyrs" of security forces are extremely important for Turkish public and how funerals carry symbolic meaning for whole nation. These funerals are symbols of terrorist's bad deeds for people who are living outside of the south eastern of Turkey. The results are in line with the number of terror martyrs that are spread all over the country. There were 3,910 terror martyrs from 79 districts between 1987 and 1995. However, author excluded some of the south eastern cities' martyrs due to fact that terror meant something different in that area. The people who are living in south eastern part affected from terrorism in different ways. Results indicated that in 1995 general elections, when compared to the elections of 1991, the government lost %3.5 on average of their vote share at district level as a result of attacks of PKK and martyrs of security forces. Moreover, right-wing parties increased their vote share %2.5 on average at district level as well (Kıbrıs, 2011).

A more recent case which might have significantly altered the voting behaviour in Turkey is the July 15 Coup Attempt. Aftermath of the failed coup attempt led to important structural changes in Turkey and scholars closely paid attention to such transformations. Moreover, the incident has been approached from different perspectives and examined by a variety of disciplines. To demonstrate, political scientists tried to explain why the coup attempt took place, how the coup attempt can be interpreted in post-truth era, and how it moderated populism in Turkey (Caliskan, 2017; Elçi, 2019; Taş, 2018). Correspondingly, the impact of July 15 Coup Attempt on different institutions like media and education (Mencet, 2017; Yeşilirmak, 2018). Rarely, the effect of the Failed Coup Attempt on elections have been discussed, too (Esen & Gümüştü, 2017). Esen and Gümüştü (2017) points out how both sides of the campaign rolled out, why a constitutional change was demanded by the ruling party in 2017 referendum, stances of key political parties during the campaign, nevertheless, there are no papers right on the same scope with the cases discussed above on July 15.

Since it is common in all three cases, it can be confirmed that that electoral punishment and leaning towards to the right-wing of the spectrum of political scale can be observed. Some of the prevalent issues of the cases could be the direct interaction with the terrorist attacks, which may have a profound effect in determining the electoral choice. Turkey and Peru cases elicited that people who are exposed to the effects of terrorists attacks directly tend to punish the responsible parties and we can track the prints of the results by combining Rational Choice Theory (Downs, 1957) and Affective Intelligence Theory (Marcus et al., 2000) in the light of work of Vasilopoulos et al. (2019). Vasilopoulos et al. (2019) indicated the importance of anger while making decisions after the terrorist attacks. We can clearly make a link with the emotions that is unravelled by the attacks and intensive anxiety and fear would push people to reason about their current situation to whether stick to the parties or change their opinions at least within a certain time range. Their expectation from change would be in accordance with the vote that they gave for the parties which are right-wing parties. We may deduce that people who are at the direct scope of the terrorism would want to punish the terrorist organizations as well. Rather than giving concessions, they tend to support military action (Hudy et al, 2005) and they condemn the terrorist organizations (Yegen, 2015).

## 2. Timing of the Attacks

In literature, the timing of the attacks has been an important aspect of the elections. Factor would provide us to see the impact of the emotions and cognition since the incidents are close and their effects continues. The timing of the attacks meant that the delay between the attacks and elections. The closer attack to the elections, the higher impact to the results of the elections there will be. Researchers restrict the time range of terrorist attacks to display the precise effects (Berrebi & Klor, 2007; Kıbrıs, 2010). One of the effects is that rally round the flag, which can be defined as a sudden jump in the popularity of a president after a dramatic event that includes the whole nation (Mueller, 1970). In one study, Hetherington and Nelson (2017) indicated that rally round the flag builds up over time however, after a while it loses the impact. Yet, there is a case which rally round the flag did not occur. We wanted to represent two unique cases that is in relation with timing of the attacks before the elections and the importance of affect and cognitive load.

### 2.1. Case of France (2015)

Similarly, the effects of 2015 Paris attacks that took place 3 weeks before the local elections (Vasilopoulos et al., 2019). The incidents were organized. Suicide bombings, shootings were

perpetrated in bars, concert venues and restaurants. 130 people died and 368 people were wounded. ISIS was responsible from the perpetration. They measured the probability vote for FN (far-right wing party) in accordance with the fear, anger and anxiety that is evoked as a result of 13 November attacks. The data was taken from the two waves of 2017 French Election Study. The survey included questions about the feelings that is entailed by terrorist attacks (fear, anger, anxiety). One of the important parts is that timing of the attack which is three weeks before the elections. The effect of the attacks had not diminished yet in the given time and that situation led to see the precise effect of feelings on the electoral choices. The paper is built upon the emotions that are leading people to vote for far-right parties. Anger is the important component of the paper along with the fear and anxiety. The basis of the paper relied on the Affective Intelligence Theory and results have revealed that anger is the main motivator to vote for far-right parties rather than fear. On the contrary, fear reduces the probability of voting for far-right parties according to study. Rather than focusing on the results of the elections, the paper aimed to find the probability to vote for far-right parties.

The timing of the attack for France case was important since there were 3 weeks to the elections. Delay of the emotions were eliminated by the proximity of the time of elections. With the help of that the true effect of terrorist attacks in relation to the emotions would be revealed by the electoral results. The case of France is already discussed by the paper's author, in the light of Affective Intelligence Theory (Marcus et al., 2000). As the results showed, anger is an important ingredient to vote for far-right. France case provided an important contribution to our point of view since the elections were close, the significance of the emotions becomes salient and that paves the way for cognitive load.

## *2.2. Case of Spain (2004)*

Bali (2007) investigates the 2004 terrorist attacks which were perpetrated in Madrid. The incident occurred in early morning at three railway stations of the Madrid. Several bombs exploded and targeted civilians. There were 200 casualties and approximately 2000 injured people. The importance of the attacks is that occurrence of them was only three days before the general elections. This closeness to the elections led researchers to find the exact effect on results. The study indicates that before the attacks the incumbent party (PP) was leading the polls with 4.7 points ahead of the closest party (PSOE). However, after the attack roles reversed and the incumbent government lost the elections with 4.9 points difference (Bali, 2007). The other significant point is that the general opinion about the government changed after the explanation of terrorist groups that are responsible for the attacks. ETA was the first suspect however; Islamic Groups turned out to be responsible for the issue. Government priority was to fight with ETA and their campaign was promising the issue however, the reason for attack was coming from another enemy that is related with the foreign policy. Eventually, people criticized government's foreign policy, the failure to investigate the case and electoral upset was the outcome (Bali, 2007).

Cases of Spain and France have an important common aspect which is timing of the attacks. Incidents are very close to the elections and we can observe and make precise inferences about the real effects of the attacks. In Spain, we can claim that the importance of the information about the attacks is crucial for the voters. Since, attacks provoke anxiety within the voters, the need for true information is essential. Other than that, the perception of the failure of foreign policies, people tend to abandon the incumbent party because it crosses their interest about the foreign issues. It is assumed in the article that failure to find the perpetrators of the incident at first hand, led people to interrogate the incumbent party. Rational Choice Theory supports the idea of the reasoning about the situation and results are in same page with the theory. However, we have mentioned before emotions are extremely important, so Affective Intelligence Theory attached to the issue in various ways. Anxiety leads people to seek

information and enthusiasm is another part since turnout of the elections increased in that case (Marcus & MacKuen, 1993). All in all, Spain provided a significant point for the absence of diminishing effect of the terrorist attacks.

### 3. Discussion

As the results showed people are responsive to the attacks and the indications of Rational Choice Theory made a link to calculative approach for the situation with the emotional trigger which is important aspect of Affective Intelligence Theory. Furthermore, it can be confirmed that that electoral punishment and leaning towards to the right-wing of the spectrum of political scale can be observed. Some of the common issues of the cases could be the direct interaction with the terrorist attacks, which may have a profound effect in determining the electoral choice. Turkey and Peru cases elicited that people who are exposed to the effects of terrorists attacks directly tend to punish the responsible parties and we can track the prints of the results by combining Rational Choice Theory (Downs, 1957) and Affective Intelligence Theory (Marcus et al., 2000) in the light of work of Vasilopoulos et al. (2019). Vasilopoulos et al. (2019) indicated the importance of anger while making decisions after the terrorist attacks. We can clearly make a link with the emotions that is unravelled by the attacks and intensive anxiety and fear would push people to reason about their current situation to whether stick to the parties or change their opinions at least within a certain time range. Their expectation from change would be in accordance with the vote that they gave for the parties which are right-wing parties. We may deduce that people who are at the direct scope of the terrorism would want to punish the terrorist organizations as well. Rather than giving concessions, they tend to support military action (Hudy et al, 2005) and they condemn the terrorist organizations (Yegen, 2015).

In this frame of works, results of terrorist attacks could be explained better in relation with the help of two theories which are Affective Intelligence Theory and Rational Choice Theory rather than Sociological Model and Psychosocial Model (Berelson et al., 1954; Campbell et al., 1960; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). This is mostly related with the personal involvement of the people and since attacks are highly demanding in terms of emotions (anxiety, anger and fear), the upcoming linkage would not be surprising.

It can be concluded that people might be inclined to respond in similar ways in different contexts. Dwelling on the question, one might ask why different factors lead to similar results. A possible explanation on this question might include another variable which is affected by contextual factors such as the timing of the attack, geographical proximity and as such. In other words, we believe that the search for a leader in difficult times might also explain some of the cases where incumbent parties gained more popularity after terror attacks. The concept of leadership has been one of the precursors for the link between terrorist attacks and voting behaviour. This topic gained an upward trend throughout the Vietnam War since the political climate in USA was far from being harmonized. In fact, Mueller (1970) drew attention to the times of national crisis and argued that presidential approval in USA corresponding to each other. In his work, Mueller further investigates the moments of political and military crises such as American intervention in Korea, Bay of Pigs or Cuban Missile Crisis and suggests that those moments might lead to a temporary increase in the approval rating of an incumbent American president. This rise in the approval rating is known as “rally round the flag effect”, that is, people “rally” behind the president of USA and show more support towards the incumbent president. Mueller argues that there are three conditions need to be met for the effect to occur: Firstly, the event must occur at an international level since international threats are more likely to aim the whole country. By the means of a nation-level menace, people would be less likely to be segregated in terms of opinions. Secondly, the event must target the American nation including the president



himself/herself due to the position's symbolic power and lastly, the event must be specific, sharp and dramatic, akin to 9/11 or Jihadist attacks.

The literature stretched over new questions after the raise of rally-round-the-flag-effect. This phenomenon can be explained in different ways, for example, when nations' larger interests (economic, strategic etc.) are at risk, public opinion is united and shows solidity (Baker & Oneal, 2001). In addition to this "Patriotic" explanation, an "Optional Leadership" is proposed too (Kernell, 1978). It is suggested that public opinion consists of preceding information and the availability of new information. In other words, people can differentiate political actions by various actors if they are given sufficient information. However, sufficient information may not be instantly available during crises. When there is no reach to information, status quo is fostered and people cling to their earlier schemas (Baker & Oneal, 2001). In defence of Optional Leadership, Kernell (1978) nods to a rally effects with further noting that presidents' earlier performance moderates the correlation between rally moments and presidents' approval.

In Merolla and Zechmeister (2009), authors argue that people are quite flexible in terms of what their priority can be in different contexts of crisis. It is also stated that party affiliations might play a significant role in voters' choice, similar to the inclination in Turkey (Erişen, 2013). Merolla and Zechmeister (2009) also mention the concept of "issue-based voting". In other words, elements like "certainty, political sophistication, interest, media exposure" and as such influence voting on different issues. Personal traits of candidates, on the other hand, have been limited to a narrower stance when compared to other models. Earlier literature suggests us personal traits and their weight in voters may change from time to time (Anderson, 2000). When it comes to emotions, voters may be hardwired to make different choices under the influence of anger or anxiety (Brader, 2005). The main hypothesis of Merolla and Zechmeister (2009) is that people are highly sensitive to times of crisis and leadership traits are more cardinal to voters in those moments. Not so surprisingly, it is stated that individuals deal with stress under crisis by prioritizing the trait of leadership, however, its significance may be on different levels for different crisis contexts. Therefore, Merolla and Zechmeister (2009) make a clear distinction between "good times" and "bad times". People do seek different personality traits in candidates and the as the context is subject to change, so are the weighs of personality traits. Sympathy might gain more importance from voters in economic crisis and the trait can be substituted with leadership in military crises.

Rally-round-the-flag effect's continuance has also been mentioned in Mueller's (1970) paper and Matthew and Shambaugh (2005) relates this point directly to the democracies. According to the author, sudden and dramatic events may lead to an abrupt polarization in terms of the measures taken and public opinion in certain manners. An example of this can be observed in detail in the case of United States of America, where people show more right-wing-authoritarian tendencies in times of external threats (Hetherington & Suhay, 2011). This trend, as Matthew and Shambaugh (2005) argue, is not predestined to be persistent over time due to the flexible nature of democracies. Particularly, rally-round-the-flag, which is triggered by contextual factors, recesses over time as democracies regress to their usual function of providing their citizens with a sense of security.

Parallel to what has been discussed in the literature of voting so far, Lambert et al. (2011) extend the question and asks whether specific emotions such as anger and anxiety could mediate the relationship between terrorist attacks and voting behaviour. The author starts by referring to Social Identity Theory, mentioning that people are prone to keep their in-group together during conflict (Tajfel & Turner, 1986 as cited in Lambert et al., 2011).

Rally-round-the-flag effect can explain why incumbent parties see an increase in their voting share after terrorist attacks, however, no model in psychology is perfect and there are cases where incumbent

parties lose support in crisis times. For example, in one of the studies that is written by Chatagnier (2012), it is claimed that political trust in government is an important aspect of the rally round the flag effect. It determines the size and occurrence of the phenomena. In this very paper, the important findings come from individual level results. One of the indications is that at individual level, people who voted for president in the past tend to support government in crisis regardless of their trust to government. However, support to the president in crisis is mediated by general level of trust for the people who did not vote for the president (Chatagnier, 2012). That means among non-supporters, people who trusts to president tend to rally around flag rather than those who does not trust. In other words, why do not parties always gain popularity after terrorist attacks? We believe that specific emotions may lead to the support for opposition parties, too. In fact, it has been argued by psychologists that our emotions significantly alter our actions and attitudes (Lambert et al., 1997). To demonstrate, 9/11 provoked anger and hatred in voters and in turn, those feelings reflected with a demand of becoming more “hawkish”. On the other hand, feeling of anxiety usually brings a decrease in support for pro-war candidates. (Lambert et al., 2010). The case of 2015 Paris Terror attacks as mentioned by Vasiliopoulos et al. (2019) resembles the findings of Lambert et al. (2010), where afraid electorates abstained from voting for far-right parties.

## Conclusion

Voting behaviour is a convoluted phenomenon, which requires interdisciplinary action to be understood thoroughly. In this paper, the role of psychological elements, such as emotions and attitudes, on voting behaviour is discussed. It is argued that voting behaviour can be affected by terror attacks, whose outcomes can have immediate and serious implications on election results. Nevertheless, it is not possible to come up with a universal explanation which allows us to predict what elections would result as. Affective Intelligence Theory, Rational Choice Theory, Sociological Model and Psychosocial Model (Berelson et al., 1954; Campbell et al., 1960; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Lazarsfeld et al., 1944) seem to be valid in the light of recent terror attacks all around the world but different scholars might still link the change in voting behaviour to different factors. While affective structures might be the key factor in some of the cases, one cannot ignore the fact that terror attacks can alter cognitive processes (as seen in the rally-round-the-flag), only to modify voting behaviour in large populations (Mueller, 1970). All in all, it is possible to conclude that terror attacks can lead to a change in voting patterns but the direction of the change should be studied carefully.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude for those who contributed greatly to the structure of this paper and stimulated us through the whole writing process, namely Albina Sila Akarsu (PhD, candidate) and Dr. Banu Cingöz Ulu.

## References

- Anderson, C. J. (2000). Economic voting and political context: A comparative perspective. *Electoral Studies*, 19(2–3), 151–170. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-3794\(99\)00045-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-3794(99)00045-1)
- Antunes, R. (2010). Theoretical models of voting behaviour. *Exedra*, 4, 145-170.
- Bailey, A. K., Drury, M. B., & Grandy, H. (2019). Student veterans’ academic performance before and after the post-9/11 GI Bill. *Armed Forces and Society*, 45(1), 101–121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X17737283>

- Baker, W. D., & Oneal, J. R. (2001). Patriotism or opinion leadership? *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 45(5), 661–687. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002701045005006>
- Bali, V. A. (2007). Terror and elections: Lessons from Spain. *Electoral Studies*, 26(3), 669–687. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2007.04.004>
- Berelson, B. R., Lazarsfeld, P. F. & Mcphee, W. N. (1954). *Voting: a study of opinion formation in a presidential campaign*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Berrebi, C., & Klor, E. F. (2008). Are voters sensitive to terrorism? Direct evidence from the israeli electorate. *American Political Science Review*, 102(3), 279–301. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055408080246>
- Birnir, J. K., & Gohdes, A. (2018). Voting in the shadow of violence: electoral politics and conflict in peru. *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 3(2), 181–197. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogy001>
- Brader, T. (2005). Striking a responsive chord: How political ads motivate and persuade voters by appealing to emotions. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(2), 388–405. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0092-5853.2005.00130.x>
- Brodeur, A. (2018). The effect of terrorism on employment and consumer sentiment: Evidence from successful and failed terror attacks. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 10(4), 246–282. <https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20160556>
- Caliskan, K. (2017). Explaining the end of military tutelary regime and the July 15 coup attempt in Turkey. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 10(1), 97–111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2016.1260628>
- Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., Miller, W. E. & Stokes, D. E. (1960). *The american voter*. New York: Willey.
- Chatagnier, J. T. (2012). The effect of trust in government on rallies 'round the flag. *Journal of Peace Research*, 49(5), 631–645. doi: 10.1177/0022343312440808
- Cooper, H. H. A. (2001). Terrorism: The problem of definition revisited. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 44(6), 881–893. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027640121956575>
- Crenshaw, M. (2000). The psychology of terrorism: An agenda for the 21st century. *Political Psychology*, 21(2), 405–420. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00195>
- Downs, A. (1957). *An economic theory of democracy*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Dugan, L., Huang, J. Y., LaFree, G., & McCauley, C. (2008). Sudden desistance from terrorism: The Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia and the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide. *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 1(3), 231–249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17467580902838227>
- Enders, W., & Sandler, T. (2020). *Patterns of Transnational Terrorism , 1970-1999 : Alternative Time-Series Estimates Published by : Wiley on behalf of The International Studies Association Stable URL : https://www.jstor.org/stable/3096066 Patterns of Transnational Terrorism , 1970-1999 : 46(2), 145–165.*
- Elçi, E. (2019). The rise of populism in Turkey: a content analysis. *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea*, 19(3), 387–408. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2019.1656875>
- Erişen, E. (2013). The impact of party identification and socially supplied disagreement on electoral choices in turkey. *Turkish Studies*, 14(1), 53–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2013.766982>

- Esen, B., & Gümüüşçü, Ş. (2017). A Small Yes for Presidentialism: The Turkish Constitutional Referendum of April 2017. *South European Society and Politics*, 22(3), 303–326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2017.1384341>
- Gaibulloev, K., & Sandler, T. (2009). The impact of terrorism and conflicts on growth in Asia. *Economics & Politics*, 21(3), 359–383. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0343.2009.00347.x
- Gallego, J. (2018). Civil conflict and voting behavior: Evidence from Colombia. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 35(6), 601–621. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894218788362>
- Gassebner, M., Jong-A-Pin, R., & Mierau, J. O. (2008). Terrorism and electoral accountability: One strike, you're out! *Economics Letters*, 100(1), 126–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2007.12.011>
- Getmansky, A., & Zeitzoff, T. (2014). Terrorism and voting: The effect of rocket threat on voting in Israeli elections. *American Political Science Review*, 108(3), 588–604. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055414000288>
- Goodwin, J. (2017). A Theory of Categorical Terrorism Author ( s ): Jeff Goodwin Published by : Oxford University Press Stable URL : <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3844488> All use subject to <http://about.jstor.org/terms>. *Social Forces Oxford Journals*, 84(4), 2027–2046.
- Heath-Kelly, C., & Strausz, E. (2019). The banality of counterterrorism “after, after 9/11”? Perspectives on the Prevent duty from the UK health care sector. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 12(1), 89–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2018.1494123>
- Hetherington, M., & Nelson, M. (2003). Anatomy of a rally effect: George W. Bush and the war on terrorism. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 36(1), 37–42. doi:10.1017/S1049096503001665
- Hetherington, M., & Suhay, E. (2011). Authoritarianism, threat, and Americans' support for the war on terror. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(3), 546–560. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00514.x>
- Huddy, L., Feldman, S., Taber, C., & Lahav, G. (2005). Threat, anxiety, and support of antiterrorism policies. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49, 593–608.
- Joshi, M., & Mason, T. D. (2008). Between democracy and revolution: Peasant support for insurgency versus democracy in Nepal. *Journal of Peace Research*, 45(6), 765–782. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343308096155>
- Katz, E. & Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1955). *Personal influence: the part played by people in the flow of mass communications*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press
- Keen, D. (2006). War without end? Magic, propaganda and the hidden functions of counter-terror. *Journal of International Development*, 18(1), 87–104. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.1264>
- Kernell, S. (1978). Explaining presidential popularity. *American Political Science Review*, 72(2), 506–522. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1954107>
- Kibris, A. (2011). Funerals and elections: The effects of terrorism on voting behavior in Turkey. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 55(2), 220–247. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002710383664>
- Kydd, A., & Walter, B. F. (2002). Sabotaging the peace: The politics of extremist violence. *International Organization*, 56(2), 263–296. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081802320005487>
- Lambert, A. J., Khan, S., Lickel, B., & Fricke, K. (1997). Mood and the correction of positive versus negative stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2, 1002–1116.

- Lambert, A. J., Scherer, L. D., Schott, J. P., Olson, K. R., Andrews, R. K., O'Brien, T. C., & Zisser, A. R. (2010). Rally Effects, Threat, and Attitude Change: An Integrative Approach to Understanding the Role of Emotion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98(6), 886–903. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019086>
- Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B. & Gaudet, H. (1944). *The people's choice: how the voter makes up his mind in a presidential campaign*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- LeVan, A. C., Page, M. T., & Ha, Y. (2018). From terrorism to talakawa: explaining party turnover in Nigeria's 2015 elections. *Review of African Political Economy*, 45(157), 432–450. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2018.1456415>
- Lin, A. (2020). Muslims in a post-9/11 America: A survey of attitudes and beliefs and their implications for U.S. National Security Policy by Rachel M. Gillum. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2018. 248 pp. \$75.00. *Political Science Quarterly*, 135(1), 164–165. <https://doi.org/10.1002/polq.13013>
- Marcus, G. E., & MacKuen, M. B. (1993). Anxiety, enthusiasm and the vote: The emotional underpinnings of learning and involvement during presidential campaigns. *American Political Science Review*, 87(3), 688–701.
- Marcus, G. E., Neuman, W. R., & MacKuen, M. (2000). *Affective intelligence and political judgment*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Matthew, R., & Shambaugh, G. (2005). The pendulum effect: Explaining shifts in the democratic response to terrorism. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 5(1), 223–233. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-2415.2005.00068.x>
- McPherson, A. (2019). Caribbean Taliban: Cuban American terrorism in the 1970s. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 31(2), 390–409. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1530988>
- Mencet, M. S. (2017). Üniversite Öğrencilerinin 15 Temmuz Algısında Medyanın Rolü: Bir Bilişsel Uyum(Suzluk) Örneği. *Marmara İletişim Dergisi*, 2(28), 131–148. <https://doi.org/10.17829/midr.20172833781>
- Merolla, J. L., & Zechmeister, E. J. (2009). Terrorist threat, leadership, and the vote: Evidence from three experiments. *Political Behavior*, 31(4), 575–601. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-009-9091-3>
- Mueller, J. E. (1970). Presidential popularity from Truman to Johnson. *The American Political Science Review*, 64(1), 18–34.
- Radil, S. M., & Castan Pinos, J. (2019). Reexamining the four waves of modern terrorism: a territorial interpretation. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 0(0), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1657310>
- Shaffer, R. (2019). The Islamic State: history, transnationalism, and implications. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 31(4), 883–891. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2019.1621639>
- Staniland, P. (2015). Armed groups and militarized elections. *International Studies Quarterly*, 59(4), 694–705. <https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12195>
- Taş, H. (2018). The 15 July abortive coup and post-truth politics in Turkey. *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea*, 18(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2018.1452374>

Valentino, N. A., Hutchings, V. L., Banks, A. J., & Davis, A. K. (2008). Is a worried citizen a good citizen? Emotions, political information seeking, and learning via the internet. *Political Psychology*, 29, 247–273.

Vasilopoulos, P., Marcus, G. E., Valentino, N. A., & Foucault, M. (2019). Fear, anger, and voting for the far right: evidence from the November 13, 2015 Paris terror attacks. *Political Psychology*, 40(4), 679–704. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12513>

Yegen, C. (2018). The impact of suicide attacks on voting behavior: The case of November 2015 early elections. *Türkiye İletişim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (November 2015), 93–114. <https://doi.org/10.17829/turcom.471067>

Yeşilirmak, M. (2018). Decreasing average cost in private schools, existence of majority voting equilibrium, and a policy analysis for Turkey. *Review of Economic Design*, 22(1–2), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10058-018-0208-1>