

SOME SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE DAY AFTER

During last months, increasing health problems of prime minister Ecevit occupied the public agenda and several speculations took place. Questions discussed by the national media and major political parties were :

- Is Ecevit able to continue as the prime minister?
- Is this possible a replacement in the leadership of the DSP (Democratic Left Party)?
- Is this possible replacement of Ecevit by Bahçeli as the prime minister?
- Is there any possibility of another coalition government composition?
- If a replacement in the leadership of the DSP occurs, who will be the next leader?
- Are there other threats against current leaders of other political parties?

In this short paper, we will discuss these possibilities, first by emphasizing on possibilities of replacements in the leadership of political parties, secondly possible electoral results after these replacements.

POSSIBLE REPLACEMENTS in the DSP

Enduring health problems of the Prime Minister Ecevit created a significant turbulence both in the parliament and the party. Ecevit, as a 80 years old politician of course is aware that this is his last official position as an active politician. Even during the electoral campaign, he often stated that he accepts prime ministry as an historical mission given to him, for struggling against enduring maladies of the country: terrorism and economic problems. Consequently, Both members of parliament and the party were expecting a change in the leadership in the party

before the next general elections. The major question is who will/would replace Ecevit as the leader.

Dissimilar to western type political parties and very similar to other Turkish political parties, the DSP is under total control of the leadership, composed cynically by Bülent and Rahşan Ecevit. Rahşan Ecevit, wife of the prime minister is also his oldest political partner who always played an active role in politics even during 1960s and 1970s. Nowadays, she is entitled as the vice president of the Party. The history of the DSP always exhibited signals of this total control of Ecevit's on the party. For example, the DSP has been established one year after return to democratic politics and after first general elections. The argument of Ecevit was to establish a bottom to top political party sterilized of old factions of traditional left which always created problems for Ecevit, during his 10 year leadership in the Republican People Party. In addition to this selective approach of the leadership to the party organization, long years in the opposition as a minor political party strengthened the party discipline. Even today, the party organization of the DSP is the closest one to the public and there is no signal of intra-party democracy. The DSP is not more than a campaign tool for Ecevit's.

Secondly, the tight control of the leadership is visible on the lack of tolerance against pluralist voices in the parliament. Before the general elections of 1995, some of significant personalities of the Turkish left participated to the DSP and became members of parliament. Prominent leader of the "Kemalist" opposition, ex-minister of foreign affairs, Mümtaz Soysal; the leader of Revolutionary Labor Unions, Rıdvan Budak, an affiliated academician Gökhan Çapoğlu, another significant leader İsmail Cem are among these new members. Following elections, all of these personalities were accepted as candidates of successor. Nevertheless, all of these significant personalities left the party except İsmail Cem, and some of them participated to the CHP, some other initiated their political parties.

The tight control of the leadership, strong intraparty discipline and lack of tolerance against pluralism; accompanied with historical mission attributed by Ecevit signal us that the replacement will occurs when Ecevit's want and the next leader of the party

will be appointed by Ecevit. Although there are some speculations about this choice, most probably the result will be surprising for us.

When this replacement will occur? As it is argued above, Ecevit attributes himself an historical mission composed of three successes. First of these successes, the fight against terrorism is accomplished with entrapment and trial of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK. Second area of struggle is the economic crisis. Fully supporting Kemal Derviş and his economic policies promoted by the Bretton Woods institutions, Ecevit and the DSP fully committed themselves to the economic program. Following signals of economic prosperity, the DSP staff hope that the economic crisis will be defeated before the next general elections. Third area of expected successes is in the relations with the European Union. The current government engaged itself to improve relationships with the EU and facilitate the membership of Turkey, despite some intra-cabinet discussions. The parliament, stimulated by this full engagement of the government presented a significant performance and ratified the majority of "laws of harmony".

This agenda of policies creates an important roadmap for the DSP. During an interview with one of high level staff of the party, he stated that they are aware that public support against them declined significantly, however if they have chance to accomplish above stated agenda, it is possible to stimulate a certain level of popular support. Thus, under normal conditions, the general elections will not be proposed before completion of above stated agenda. If health conditions of Ecevit does not worsen so he can not perform as prime minister, replacement in the leadership will occur just before the general elections. Even that it is possible that the electoral government will be led by Ecevit and the electoral campaign will be led by the new leader.

Assuming that Ecevit's health conditions will not worsen, let discuss potential candidates to leadership. First and the most prominent candidate is İsmail Cem, the successful foreign affairs minister of the last two governments. As being a close friend of Ecevit, since 1970s, he is a trustworthy person and he is significantly popular among the electorate. However, his control upon the party and the

parliamentary group is discussable. If he succeeds Ecevit as the party leader, he will need support of Ecevit and old cadre of the party in order to establish his control. It is not an easy task even that a Westminster style separation of party powers may occur, while the prime minister is controlling the parliamentary group, the head of party controls the party machine. However such a separation of power has never been observed in the Turkish political history and charismatic party leaders always occupied both positions. If Cem fails to control the party mechanism and forthcoming elections don't bring an electoral victory to the DSP, his leadership may be short lived, even that the party may be dissolved. We observed how the strong leadership could control the party despite electoral losses, in the case of the Motherland Party. In the lack of strong control upon the party mechanism, it is not easy to control the party and transfer losses of today to victories of tomorrow.

Second prominent candidate to leadership is the charismatic minister of economy, Kemal Derviş. As a reputable bureaucrat of the World Bank he took the responsibility of the economic program and despite lower levels of reputation, he stimulated a significant popular support. Nevertheless, he fails to get support of the establishment. The support of international agencies against him, created a significant reaction from the third world-ist, "Kemalist" segments of the intelligentsia. Moreover, since he is identified with the economic program, he attracted criticisms of opposition parties, even he is accused of being an agent. Similar to Cem's case, his control upon the party machine will be almost lacking and if he fails to stimulate a certain level of popular support, his rule will be very short lived. In Derviş's case, another question is whether he is willing to participate to active politics or not. He and his advisors several times argued that he does not want to play an active role in politics and he limits his mission with completing economic program. We know that he twice rejected calls of the ANAP and the CHP to participate in their ranks. Most probably he prefers to wait until the declaration of general elections and if he participates to elections, his position will be as a "rank and file" member rather than the leader.

When intra-party power is considered, the most prominent candidate to the leadership is Hüsametdin Özkan, the vice prime minister. As an old supporter of

Ecevit, he always played a significant role in the party politics since 1980s. When the party was far away from the government he supported and he was one of four members of parliament after the general elections of 1991, in which the party was firstly represented in the parliament. As a party politician, he has a significant control over the party machine and if voice of the party will be considered, most probably he will get a significant support. However, Özkan is face to face with accusations of corruption. Even that, some segments of the populace accepts him as the first responsible of the economic crisis of 2001. The DSP, which is always identified with being "honest", may not accept his leadership. According to rumors, Rahşan Ecevit wants to replace him and thus emphasize on the "honesty" of the party. Consequently, despite his power upon the party mechanism, his leadership may not be possible. Moreover, he is often argued that he is not willing to lead the party.

Apart above stated significant persons, there are several candidates supported by Ecevit couple, however none of them has significant popular support. Şükrü Sina Gürel, Emrehan Halıcı are some of these figures. Moreover, a "nameless" candidate may be promoted by Ecevit and easily get the support of the party machine. But, he or she most probably suffer of the lack of public awareness. Turkish political history witnessed several times success stories of "nameless" candidates: Demirel is the most prominent one. Moreover, new leader of the DTP, Mehmet Ali Bayar is another example of such an attempt: to publicize a new leader and to stimulate popular support.

In addition to above stated scenario, the most realistic one is the formation of intra-party coalition. This coalition will be led by prominent and reputable figures of the party including Cem and Derviş. Support of Özkan and other old cadre of the party will help to mobilize the party machine and prevent intra-party opposition. The leader of this intra-party coalition may be one of above stated actors or another "nameless" figure. However, his/her role will not be more than "primus inter pares" actor who will symbolize the unity of the party. Since the party is under total control of Ecevits, this intra-party coalition will not face with a significant opposition and naturally it will be a "winning coalition".

POSSIBLE REPLACEMENTS in OTHER PARTIES

When we emphasize on other major political parties, possibility of replacement of leaders is not realistic. It has not to be expected that the TPP of Çiller, the FP of Kutan and the CHP of Baykal experiences a take over in the party leadership. All of these parties are under full control of the leadership and thanks to being in the opposition, they are preferring to exploit losses of the government parties.

Two replacement is possible before the general elections:

First one is expected in the AKP of Erdoğan. It is widely accepted that the current support against the AKP is borrowed to charismatic leadership of Erdoğan. However his legal situation is still disputable. Lastly, it is stated that he can not participate to elections as a result of his status, although staff of the AKP argue that Erdoğan will participate to elections as the leader of the party. Most probably, the AKP will enforce a change in the law prohibiting participation of Erdoğan to general elections, in return of support for "laws of harmony with the EU". If they fail to enforce this change and Erdoğan can not participate to general elections, a temporary or permanent change in the leadership should be accepted. Two prominent figures of the AKP, Bülent Arınç and Abdullah Gül are already pronounced candidates to the leadership of the party. Both of them lack the charismatic power of Erdoğan, however they are well known as leaders of the moderate wing of the ex-Welfare Party. Whether they will be able to replace Erdoğan as leaders or not will be discussed in details, nevertheless in the municipal elections of 1999, Gürtuna succeeded in getting votes of supporters of Erdoğan. Despite a possible loss in electoral support to the AKP, this loss may be recovered during the electoral campaigns. If this scenario occurs, the main strategy of the AKP will be to gain a significant majority in the parliament, being a member of the coalition government and enforce the legislative change which will allow the leadership of Erdoğan. Consequently, such a replacement in the leadership of the AKP will be temporary and Erdoğan will return to his post as soon as possible.

Second possibility of leadership replacement may be observed in the Motherland Party. Although the party never became successful in the general elections, Yılmaz succeeded in keeping in touch with the government. Since the general elections of 1995, the ANAP was out of government for only less than two years. This success of Yılmaz in the parliamentary games creates a significant support in the parliamentary group and the party. However, some members of the party argues that they are first time face to face with the threat of being excluded from the parliament. Such an exclusion most probably will mean a sudden death of the ANAP, since it lacks ideological commitment which would enforce party integrity in crisis times. Then, an alteration in the party leadership may stimulate a degree of popular support and postpone above stated death, if not preventing. However, such an alteration is not an easy task. The ANAP party is under the full control of Yılmaz and old alternatives against him became "rank and order" members of the party. Although some new politicians make some criticizing speeches, they are far from being serious alternatives to Yılmaz. Consequently, an alteration in the leadership of the ANAP is not something possible for short term. After an electoral defeat such a challenge may occur but it is not clear that it will be prior to dissolution of the party.

Approval of Some Political Leaders by The Electorate (%)

	April.01	May.01	June.01	July.01	Sept.01	Oct.01	Feb.02	May.02
Ahmet Necdet Sezer	78,3	80,1	79,0	75,3	73,7	76,7	78,0	74,0
Bülent Ecevit	6,0	9,5	8,2	7,0	7,3	4,7	12,0	7,0
Mesut Yılmaz	8,7	13,6	9,5	9,1	10,4	8,3	13,0	9,0
Devlet Bahçeli	12,2	18,7	13,9	12,5	12,0	9,6	15,0	11,0
Hüsamettin Özkan	5,1	7,2	5,9	5,8	5,8			
Kemal Derviş	27,8	47,8	40,2	27,3	21,9	18,8	26,0	18,0
Sadettin Tantan		53,0						
İsmail Cem		39,6			36,1	33,0	37,0	34,0
Enis Öksüz		18,8						
Fikret Ünlü					19,1			

WHEN THE VOTER DECIDES:

In order to evaluate effects of possible change in the leadership, following survey results have been used:

	Party preferences*	Tendency of voting for...	If the leader changes, tendency of voting for...
ANAP	8,3%	11,6%	17,7%
DYP	14,8%	15,9%	15,5%
CHP	12,3%	10,2%	10,5%
SP	5,2%	9,9%	10,8%
DSP	4,5%	7,6%	10,7%
MHP	11,1%	11,0%	11,4%
HADEP	7,3%	5,7%	6,1%
AKP	36,3%	28,1%	17,3%

** Excluding "other parties", "not decided" and "none of above" responses.*

According to the survey, if a general election will be held next Sunday, the AKP will be the first party and most probably will gain the majority of seats. The DYP (TPP) and the CHP will be followers of the AKP party. According to above table, the ANAP, the SP, the HADEP, the DSP seems to be excluded from the parliament. However, it has to be considered that percentage of undecided and none of above responses is 39 percent and when the election day arrives, this picture may change a lot.

In order to control the leadership effect, two questions are asked to the electorate: What is your intention to vote for the Party? And, what is your intention to vote for that party if the leader of the party changes? Results are exposed in the last two columns of the table.

According to this table, when the intention are taken into account, results does not change too much. The AKP is still the first party, the DYP follows it. What is interesting is that, the percentage of tendency towards the CHP decreases and towards the ANAP increases. It means that undecided voters tend to vote for the ANAP more than other parties.

The most important finding comes when the scenario of change in the leadership is taken into account. First of all, tendency to vote for the ANAP increases significantly if the leader of the party changes. This confirms above stated criticisms against Yilmaz administration. If the leader of the ANAP changes, it takes 17.7 percent of total votes.

Secondly, if the AKP party changes its leader, it significantly losses its supporters to a 10 percent level. Such a leadership effect is not surprising when the charisma of Erdoğan is considered. However when election day approaches, this situation may change and the AKP may compensate its losses by promising a future leadership of Erdoğan.

Results are interesting for the DSP. According to the table, if a leadership change occurs in the DSP, it results on 3 percent increases independent of the personality of the leader. If a charismatic leader may be exposed to the public, he/she can replicate personality effect of Erdoğan and creates a significant electoral stimulus for the DSP. In order to measure individual leadership effects of above stated actors, further research has to be done.

Above table does not show significant changes for other political parties, meaning that change in the leadership of these parties do not contribute to perceptions of citizens against these political parties.