

Rational View to Irrational Voting Behavior

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Abstracts: The main purposes of the study are next. Firstly, is to research and explain the phenomenon of electoral absenteeism. Secondly is to propose means of solving of problem of electoral absenteeism like one of most destructive for democracy problem. The research instrument in theoretical sphere is methodological toolkit of theory of rational choice. And the research instrument in practical sphere is analyze and comparing of data from research of different scientists about problem of electoral absenteeism and connected problems within society. All analyzed in research data is taken from certified scientific researches or informative resources after checking them for absence of contradiction. The results of the study were as following. Electoral absenteeism can be logically explained like paradox of rationality from the position of theory of rational choice. That is like irrational within society thing which is caused by rational motives of individual members of this society. That is irrational crisis of insufficiency of support of democratic system during voting caused by decision of individual members of this system not to participate in this voting from rational reasons (discrepancy between individual costs and results of such voting). Explanation of electoral absenteeism like paradox of rationality and existence of paradoxes of rationality at whole are verified from number of researches. This position also gives possibilities to define means of solving of this problem. That's means of linking individual and collective rationalities by negative and positive incentives in pair. First are compulsory voting and campaign against political unconsciousness, second are simplification of process of voting and promoting of active participation in elections. And efficiency of right using of these means or non-efficiency of their not right using is verified by example of real political practice of number of countries like Brazil, Australia and Austria.

Key words: electoral absenteeism, paradox, rationality, irrationality, positive incentive, negative incentive

1. Introduction

Many supporters of democracy say that individual citizen in real democratic society must be rationally conscious and active in political life, including voting process. But is it possible simultaneously? A lot of researchers and scientists mark that exactly narrow rational behavior of citizen according exclusively to his own rational interest lead to crisis of common rational behavior and principles of society on the whole. And thinking about of only own priorities and interests according to these scientists can cause great electoral absenteeism or support odd candidates from citizens on elections. So we see that there is the problem gap between the individual and collective behavior in voting process and in political life on the whole. And this gap this gap is needed to be researched and explained to try to find the ways of its solving. And this text is dedicated to this.

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2. Literature Review

Many researches and works are used here like literature that is sources of data and scientific confirmations of author's assumptions. These are number of works which are used to analyze and highlight methodological toolkit in theoretical sphere. These are works of representatives of theory of rational choice like Olson, Downs, their predecessors like Smith and representatives of alternative positions of view like Friedman. These are also some researches which are used to reveal proofs of verifying of such explanation of electoral absenteeism. These are materials of Schneider and Pommerenne, Catz and Levin. And finally these are which works are used to define means of solving of problem of electoral absenteeism from this positions. These are researches of Fujiwara and Hoffman, Leon, Lombardi. Also work of Ghiuta is used here like source of instrument to investigate electoral absenteeism and position of its explanation from theory of rational choice deeply.

3. Research Method

The research methods are comparative analyze and generalization. It is comparative analyze of different theoretical hypotheses and parts of data base. And then it is matching and generalization of them with deduction of unite complex of theoretical assumption and unite data base confirming it and conclusions from it.

4. Results

4.1 Theoretical Explanation

4.1.1 Individual Rationalism Causes Collective Rationalism?

Before start of research problem of electoral absenteeism it is necessary make theoretical hypothesis about nature of this problem which is needed to be checked. Looking to history of attempts of theoretical explaining of marked problem and comparing them we can see that many political actors propagate active involve in voting process between citizens using the principle of individual utility and rationality. And they describe negative features of passing of voting process as results of ruining this rationality. So thesis of utility of individual rationalism is one of fundamental principles for modern economic and politic order. Theoretical explanation of problem got started from the doctrine of father of modern economical science Adam Smith. In the times of Smith, the end of XVIII century and the beginning of XIX century there is strong rises of growth individualism. And Smith successfully reacted to efforts to stop it according to traditional critic of individualism that it is socially unwholesome based on traditional ideas about prosperity of society like common integrality without individual prevailing. Smith revised understanding of social prosperity and proved that it can be achieved from individualism that is useful for economy and politics. Smith proved that strongly rationally individualism and aspiration to prosperity of separate person summary together and form the collective welfare. So according to this individual rationalism causes collective rationalism. This process unfolds unconsciously by every individual and it is being directed like by "invisible hand". The direct word of Smith about these positions are next:

"Individual person neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was not part of it. By pursuing his own interest, he frequently

promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it” (Smith, 1999).

Smith also developed doctrine about Homo economicus. Homo economicus is person who lives strongly according to calculating of his own rational interests in every sphere of society, including policy. And he tries to makes his profit maximums and expenses minimum. And this on the first view egoistic and destroyable behavior lead to mutually agreed welfare of every individual of common society according to principles of invisible hand. Like Smith said:

“It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest” (Smith, 1986).

Or like political scientist Mancur Olson successfully admitted about this position: “Smith’s invisible hand works when manufacturers do their best to sell products made to buyers who buy from them only when it is in the interests of buyers” (Olson, 1965, p. 60).

Of course the concepts of Smith were improved of no one time after him. For example, adherent of doctrine of Smith John Stuart Mill added that separate individual of course need to respect the basic rights and principles of doing of every individual. And all persons should contradict individual who violates this principle and try to satisfies own interest by the way of destroying other individuals. And they are interested in this because if this individual destroy at least one another he can’t stop in impunity of this destroying. In the last way civilized achievement of interests of every individual and competition during this process are impossible and they turn into war of everyone again everyone. And exactly Mill create the words “Homo economicus”. However, in simplified form without with additions doctrine of Smith became the mantra of modern popular but rustic economic and politic thinkers. And they are repeating typical conclusions from concepts of Smith. These conclusions are approximately next: government mustn’t interfere in economic and political sphere because activity of usual individuals solves all problems in these spheres according to principle of invisible hand of market. And such interference is violation of rights of individuals and it can lead to despotic pressure of government to them. Like Milton Friedman said movement of adherents of this approach “support free economic competition like mean of weakening of government in economic sphere and according strengthening the role of individual” (Friedman, 1957, p. 27). Of course this stereotypical position had a lot of opponents during XIX century for today. But because the biggest part of these opponents are from non-dominated economy paradigms – tradition and left their arguments didn’t take into account seriously. But in half of XX century new group of economic and political scientists appear. They used the schemes of contemplation of Smith and they were inheritors of his doctrine in some extent so they could change this situation. They were scientists from school of theory of rational choice. And these scientists claimed and tried to prove that conversely to basic assumption of Smith individual rationalism sometimes causes collective irrationalism.

4.1.2 Individual Rationalism Causes Collective Irrationalism?

So it is necessary to look on three typical situations researches of which impugn the that Smith’s principle that individual rationalism causes collective irrationalism on the base of Smith’s logic. Situations with participation the individual rational individual, exactly Homo economic from the doctrine of Smith.

1) Crisis of Overproduction

Let’s make the assumption about of standard behavior of individual producer in some branch of economy. Sometimes this producer sees that demand of consumers on products in this branch doesn’t change according to increasing of quantity of products and accordingly the price. So he sees the blank interval of demand non-elasticity that is fluctuation of demand according to quantity of products and price. And this producer wants

to full this interval and has the profit before demand become elastic. He makes this decision based on his own knowledge and rationality. And he can't know about making decisions from thousands of other producers. And he doesn't have the time to know it because of permanent treat of demand elasticity. And this producer doesn't want lost his profit because of other producers and he does this. And some logic leads all producers to producing. This quickly fills the blank interval of demand non-elasticity, demand become elastic and people stop to buy product of this branch according to overproduction. And in result because of individual consumer's rationality we have the collective irrational crisis of overproduction. This assumption is based on conclusions of representative of theory of rational choice. These are conclusions of Olson about with situation:

"By analogy with the market for perfect competition, it can be stated that prices will never fall below the set level in this sphere, since all firms will predict that if one firm increases its output, then all others will act in the same way, prices will decrease; thus, none of the companies will go for a destructive price increase of their own products. In reality, this never happens in the free market. When the number of firms in the industry is large, no one will notice the effect of an increase in output by one firm, and so no one will change their plans because of it" (Olson, 1965, pp. 10–11)

2) Free Rider Effect: Non-payment of Contributions in Organizations

And let's make second assumption about the standard behavior of member of any organization, for example trade-union, lobby organization or even national state. This member is one of hundreds or thousands members of these organization. His responsibilities and payments to the organization always remain the same. While the benefits of participating in it can be unstable and even imperceptible due to the huge number of members in the organization and the difficulty of sharing the benefits of the organization between them. Is it so effective for a rational individual member of an organization to have a small inconsistent benefit with such a constant large burden? So according to next Olson's conclusion rational strategy for this member is next, then

"All members of group are interested in collective good, but no one wants to assume expenses for its providing. Everyone of members of group considers the best to everyone make payments but him only satisfies the results of collective good" (Olson, 1965, pp. 10–11). That is free-rider strategy then someone gets the good from organization but doesn't pay for it. And this person isn't afraid of punishment for such no-payment. Its non-payment is simply invisible among payments of thousands of other participants of the organization. And Olson prepared answer for critics which claim about untruthfulness of the description of the individual's behavior according to this logic in this and similar situations. That is next his theses: "Critics can argue with this statement, stating that a rational individual will actually support a large organization, so he knows that unless he invests money in himself, others will not, and then the organization will crash and he will remain without the benefit she could bring him. In fact, this is never the case in a large organization. There, the loss of one payer will not significantly increase the contribution of another payer, and the rational individual will not agree to believe that his departure from the organization will entail the care of other individuals" (Olson, 1965, pp. 10–11).

3) Collective Unconsciously and Absenteeism on Voting Process

And it's necessary to make assumption about something that is especially important for with research. This is the standard behavior of citizen in developed democratic state. Political process and governing of this state is stable and strongly defined by democratic norms. So it doesn't greatly change according to shifting of ruling party. So do significant reasons exist to worry individual about selection this? No. Usual citizen hasn't strong rational interest to participate in voting for potential ruling party. Citizen don't understand why he must give much time to find all information about parties and candidates. His vote is one among millions and it hasn't decisive power. But

if he ever votes result will probably be similar: ruling of some centrist party or big coalition. So individual make rational decision. Decision is no to take part in voting because expenses to this don't pay back results. And if such positions take every usual citizen the biggest part of society won't participate in elections. This leads to crisis, irrational for democracy.

This assumption is connected with conclusions of another representative of theory of rational choice. These are conclusions of Anthony Downs about this situation. He claimed that "it is rational for every individual to minimize his investment in political information, in spite of the fact that most citizens might benefit substantially if the whole electorate were well informed. This disparity between this conclusion and the traditional conception of good citizenship in a democracy is indeed striking. How can we explain it? The answer is that the benefits which a majority of citizens would derive from living in a society with a well-informed electorate are indivisible" (Downs, 1957). Description of electoral absenteeism from this position is also called economic model of absenteeism. According to this model, like scientist Ovidiu-Aurel Ghiuta said "the individual wants to use his vote for influencing the outcome of the election" (Ovidiu-Aurel Ghiuta, 2016, p. 4).

So we see electoral absenteeism in the number of things, that like Anthony Downs said "is collectively rational, but individually irrational. And, in the absence of any mechanism to insure collective action, individual rationality prevails". And here are assumptions about such nature only of three the most expressive examples of such things. Significant part of them with proofs of their paradoxical nature are systematically described by Norwegian political scientist Thor Midtbe (Midtbe, 2003). All examples of researching and describing of these things from such positions prove that individual rationality can really cause collective irrationality. Or it sounds like Norwegian political scientist Thor Midtbe said: "Individual rationality leads to collective irrationality" (Midtbe, 2003, p. 190).

Thor Midtbe called this phenomena "paradox of rationality". In Olson's works we can find a good expression for determining this phenomenon. That is "left invisible hand". But he means that is the possibility of directing by rationality of one super-influential individual (autocrat) in society for the good of the whole society. This is similar to the direction according to Smith's invisible hand of rationality of any not over influential individual in society towards the general rationality of society. Like Olson said about this: "This invisible hand, which should probably be called the invisible left hand, directs the overarching interest in the exercise of power in the public interest, even in the welfare of the public, without being directed by anyone's personal consciousness. The second invisible hand is as mysterious and perhaps as contrary to intuition as the first hidden hand discovered by Smith, but it does not mean less" (Olson, 2000, p. 27). The phenomenon described in this research does not lead the rationality of any of these individuals to general rationality. On the contrary, it turns rationality of individuals on a massive scale into irrationality. Therefore, by this logic, we call it the "reverse invisible hand"!

This must mark the summation the individual rationality to collective irrationality in the opposite of summation of the summation the individual rationality to collective rationality according to principle of invisible hand of Smith. Of course the definition "reverse invisible hand" mustn't lead to neglecting of invisible hand of Smith at all. It has the meaning that principle of invisible hand really works in modern economy during its normal stage of functioning. But principle of "reverse invisible hand" works in parallel with it and leads to irrational consequences of rational economy, which born the crisis. And according to marked hypothesis this paradox of rationality exists and acts in political voting sphere and cause crisis of voting citizens there. But is this hypothesis is checked on practice?

4.2 Practical Checking

There is number of attempts to check assumption of every of things from marked row on practice. One of the famous attempts is experiment of scientists Friedrich Schneider and Werner W. Pommerenne with goal to recreate intentionally conditions of free-rider effect. They tried to make this experiment in the group of students in the University of Zurich. So like scientists said conclusions of their experiment are additionally supported by the fact that we used as subjects students in economics who had just been studying the free-rider problem” (Schneider & Pommerenne, 1981, p. 16). And although experiment show “that the free-rider problem cannot always be presumed to occur” (Schneider & Pommerenne, 1981, p. 16), according to its results “the individuals did systematically behave as free riders in line with the different incentives offered by the experiment’s three stages” (Schneider & Pommerenne, 1981, p. 16). So results of experiments of Schneider. and Pommerenne. can be considered like proofs of existence of free-rider effect and things with same nature in public relations in some extent.

And what’s about proofs of existence of reality of electoral absenteeism’s nature exactly from positions of paradoxes of rationality? This is primarily research of Gabriel Katz and Ines Levin about causes of electoral absenteeism in Brazil. Brazil is country with mandatory voting. That is the norm when persons registered on polling places get a fine or other administrative punishment in event of not appearance here on the day of voting. However, reasons which are stimulate electoral absenteeism are so strong what they lead citizens even to delinquency and financial punishing for non-participating in voting. And level of absenteeism in Brazil is significant even with mandatory voting. It is possible to see summary dynamic of it on the Figure 1 below from research of Katz and Levin (Katz & Levin, 2016).

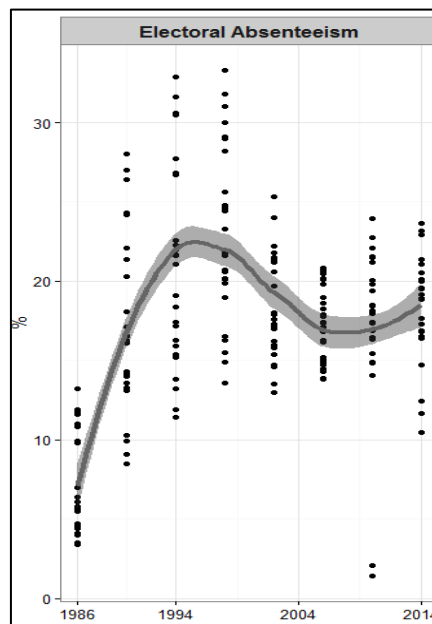


Figure 1 Absenteeism in Brazilian Lower House Elections

And Katz and Levin decide to research what reasons push Brazilians to this during elections in 2002, 2006 and 2010. They decide to do this using research of electoral statistics in Brazil that is Brazilian Electoral Study. And it is possible to see from Table 1 below reasons of electoral absenteeism in Brazil which are highlighted by Katz and Levin according to results of their investigation.

Table 1 Reasons Pushed Brazilians to Electoral Absenteeism

Covariates	Absenteeism
Intercept	-0.98 (-1.92, -0.10)
Education: University	-0.94 (-1.38, -0.49)
Education: Secondary	0.04 (-0.21, 0.30)
Income	-0.01 (-0.26, 0.21)
Political Knowledge	-0.28 (-0.40, -0.15)
Urban	-0.16 (-1.17, 0.71)
Candidates	0.81 (0.47, 1.16)
Political Inefficacy	0.06 (-0.02, 0.16)
No Political Representation	0.30 (0.03, 0.58)
Dissatisfaction with Democracy	0.02 (-0.06, 0.12)
Growth	0.45 (-0.29, 1.43)
Inflation	0.42 (-0.34, 1.19)
Clearance Rate	0.03 (-0.04, 0.10)
Illiterates	0.71 (0.22, 1.16)
Young	0.87 (0.31, 1.49)
Seniors	2.11 (1.69, 2.53)
Competitiveness	0.35 (0.07, 0.62)

And it is strongly notable what reasons push citizens to electoral absenteeism to Brazil even in contradiction to law. These are reasons substantially corresponding to reasons of electoral absenteeism according to theory of rational choice. These are economic factors (“inflation”), insignificant level of political awareness (“illiterates”) and factors which causes limitation of possibilities of influence to politics and perception of own low value within it (“young”, “seniors”). So this research can be considered like evidence of correctness of electoral absenteeism’s explanation from theory of rational choice.

4.3 Possible Practical Solving of Problem

So if the assumptions of marked nature of electoral absenteeism is right we are we powerless on the face of this paradox. It is paradox then collective irrationality is caused by rational motive of individuals to which we usually appeal trying to fix irrational anomaly in society. Olson conversely gave the opinion that we aren’t powerless in this situation using means of rational persuasion. The way of overwhelm of this paradox it is to revise relationships between individual and collective. This way is to give individual new rational reasons to support the collective rationality and to find new link between individual and collective rationality. And this new link can be found like Olson said with the help of “Only a personal incentive can induce a rational individual to act in the interests of the group. Such selective incentives can be both positive and negative. They can either force

to participation on the expenses of a group of those who have refused to share them with each other from punishment, or they can encourage those who act in the interests of the group” (Olson, 1965, p. 46). So the selective incentives are only way to connect individual and collective rationality in the cases of crisis of last. And that organization is possible to realize these incentives for any individual in society and have significant material, organizational and personnel. Of course it is state. State which is needed to be restricted in many questions but not in the means for an urgent solution of crises in the life of society in contradiction to initial conclusion from thesis of invisible hand. Because, as we see society, it will not solve them by itself on the principle of an invisible hand. And then such crisis will become uncontrollably and simply destroy it and wellbeing of many individuals. And it is pointless to be afraid on the basis of this, that the state will become a dictatorship. Obstacle to this became the modern wide democratic control of citizens over power. And it can be certainly can be realized in one area of emergency powers of the state. This position was also supported by Olson.

So that negative and positive incentives can be used by government to influent of voting behavior of citizens, to link rationality of individual citizen with collective rationality and not to allow the crisis of collective electoral absenteeism. And let’s look to means of solving problem of electoral absenteeism from this position.

4.3.1 Negative Incentives to Solve the Problem

The most famous negative incentive in this area is the rule of marked mandatory voting. At the same time, democracy can well be maintained with such compulsory voting. Compulsory voting doesn’t provide an obligatory choice for some position, but it simply makes required an appearance at the polling place and a mark in the ballot paper of any character according to desire of the person. The most famous country with current compulsory voting standards and punishment for evading it is Australia. For example, in the 2010 elections in Australia, where 335,353 people participated in the election, approximately 6,000 were fined \$26 for not participating in the vote, of which approximately 2,000 paid a fine. Also expressive examples of democratic countries with acting compulsory voting are Belgium, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, marked Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay. There are also countries in which legislation on compulsory voting exists but it isn’t acting. They are Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Mexica and others.

Although a norm with a compulsory voting doesn’t affect to democracy of voting and is successfully implemented today in a number of democratic countries, it remains controversial. It is controversial from the principles of democracy. The political choice of a citizen should be conscious, responsible and based on individual rational interests or other reasons. And he will definitely be like that only when this citizen comes to the voting place of his own free will. When he goes there under the threat of sanction, the choice may be formal. So, of course, a high turnout is observed and the collective rationality of the electoral process is ensured. But then there is no real connection of individual motivation and rationality with collective. In addition, the negative incentive for citizens for electoral absenteeism in the form of compulsory voting is only successfully implemented in parallel with a number of positive ones. We will consider them further. But establishment of compulsory voting without positive incentives from another side can’t be capable to eliminate electoral absenteeism like in Brazil.

Another negative incentive to motivate citizens to appear in elections without violations of a democratic nature is the campaign against political unconsciousness. When different media without bias for any candidate show negative consequences for the country due to the mass electoral absenteeism. And they even frighteningly describe the consequences of this crisis in society to personal life of someone who won’t go to voting place to vote and thus effects of many persons not to vote according to the Olson’s principle. Such campaign may well be conducted by the state if it has enough resources for it. Otherwise, it is carried out by various non-governmental

public funds.

4.3.2 Positive Incentives to Solve the Problem

Like positive incentive of participating of voting can be simplification of process of voting. For example, in Australia such measure applies in parallel with compulsory voting. There is possible to vote ahead of schedule or by mail if it isn't possible to some persons to come to the polling places on the day of voting. Email voting is also actively used in USA, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada. The most innovative way of simplifying of voting procedure is electronic voting. Of course providing of electronic voting is connected with great expenses and changing to technique and low base of elections. So we have only discussions about providing electronic voting on every voting level in some democratic countries. However electronic voting is successfully used now during voting to agencies of local government. And using of it really increases the turnout of voters. For example, we can see such effect to citizens especially with low levels of security and education with establishment of electronic order of voting on the local elections in some states of Brazil. Such facilities were established here exactly like attempt to apply positive incentives to vote in pair with negative incentives of compulsory voting. Like Brazilian political scientist Thomas Fujiwara said "less educated voters would find voting under EV easier find voting under electronic voting easier. The guidance and feedback of electronic voting can have an effect on an illiterate voter, given the device's graphical interface" (Fujiwara, 2015, pp. 428, 430).

Also, such incentives include making of the most comfortable conditions for voting at the polling place. Exactly this includes hanging information about all candidates and political forces to the possibility of acquaintance of citizens, politely of the members in the election commissions and their willingness to provide technical assistance to voters. All this should be fully organized by the state in cooperation with candidates in the elections. And it doesn't require large financial costs.

Promoting of active participation in elections can also create positive incentives for persons to participate in elections. Propaganda of active participating in elections must be neutral and unbiased like anti-propaganda of non-participating in elections. Such propaganda of civic activism should convey the positive consequences of each citizen coming to the polling place. And it should describe what little efforts are needed for this.

Also it is important to admit that no compulsory voting no company of propaganda of active participating of citizens in voting process doesn't take a lot of money from government. On the base of their investigation of history experience of compulsory voting in Austria before 1992 political researchers Mitchell Hoffman Gianmarco Leon Maria Lombardi admit that "CV laws need not significantly affect government spending. Our study suggests that policies aimed at increasing turnout (e.g., get-out-the-vote campaigns) need not necessarily affect public spending" (Hoffman, Leon, Lombardi, 2015).

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