

A Spatial Analysis of Religious Conservatism and Voting Behavior in Turkey between 2007-2018

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Abstract:

A new political party, Justice and Development Party (AKP) which has been established in 2000, has won all of the general elections since 2002. The other opposition parties have repeatedly tried to challenge AKP, but they could only win in specific regions of Turkey. Moreover, the Turkish political context has witnessed different political cleavages such as religiously conservative tendencies, nationalism, secular resilience, etc. since 2002. One of the important claims of the opposition parties is that religious conservatism is being promoted as the main motivation for its supporters by the ruling party. Also, AKP claims to be a representative of the conservative masses who have been historically ostracized by the elite ruling powers in Turkish history. In this regard, it's important to provide comprehensive data for religious conservative tendencies and voting mechanisms at the most detailed spatial perspective in Turkey. This paper will attempt to derive an indicator for province-level religious conservatism data with the help of spatial statistics. To contextualize religious conservatism, the indicators of religious tendencies such as attendance of Quran Courses, the number of the staff for Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), and the number of people who attended the "Hajj" religious pilgrimage mission will be taken into consideration at the province level. Then, the relationship between religious conservatism and the voting behavior will be investigated in terms of the results of general elections between 2007 and 2018. This study will be the very first attempt to compute the relationship between voting behavior and religious conservatism at the province level with unique data.

Keywords: Elections, Religious Tendencies, AKP, Turkey

1- Introduction

Currently, the impact of religion takes an incontrovertible place in political science literature. Although neglecting the role of religion was dominant until the 1980s (Wald and Wilcox, 2006), it became an inseparable part of many studies which are focusing on the relationship between religiosity and voting behavior in political science (Wald et al, 2004; Layman, 1997). Recently, studies about Islamic religiosity and its political consequences have an increasing interest. Some of these studies are focusing on whether Islamic societies may prefer a liberal democracy (Collins and Owen, 2012; Tessler 2002; Toprak, 2005), while some others analyze autocratic tendencies that embedded among Islamic groups and parties in the Islam world (Esen and Gumuscu, 2020; Wehrey, 2015).

However, the concepts about Islam and Islamic religiosity that have been used in these studies remain unclear. These studies are avoiding to give a certain definition of Islamic religiosity and piousness. One of the reasons for this avoiding might come from the difficulties to measure Islamic rituals in everyday life in Islamic societies in comparison to Christianity. It is relatively easier to reach out the data of church enrollment, church attendance, etc. (Botterman and Hooghe, 2012; Brunette and Lacombe, 2012) or using publicly available surveys (Koster and Waal, 2007; Arzheimer and Charter, 2009) in western liberal democracies in order to analyze the relationship between Christian religiosity and voting behavior. However, in Islam, the everyday life attitudes that make people more religious than others are not subject to be taken in statistics easily. Collins and Owen (2012) makes an attempt to itemize these everyday Islamic life routines. Their definition of Islamic religiosity consists of the frequency of reading the Qur'an, praying at home, communal rituals, shrine visitation, attending mosque, and so on. As mentioned before, it is hard to find these everyday life attitudes as publicly available data in most of the Islamic countries other than utilizing surveys based on a self-report. This lacking may reduce the power of analysis on research about the relationship between religious conservatism and voting behavior. However, Turkey seems as an exception among other Islamic countries in the Middle East in terms of data availability. Religious Affairs Directorate (Diyanet), make researchers enable to analyze some of these Islamic practices in terms of data such as the number of mosques or the number of the staff at the province level. However, the data that posted on Diyanet's website suffers from update. Diyanet only releases the most updated numbers while removing the old ones. It causes to miss historical components of the potential analyses.

Analyzing Islamic religiosity and voting behavior not only requires an electoral data but also sociologic data. It can easily be seen in the literature that the variables such that income, education, gender, etc. are the most commons in research for both voting and religiosity. Also, taking into account the local effects about religious tendencies might be useful while it's quite possible to observe spatial pattern for those. As well as known in the modernization theories, industrialization and urbanization have strong impact on people's lifestyle. It is possible to observe more religious everyday life rituals in rural areas than urban areas. In his work that consists of national representative surveys of 114 Islamic and old communist countries, Barber (2012) found out that religiosity declines with lower agricultural employment (Barber, 2012). Furthermore, other religious everyday activity, veiling, might be another space-based practice for the religious women who covers and adapts herself to live in urban space (Secor, 2002). Thanks to the strong institutional ties with the Eurostat and Turkstat, it is possible to derive these socio-economic data with their spatial components in Turkey. This makes Turkey even more interesting in order to analyze relationship between religiosity and voting behavior.

There is another indirect contribution that comes from economics theory for the relationship between religiosity and voting behavior. Although it is the main part of the economic voting theory that establishes a reward-punishment mechanism (Kim et al, 2003) between voters and the incumbent party based on their economic well-being, the relationship between income level and religiousness remained less examined in the literature. The studies may vary from different perspectives about the relationship between religiosity and economic conditions. While some of the studies find that the relationship between religiosity and income is negative (Herzer and Strulig, 2017), some others claim that religiosity helps to get by to serious results of inequalities in the economy (Joshani and Weijers, 2015; Solt et al, 2011). Also, La Barbera and Gürhan (1998) include the degree of religiosity in their analysis. They found out that there is a positive correlation between low religiosity and subjective well-being (SWB) and a negative correlation between high religiosity and SWB among consumers. One might think to establish this relationship from the other side in comparison to previous studies. Plouffe and Trembley (2017) found out positive main effects of individual-level income and religious belief together on life satisfaction. But still, in all these studies, which are mostly coming from economics, the relationship between religious tendencies and political outcomes is unclear. One unlikely contribution to the widely-accepted modernization hypothesis that establishes an inherent relation between higher income and democracy comes from Acemoglu et al (2009). In their work, they claimed that the existed studies rely on panel-data approaches suffers from the omitted variables and thus they are leaning towards to find a positive relationship between the level of economic development and democracy. However, they figured out that controlling these omitted variables with fixed effects are removing the positive relationships in question.

This study focuses on the relationship between Islamic religiosity and voting behavior in Turkey. First, Turkey differs from its Muslim neighbors in the Middle East and the other Muslim countries in the near and far east in terms of relationship with modernization, economic system, lifestyle, etc. Turkey has been established as a modern republic almost 100 years ago while the founder of the republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was showing to his followers to the western values and modernist development as a benchmark. Since then, it is the only country in the world with modern institutions, multi-party system (since 1950), and the Muslim majority of people. On the other hand, this modernist transition has never been a smooth process. Ostracizing of rural masses from the central government for decades ended up with the religiously conservative party, the Justice and Development Party (the AKP)'s ongoing electoral success since 2002. Since then, focusing on a new transition of Turkey with the Islamic-oriented ruling party has become even more interesting. Also, it is still possible to analyze Turkey's new phase with a novel data set that consists of socio-economic features at the province level in terms of religious tendencies and voting behavior. To do that, a novel data set has been created in order to capture the changes in religious tendencies, and its impact on voting behavior at the province level. The paper proceeds as follows: In the second chapter, a brief explanation of the legal Islamic parties will take place. The third chapter will focus on the specific literature about religiosity and the voting behavior in Turkey. The fourth chapter will present the model and data. The fifth chapter interprets the results while the last chapter will discuss and conclude.

2- Historical background

As aforementioned, Turkey is in a new political phase that differs from its original establishment since 2002. A relatively new party, the Justice and Development Party (the AKP), which has been found at 2000 has come to the power in general elections at 2002 while the whole country was suffering from a crucial economic crisis. Since then, the general elections have been held five times (2007, 2011, 2015 June, 2015 November, and 2018) and the AKP has won all of them as the first party. Although the AKP is a relatively new party in Turkish political spectrum¹, the political orientation that represents itself in the AKP is not a new in Turkish political spectrum. In order to understand this tendency a little bit more, it might be useful to take a deeper look at its historical roots.

As aforementioned, Turkey is in a new political phase since 2002 that differs from its original establishment. A relatively new party, the Justice and Development Party (the AKP), which has been found in 2000 has come to the power in general elections in 2002 while the whole country was suffering from a crucial economic crisis. Since then, the general elections have been held five times (2007, 2011, June 2015, November 2015, and 2018) and the AKP has won all of them as the first party. Although the AKP is a relatively new party in the Turkish political spectrum, the political orientation that represents itself in the AKP is not new in the Turkish political spectrum. To understand this tendency a little bit more, it might be useful to take a deeper look at its historical roots.

The newly established republic was under the CHP's ruling as a one-party ruling between 1923-1950. The Islamic tendencies embedded in the people's everyday life and religiousness have been perceived as a threat by the central Kemalist elites². The main political struggle between secularists and conservatives has been shaped within this tension. The representatives of religious masses have struggled to establish a party system which could be accepted by the state as having a non-threatening ideology. They have tried to find a place at the table of the bureaucratic hierarchy of the state. Since Turkish nationalism was one of the important components of the state, they combined nationalist and religious tendencies called "Turk-Islam synthesis" to survive. Even though their political parties were shut down by the supreme court of Turkey several times³, the AKP, the last one, was able to secure its position. This transition was not smooth though.

During these political storms, the AKP has challenged against establishment. Even though they have been denied by themselves later, the discourse that has been improved by the AKP to find a democratic solution for Kurdish question⁴ was one of the biggest indicators of this new politics. According to the AKP, the solution for Kurdish question was also subject to the Islamic brotherhood. Within this perspective, they promoted religious institutions affiliated with Diyanet both in western and eastern regions of the country. However, some studies show that Islamic brotherhood policies do not repress the demand for identity in Kurdish region (Gurses and Ozturk, 2020).

¹ For instance, the main opposition party, the Republican Peoples' Party (CHP) is the founder party of the modern Turkish Republic since 1923 and it is in the main opposition position since 2002. Another important party that reflects the historical nationalist tendency in the Turkish politics, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) has been found in 1969.

² For further information see. Zuckhrer...

³ The pro-Islamist parties and the year of their shooting down by the Supreme Court of Turkey: National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi, 1971), National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi, 1980), Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, 1998), Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi, 2001)

⁴ For further information for Kurdish Opening policies, see

Also, the AKP has challenged the old establishment in terms of education policies. The Kemalist elite bureaucracy had made an important change in the education system via the National Security Council meeting (Milli Guvenlik Konseyi, MGK) against the Islamic party led coalition government on the 28th of February 1997. With that change, compulsory education has been increased from 5 years to 8 years without interruption. Although it might be thought of as a positive regulation while it increases people's education level, this was employed to curb registering to the middle section of preacher schools called the Imam Hatip. Furthermore, wearing a scarf for women students in higher education was strictly banned from the Higher Education Council (Yuksekk Ogretim Kurulu, YOK). This political intervention by the military, they would be the main component of Turkish politics for more than a decade. During its third term government between 2011-2015, the AKP has made some important regulations in order to turn around the old regulations of the 28th February process, especially in the education system. First, the AKP has removed the uninterrupted education for 8 years in 2012, instead they made it 12 years with the 4 + 4 + 4 formula. This regulation allowed pious people to send their children to the middle section of preacher schools again. The removing ban for scarf took more time though. It has been gradually removed between 2013-2017.

On 28th February intervene, another regulation about the student enrollment for the Qur'an courses has been made by the military lead government in 1999. Based on that, sending children who were under 12 years old that did not complete 5-year primary education, was banned. This regulation was also has been removed by the AKP in 2011.

All these political storms have been discussed in the public opinion. All the regulations that have been done by the military intervention was about religious tendencies and practices among the people. And the all regulations that have been removed by the AKP further was also about the religious rituals in everyday life. This empowered the perception of the AKP as a representative of the ostracized people who have religious, rural based life (Heper, 2013). Furthermore, the AKP has encourage its supporters to be more religious as well. Bekir Bozdog, the vice prime minister who responsible for the Religious Affairs Directorate in 2018 said

“There won't be any district without Qur'an courses. The imams are supposed to find students. If he or even mufti are not able to find a students, they will be unseated”

Do all these returning regulations that have been made by the government caused any increase in terms of religiosity in society? If so, does this increase the support for the government? Answering these questions is still important to understand the interactive process between politics and religious tendencies in Turkey. Thus, the next chapter will focus on literature about religiosity and voting behavior in Turkey.

3- Literature

Almost there are no studies in the literature that are not emphasized the religious affiliation of the AKP's supporters as voters. Thus, it is easy to understand that the backbone of the AKP consists of religious sensibility. However, the interpretation of the functionality of religiosity and voting support may differ. In the early era of the AKP, most of the studies highlighted the prone of pro-democracy among the AKP's supporters and leadership (Toprak, 2005). Some others explained the support for the AKP not only with the religion but also with the voters expected economic benefits (Kalaycioglu, 2007) and some make other contributions for the voting

motivations of the AKP supporters such as party identification/partisanship, religiosity, and economic expectation again (Kumbaracibasi, 2016; Laebens and Ozturk, 2020).

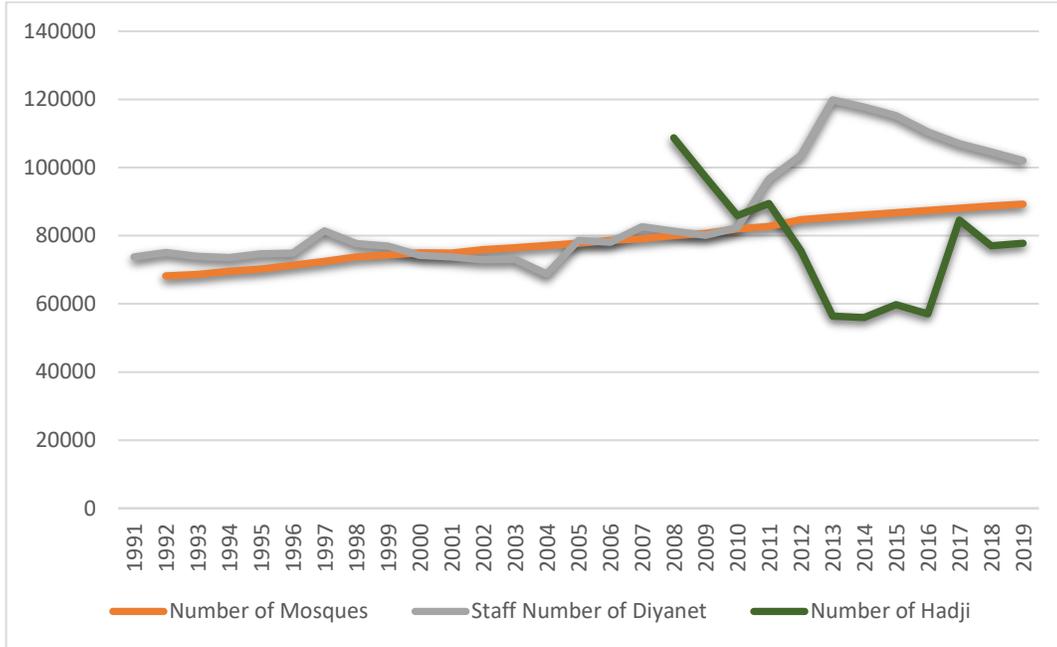
Another body of literature focuses on the ties that exist between identity and religion. After Kurdish Opening politics, solving the Kurdish Question within an Islamic brotherhood perspective was one of the main promises of the AKP. It has even been evaluated as a rational strategy for a party that is looking for a vote maximization (Akdag, 2015). When viewed from now, it is clear that these emphasizes were made in the early era of the AKP. As a pragmatic party, the AKP has chosen to establish a new agreement with the nationalistic party (the MHP) and ignored all the ethnic demands by the Pro-Kurdish players (Gunay and Yoruk, 2019). However, still, the role of religious ideology seems inseparable part of the AKP in comparison to motivations for the economy, nationalism, or democracy among its supporters (Cinar, 2016). The simplest way to keep public support for the AKP is the usage of Diyanet as an apparatus implementing the political ideology of the ruling cadre (Ozturk, 2016). Analyzing the success of these will be investigate in the next chapter.

4- Some Visual Facts

Since the AKP claims to be a representative of the conservative masses who have been historically ostracized by the elite ruling powers, this section will attempt to derive indicators for province level religiousness data. In order to contextualize religiousness, the indicators of religious tendencies such as Quran Course attendance, number of mosques, number of the staff for Diyanet, and the number of people who attendance the “Hajj” religious pilgrimage mission will be taken into consideration*. Figure 1 shows the data for number of mosques, the number of the staff for Diyanet, and the number of Hadji since 1991.

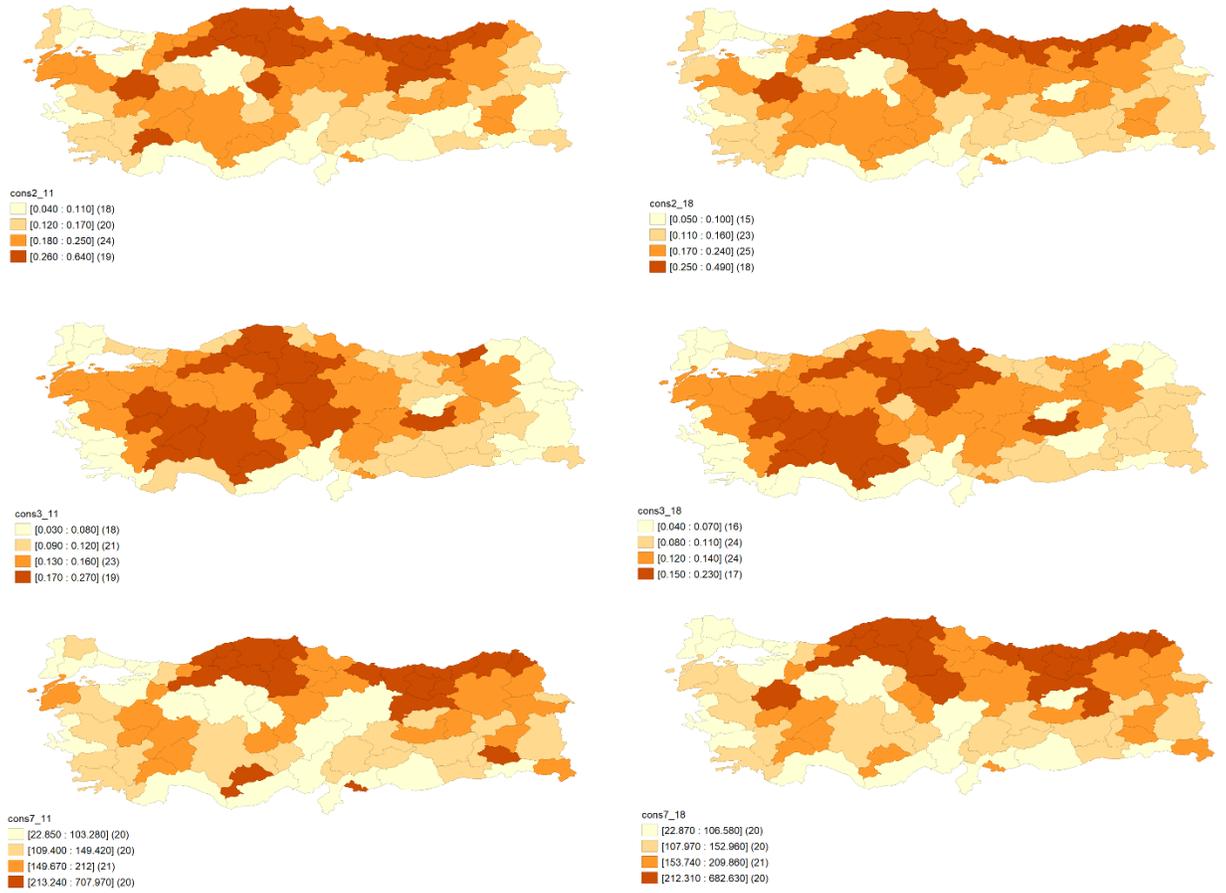
* Hajj is an obligatory worship for those who can afford or encourage to travel Mecca at least once in the life time.

Figure 1: Number of Mosques, Hadjis, and the staff number of the Diyanet



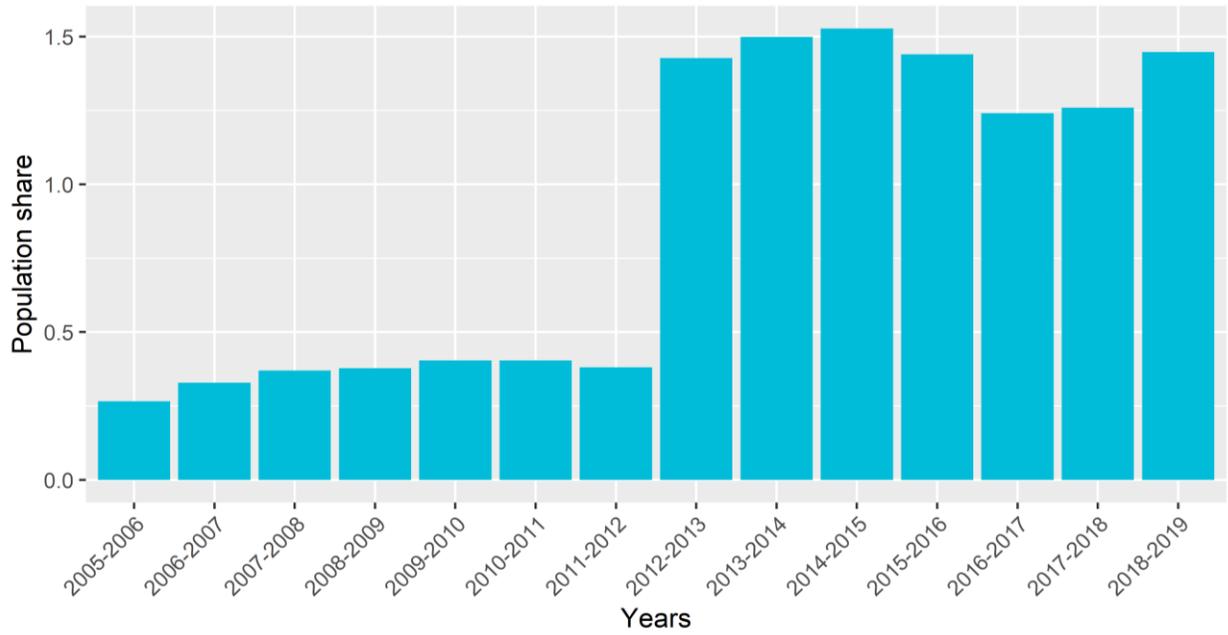
In the literature, one of the most cited data is the number of mosques while evaluating the religious activities that were promoted by the government. Within an Islamic context, the mosques are the main worship places for the practitioners of Islam and mostly it has been used as a proof to religiously government institutional structuring in Turkey (Gurses and Ozturk, 2020). However, it can easily be seen from figure 1 that, it has the same trend since 1991. Thus, it might not be the most important government-supported religious activity for the AKP. Furthermore, the number of staff of Diyanet is determined by the government which mostly encourages the practice of religious activities in people's everyday life during their tenure as civil servants. There is a strict break in the staff number of Diyanet in 2010 that shifts from 85 thousand to 119 thousand in 2013 and goes back to 102 thousand in 2019. It shows explicitly an unstable pattern though. Even the number of people who have visited Mecca as one of the most important religious activities in Islam might not indicate real religious activity. First of all, it economically costs high and this curbs people to complete the pilgrimage mission freely in Turkey. Also, the number of visitors to Mecca is restricted by the Saudi Arabian government with a country quota that changes year by year according to the country. Checking their spatial distribution as of population share at the province level (mosques per 100.000 people) might also provide a useful insight. Figure 2 shows these for the 2011 and 2018.

Figure 2: The spatial distribution of the population shares of religious activities (2011-2018)



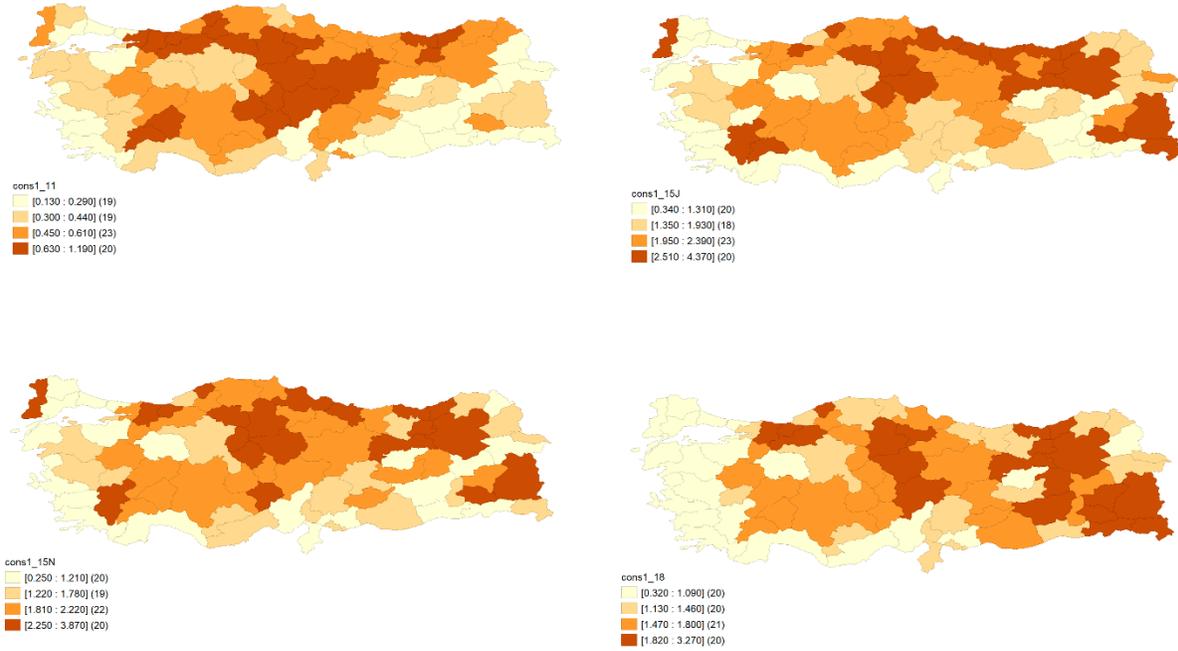
According to the figure 2, all religious practices are clustering in internal provinces of Turkey and the Blacksea region. It is understandable because these provinces are the ones where agricultural way of life is dominant. Unlikely to the existed literature (Gürses and Öztürk, 2020) Figure 2 also shows an interesting proof that mosque share per 100.000 people are not higher in the eastern parts of the country where predominantly Kurdish population lives (see the maps at the bottom). On the contrary, the mosque share is higher in the Blacksea region. In order to detect the impact of religiosity, it might be useful to take a look to the Qur'an course attendance. The number of Qur'an courses attendance might be one of the main indicators in order understand the government bolstered religious practice. These Qur'an courses are conducted under the authorization of the Diyanet as mentioned in chapter 2. Figure 3 illustrates the population share of attendance of Qur'an Courses between 2005 and 2019 in Turkey.

Figure 3: The population share of attendance of Qur'an Courses between 2005 and 2019



Analogously with the staff number of Diyanet, there is solid break in the Qur'an course attendance in 2012-2013 education year. After removing the age restriction in 2011, there is a great shift in the number of attendances in Qur'an Courses. It shifted from 287 thousand in 2012 to 1.1 million in 2013 and stayed higher than a million since then. Since this study focuses on the spatial dimensions, it might be useful to look at the spatial distribution of the data in question. Figure 4 illustrates the spatial distribution of the population share of attendance of Qur'an Courses before general elections since 2011.

Figure 4: The spatial distribution of the population shares of attendance of Qur'an Courses



In a similar vein with the previous maps, the population shares of Qur'an courses are also clustering in the internal parts of Turkey. However, apart from the previous maps, there is an observable change in the eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey in terms of the population share of the Qur'an course attendance. It increases in these regions eventually. This implies that the Qur'an courses might be the way for the AKP to encourage and keep its mass support. In order to reveal this question, an econometric analysis has been conducted in the next section.

5- Model and Data

In order to see the relationship between the AKP's vote support and religious activities, the OLS model is created as a starting point:

$$Party_{it} = a_i + \beta_1 cons1_{it} + \beta_2 cons2_{it} + \beta_3 cons3_{it} + \beta_4 cons7_{it} + hedu_{it} + growthpc_{it} + t_t + u_{it} \quad (1)$$

The data, which was derived from Turkstat, Religious Affairs Directorate of Turkey, and Supreme Election Council of Turkey database, encompasses 81 provinces observed between 2011 and 2018. The model mainly covers the four general elections (2011, 2015 June, 2015 November, and 2018) as a result of the panel data mechanics, and thus time dimension of the panel data, $T = 4$. In Equation 1, $Party_{it}$ variable is a dependent variable consisting of the party's voting rates at the province level between 2011-2018. $growthpc_{i,t}$ variable indicates the real growth rate of GDP per capita at the province level. This is the most widely used variable used to test the economic voting theory. In most cases, this variable is used to test voters' decisions about rewarding or punishing the ruling party according to its economic performance.

In order to measure religious conservatism's impact on voting behavior, *cons* variables are created. *cons1_{it}* variable consists of the population share of those who attended Qur'an courses at the province level; *cons2_{it}* variable shows the population share of staff of Diyanet at the province level; *cons3_{it}* is the population share of the ones who completed their pilgrimage mission at the province level; and *cons7_{it}* indicates the mosque share per 100,000 people at the province level. All *cons* variables are provided by the Directorate of Religious Affairs and could be thought of as a well-defined indicator of religious everyday life practices. The ruling party, the AKP, encouraged the people explicitly to be more religious in their everyday life. Thus, these *cons* variables could be considered as a political motivation which is promoted by the ruling party, the AKP.

kurdrate_{it} variable also shows Kurdish population at the province level and will be used as a proxy variable while analyzing the Kurdish population voting dynamics in terms of the religion and demand for identity. It is well known that there is a serious tendency to vote for the ruling party, the AKP, especially among the conservative Sunni majority of the Kurdish population. Thus, having a separate "*kurdrate*" variable in the equation will allow us to analyze the voting behavior dynamics of the Kurdish population between religiosity and identity as well.

Hedui,t variable is share of university graduation at the province level. This variable is used to measure secular tendencies since it has been evaluated as one of the biggest features of people who have a modern and a secular way of life in Turkey.

Panel models should contain fixed (individual and/or time) or random effects to get consistent coefficients. Since $T (4) < N (81)$ in this case, in this study time fixed effect was considered to deal with time heterogeneity due to the fact that short time series do not satisfy asymptotic for random effect. Thus, in order to capture political fluctuations between elections, t_i introduced to the model as a time fixed effect and $u_{i,t}$ is the idiosyncratic error term.

6- Results

Table 1 presents estimation results for the AKP.

Table 1: Estimation results for the AKP

	Dependent variable:			
	AKP			
	a	b	c	d
Constant	60.767*** (3.782)	56.883*** (4.165)	41.123*** (4.292)	41.211*** (4.347)
cons1	7.134*** (0.870)	6.247*** (0.956)	4.888*** (0.891)	4.848*** (0.940)
cons2		12.865** (5.931)	2.558 (5.574)	4.644 (16.270)
cons3			106.448*** (13.397)	105.727*** (14.418)
cons7				-0.002 (0.013)
hedu1_tuik	-1.296*** (0.254)	-1.165*** (0.260)	-1.001*** (0.239)	-1.007*** (0.243)
grwpctuik	0.164 (0.178)	0.193 (0.178)	0.372** (0.164)	0.369** (0.165)
kurdrtr	-0.361*** (0.022)	-0.339*** (0.024)	-0.274*** (0.024)	-0.273*** (0.024)
Observations	324	324	324	324
R ²	0.603	0.608	0.674	0.674
Adjusted R ²	0.594	0.598	0.665	0.664
F Statistic	68.427*** (df = 7; 316)	61.163*** (df = 8; 315)	72.106*** (df = 9; 314)	64.694*** (df = 10; 313)

Note:

*p<0.1;**p<0.05;***p<0.01

In table 1, cons1 variable that represents the population share of the Qur'an course attendance at the population share is positive and significant as expected for the AKP's voting rate in all regressions. It means that it captures well the relationship between the AKP and the everyday life religious practices between 2011 and 2018 in Turkey. Furthermore, cons2 variable which represents the number of staff of Diyanet is also positive and significant in regression b. It's impact on the AKP's voting rate has removed in regression c and d though. It turns out to insignificant in regression c and d. cons3 variable which shows the number of pilgrims is pretty significant in regression d. There is a very strong and positive correlation between the number of pilgrims and the voting rate of the AKP. Unlikely the existed literature (Gurses and Ozturk, 2020), cons7 variable that represents the mosque share per 100,000 people at the province level is insignificant. This finding must be investigated for the further analysis.

This model has control variables such as the share of higher education, per capita growth rate, and the Kurdish population share at the province level. Higher education level and the Kurdish rate have negative and statistically significant impact on the AKP's voting rate in all regressions. Also, growth rate is only significant in regression c and d. This is quite informative though. The main motivation of the supporters of the AKP mostly consists of religious tendencies rather than economic gains and identity is another important motivation to not vote for the AKP among Kurdish people even though Muslim brotherhood is a bolstered propaganda by the government. That is, religious rituals have limited impact on the voters.

These results may be confirmed with the voting rates of the other opposition parties as a robustness check. As well known, the main opposition party, the Republican Peoples' Part (CHP) represents secularist tendencies, the Nationalistic Movement Party (MHP) represents nationalistic tendencies, and finally the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) represents mostly the Prokurdish tendencies among voters. Thus, it is possible to expect significant negative values between cons

variables and the CHP's voting rates, positive significant values for the share of the Kurdish population and HDP's voting rates. In order to cross check these expectations, Table 2 has been created that shows the regression results for the opposition parties with the AKP.

Table 2: Opposition results

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	AKP	CHP	MHP	PROKURDISH
Constant	41.211*** (4.347)	31.930*** (4.232)	15.939*** (2.951)	6.865** (3.264)
cons1	4.848*** (0.940)	-2.350** (0.915)	0.582 (0.638)	-1.814*** (0.682)
cons2	4.644 (16.270)	-27.024* (15.840)	5.749 (11.045)	2.597 (12.327)
cons3	105.727*** (14.418)	-111.908*** (14.037)	16.681* (9.788)	-24.850** (11.526)
cons7	-0.002 (0.013)	0.020 (0.012)	-0.007 (0.009)	-0.006 (0.010)
hedu1_tuik	-1.007*** (0.243)	1.863*** (0.236)	-0.138 (0.165)	-0.784*** (0.174)
kurdrtr	-0.273*** (0.024)	-0.292*** (0.024)	-0.176*** (0.016)	0.760*** (0.018)
grwpctuik	0.369** (0.165)	-0.253 (0.161)	-0.057 (0.112)	-0.120 (0.124)
Observations	324	324	324	285
R ²	0.674	0.616	0.488	0.934
Adjusted R ²	0.664	0.604	0.471	0.932
F Statistic	64.694*** (df = 10; 313)	50.286*** (df = 10; 313)	29.792*** (df = 10; 313)	390.103*** (df = 10; 274)
Note:	*p<0.1;**p<0.05;***p<0.01			

As mentioned above, the regression results for the opposition parties are compatible with the expectations. All cons variables are negative and statistically significant for the CHP while hedu1_tuik variable that represents the higher education level at the province level is positive and significant. Also, cons1 and cons2 variables are negative and statistically significant for the ProKurdish party while kurdrate variable is the positive as expected. Moreover, kurdrate is negative and statistically significant for the all parties regardless whether in ruling or in opposition position. This might explain why Kurdish people are not impacted the religious activities that incited by the government.

7- Conclusion

Recently, Turkey has become an important research context for social scientists. It has many different types of diversities and these make Turkey an even more interesting research object. As a middle eastern country with a majority Muslim population, Turkey is still a potential candidate to join EU. Although there are democratic institutions -elections, parliament, semi-independent official associations- the democratic institutions are lacking from a human rights perspective. As a result, understanding Turkey's political tendencies in the 2000s could provide important insights from a social science perspective.

The main claim of this study is to reveal relationship between religious tendencies and the ruling party, the AKP's voting rate. Apparently, the AKP is promoting these religious everyday life practices since it is the last representative the religiously conservative parties in Turkish

political history. Although the restrictions on the Islamic tendencies made by the secular elites found itself a strong reaction with the democratic perspective that has been shared by the first times of the ruling party, the AKP, after securing its positions, religion became an important factor of the lifestyle that was bolstered by the government. The regression results show these tendencies correctly. For the AKP, the religious activities that take place in people's everyday life are the most important motivations and vice versa. On the other hand, the mosques are not the main component of this policy. Instead, religious education in the Qur'an courses are carrying out the main notion of the AKP.

One way to interpret these findings is the continuous success of the ruling party does not rely on co-existed popular vote. It's rather as a result of crystallization of its voters who are motivated by religious factors analyzed in this study. This shows similar pattern for all other main political parties as well. This is an important finding both for politicians and researchers to understand the Turkish political context.

Resources

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