

## Social Indicators and Voting: The Turkish Case

“Were they voters, disciples or under illusion?”  
*Özdemir İnce, 17 August 2007, Hürriyet, commenting on AKP voters*

### Introduction

The above quotation belongs to Özdemir İnce, who is a well-known columnist in Turkey. Speaking from a naïve-journalistic perspective, İnce with this question tries to find an explanation on why people voted for Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party, AKP) but not the other parties. Since the magnitude of AKP's 2007 victory was foreseen by only one survey company (which most of the prominent columnists ironized before elections), this has created a shock and the issues about voting behaviour suddenly ascended to the top of the political agenda in Turkey.

Unquestionably voting behaviour is a chaotic phenomenon. However, this does not mean it is immune to scientific investigation. In that sense, the studies on voting behaviour developed rapidly during the last three decades especially focusing on the countries with established democratic election traditions. Although the early research on voting behaviour suffered from the limited availability of data and methodological problems (Brooks, 2006), in recent years the interest in elections and voting behaviour produced valuable theoretical and methodological improvements (Burstein, 2003). By the contribution of these emerging theories and fresh methodological developments, new ways of research became possible. For example the availability of standardized local and cross-national data opened the ways for testing the existing theories and expanded the empirical scope of research, accompanied with alternative research designs (Franklin & Wlezien, 2002; Knight & Marsh, 2002). Additionally the democratic transitions of the last three decades provided further stimulus for alternative research in the area (Lijphart, 1994, 2011). Taken together, these developments hold the promise of advancing empirical research on voting behaviour, “including potentially with respect to the remarkable diversity of developed democracies” (Brooks, 2006). The analysis on different countries will reveal the mechanisms of voting behaviour which will produce essential knowledge to comparative political scientists, political sociologists, and public policy analysts.

In accordance with the above arguments the aim of this article is to set out the various explanations of voting behaviour in Turkey. Its principal intellectual motivation is to present the factors that shape voting in such a way as to explain how an activity which is so crucial for democratic life is also based upon voters' values and surrounding political context. Although the number of empirical work on voting behaviour in Turkey is increasing there is a considerable room for testing alternative variables and research tools in order to expand the academic knowledge on the problematic. Hence the contribution of this study is the introduction of an explicit methodology which can compare the impact of different factors that are salient in voting behaviour and magnitudes of these factors on different political parties by using a public database. Thus this study will not only uncover the relevancy of the variables in the literature for Turkish voters but also it will highlight the meaning and significance of these factors for different political parties.

The 2011 national elections of Turkey ended with the landslide victory of the governing Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP). Under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan this was the third consecutive win of the AKP since the November 2002 elections. The party, by increasing its vote share from 46.66 percent to 49.83 percent, won 327 seats in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA). The party not only won three consecutive elections since 2002 but also increased its vote share in each of these elections which constitutes a unique case for the Turkish political history. So in general it is plausible to argue that the 2011 general elections consolidated the rule of the reigning AKP government. However, the party's number of seats at the TGNA decreased. Although this is due to a couple of reasons the most important one is the increase in the number of seats gained by the Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP). In the eastern and south eastern provinces the BDP managed to break the AKP's dominance and won more seats compared to 2007 elections.

The AKP was followed by Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP). Compared to the 2007 elections the CHP managed to increase its vote share from 20.87 percent to 25.94 percent and won 135 seats at the TGNA. Under the rule of the newly elected party leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the party displayed a reformist image with new candidates. Although the CHP's electoral leap was widespread across the country, the party obtained most of its support from the western and southern coastal regions of the country where the urban population is concentrated. More specifically the party done well in the Thrace region, urban centres and Alevi populated cities. However, with its new leader and party cadre, this positive performance was far from satisfying the rising expectations of the CHP voters.

The Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP), came third with 53 seats and 13 percent of the vote share. This was a shock to the MHP since the party's seats and vote share diminished significantly compared to the previous elections. The MHP with its conservative nationalist tones received its support mainly from the Mediterranean, Aegean and Central Anatolian regions. The party struggled seriously in replying the AKP's effort to attract the nationalist voters during the whole election campaign. In return, as a strategy, the MHP cadre challenged the AKP by mainly focusing on AKP's policies on the Kurdish problem. Unlike the CHP, MHP did not highlight the socioeconomic problems. Instead the party confided in conservatist tendencies of the voters. Although this strategy worked in cities like Mersin, Muğla and Aydın which host the rapid Kurdish migration, the party lost power in central Anatolian cities where the party's traditional vote base is located.

Lastly the Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP), which ran its candidates as independents, won 35 seats in the TGNA. The existence of the national ten percent threshold forced the BDP to compete with independent candidates (ten percent threshold is not valid for independent candidates) which eventually produced a significant success for the party. After the closure of its predecessor Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi, DTP) by the Constitutional Court, BDP managed to reunite the Kurdish voters under its flag with a well performed electoral strategy. However problems persisted for BDP. Hatip Dicle, an important Kurdish political figure, was banned from the parliament by the Higher Electoral Council, based on his conviction for supporting terrorism. This decision created the "oath crises", where BDP MPs refused to take the oath which is necessary to initiate the legislative activities at the TGNA. This and

some other actions of the party consolidated and deepened the doubts of the non-BDP voters on the party as a legitimate political agent of the Turkish political system.

## Theory

This study argues that *ideological orientations, political and personal values, salient issues, media* and *socioeconomic* factors shape the voting behaviour in Turkey. The preference on these variables is guided by two important factors. First and foremost is the availability of rich theoretical and methodological record on these variables in the voting literature. As will be elaborated in the following paragraphs there is a well-established theoretical ground available for the chosen variables. Second is the availability of the data. The chosen variables were measured scientifically by the European Values Study (EVS) 2008 (EVS, 2010) which will constitute the data base for the analysis and evaluations. The EVS questionnaires were administered as face-to-face interviews in Turkish. As far as the data capture is concerned, CAPI (Computer-assisted personal interviewing) or PAPI (Paper and pencil assisted personal interviewing) was used. The English basic questionnaire was translated into Turkish by means of the questionnaire translation system WebTrans. The following paragraphs elaborate theoretical roots of the variables in the literature and their relevancy with the Turkish political context.

### *Ideological orientation*

The left–right ideological dimension is a widely used conceptual tool for determining voting behaviour (Castles & Mair, 1984; Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Jou, 2010; Thorisdottir, John Jost, Liviatan, & Shrout, 2007) This is mostly because the left-right classification simplifies the complexities of theoretical politics (Fuchs & Klingeman, 1990, p. 205). Hix (1999) also argues that by labelling the issues in an intelligible way for the masses, the left-right division is helpful for voters in understanding party programs. Although the intellectual roots of Turkish left and right ideologies go far back, practical party politics witnessed a left-right distinction primarily during the 1960s and 1970s (Çarkoğlu, 2007). This is mainly due to the new constitution of 1960. The comparatively liberal nature of the 1960 constitution provided the basis of political representation for newly emerging social classes. Utilizing this chance, primarily the working class in Turkey started to be visible in the political system, particularly organized under left-wing organizations. As an antidote, the right-wing, which prioritized nationalist sentiments with religious and conservative tones, also found an important place in the political arena. Hence, the tension between the left and right has shaped Turkish politics during the 1970s.

The left-right distinction in Turkish politics has evolved into an alternative stage after the 1980 military intervention. Blaming the left-right distinction in party politics as one of the basic reasons for the turmoil in Turkish society during the 1970s, the 1980 military regime tried to eliminate all such ideological stances from society. This project by creating apolitical masses and ideologically weakened (more centrist) left and right parties opened up in a paradoxical way the resurgence of ultra-nationalist and pro-Islamist parties (Çarkoğlu, 2007). Thus, the ideological left-right distinction survived in Turkey during the 1990s and onwards in an alternative form. For the 1990s Esmer (1995, p. 84) observes that the ideological differences among the centre-left and centre-right parties, like Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi, ANAP*) and True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi DYP*), seem negligible; however, the distinction between the far ends of the ideological

spectrum remain significant. This fact is valuable for the model which will be presented in the following paragraphs, since Turkish voters still utilize the ideological left-right distinction as a major dimension at work in determining how they vote during the 2000s (Kalaycıoğlu, 2010).

### *Personal and political values*

In one of the earliest studies on values Kluckhohn (1951) argues that, values refer to broad and deep-rooted beliefs of an individual about what is good or bad and they are highly related to “the desirable”. As guiding principles, they are limited in number and serve as a basis for numerous specific evaluations and subsequently constrain behaviour (Leimgruber, 2011). Schwartz (1992) define basic characteristics of values under five main headings “[*Values are*] (1) are concepts or beliefs, (2) pertain to desirable end states or behaviours, (3) transcend specific situations, (4) guide selection or evaluation of behaviour and events, and (5) are ordered by relative importance.” (Schwartz, 1992)

A considerable amount of literature argues that political and personal values are becoming more and more central to the voter behaviour (L. Feldman, 2011; S. Feldman, 1988). According to Capara and Zimbardo (2004) this is due to two basic reasons. First, in our times political choices are more individualized: they are shaped by voters’ likes and dislikes as much as the previously identified categorical variables such as education, gender, and age. And second, candidates have become more concerned with conveying favorable personal images and appealing narratives that please potential voters. In addition, the tools of modern media, such as television, accelerated this personalization and continuously convey candidate images into voters’ daily life contributing the mass of information those voters must process. Accordingly voters increasingly use values not only for the judgement of political issues but also for the justification of political choices (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Moreover, going one step further, a considerable amount of articles also analysed the parcel of values on ideologies (Schwartz, Caprara, & Vecchione, 2010). Beyond the personal values, the core political values like nationalism, conservatism, egalitarianism and alike continue to shape the preferences in voting (S. Feldman, 1988). People operate these values as standards to assess the actions, events, or people. Hence political values can be evaluated as the reflections of basic personal values that guide the voters choices to the political sphere (Schwartz et al., 2010).

For the analysis of personal values, this study will use *religiosity* and *conservatism* as independent variables. For the Turkish setting the level of *religiosity* is a salient and frequently used variable for the explanation of the political structure and voting behaviour (Carkoglu & Kalaycıoğlu, 2007; Çarkoğlu & Toprak, 2006; Y. Esmer, 1999; Grigoriadis, 2009; Güneş-Ayata & Ayata, 2002; Kalaycıoğlu, 2005; Kalaycıoğlu, 2002; Kanra, 2005; Somer, 2007; Sunar & Toprak, 2004; Yeşilada & Noordijk, 2010). The main argument of this literature refers to the fact that the level of religiosity is a key determinant in voting behaviour in Turkey. Although not studied frequent as religiosity, *conservatism*, constitutes the other important value for Turkish voters. According to Kalaycıoğlu (2007) “there is a definite popular attraction of conservatism in Turkish politics which can be converted into remarkable electoral support at the polls”. While discussing the nature of conservatism in Turkey Insel (2004) argues that the conservatives in Turkey, follows a mindset which has two options: the first option is to evade the sociopolitical change. If not, then the second best

option is to allow a slow and well controlled change that does not clash with traditions and established practices.

For the political values, *nationalism* and *Islamism* will be used as the explanatory variables. Like other independent variables described above, nationalism is also a salient political variable for understanding the political structure in Turkey (Akdeniz & Göker, 2011; Bacik, 2011; Belge, 2009; Bora, 2003; Fabbe, 2011; Grigoriadis & Özer, 2010; Kadioglu, 1996; Müftüler-Baç & Fuat Keyman, 2012; Salt, 1995). All of these studies underline the power of nationalism as constitutive principle of the Turkish republic. Although there is no scholarly consensus on the precise definition of Islamism, its common usage generally encompasses the political movements and parties that reconstruct Islam as a political ideology and seek to expand the power of Islam in the political sphere (Gorski & Altınordu, 2008) The current literature aptly suggests that the pietistic movements locate themselves in a position of opposition to the “corrupt secular- Westernized environment”, and push their participants to perform their everyday lives according to Islamic guidelines (Alam, 2009; Göle, 1996, 1997; Hale & Özbudun, 2010; Turunc, 2007).

### *Media*

The current literature on voting behaviour frequently elaborates the effect of media in political action (Cohen & Tsifti, 2009; Elmelund-Præstekær & Hopmann, 2012; Shah, McLeod, & So-Hyang, 2001). This is due to the reason that voters usually use mass media as the basic tool for acquiring information about politics, which according to Beck et al., (2002) shapes “ the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and ultimately decision making”. The form of the political information served by the mass media shape the engagement of voters in the active political debate (Shah, Kwak, Schmierbach, & Zubric, 2004). Although that is the case, media coverage on elections may produce insufficient information about issues (Eveland Jr, 2004; Eveland Jr & Hively, 2009; Hopmann, Elmelund-Præstekær, Albæk, Vliegenthart, & Vreese, 2012; Yunying & Tan, 2011). Although the relationship between media and politics has been analysed extensively (Guida, 2008; Heper & Demirel, 1996; Kaya & Cakmur, 2010; Keyman, 2010; Somer, 2010; Wuthrich, 2010) in the Turkish context, its role in Turkish elections has only been subject to a couple of academic analysis (Balkir, Banducci, Soyaltin, & Toker, 2008; Bek, 2004; Carkoğlu & Yavuz, 2010).

### *Issues*

Along with the ideological positions and personal choices, voting decision is also shaped by policies produced on issues. Early literature on this subject asserts that the voters’ selection becomes more rational when the saliency of different issues on daily politics increases (Granberg & Holmberg, 1988; Rose & McAllister, 1986). Although there is a debate on whether issues are really important aspects of electoral behaviour, policy differences between the parties and citizens’ political competence has certainly remained popular over the decades (M. Alvarez, 1997). For example the literature on social movement underlines the connection between the active political involvement with the group membership. That is to say, individuals who are grouped around an issue are more likely to display political action (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). As politics has grown increasingly concerned with issues that cut across traditional cleavage lines such as the environment, gender, and minority rights, the idea of other forms of voting -like class based voting- has been challenged (Boyle, Schmierbach, & McLeod, 2007).

Guided by the theory and available data, this study analysed the support for the European Union (EU) as an issue. Starting from the 1960s governments tried to secure Turkey's place within the Union. Since from these early days, the attempts of administrations brought up numerous discussions on a number of different issues: economic and fiscal policies, harmonization of laws, human rights issues, Cyprus problem are a few to mention. So "the issue of EU" covers a number of dimensions which makes it suitable for the analysis.

## Method and Data

For the purposes of the study the survey data was organized as follows:

### *Independent Variables*

#### *a. Ideological orientation*

For the purposes of simplicity The 10-level original question on ideological position (v193) was recoded into three categories of "left" (from 1 to 3), "centre" (from 4 to 7) and "right" (from 8 to 10).

#### *b. Personal values*

As discussed in the theoretical background, the levels of religiosity and conservatism were chosen as the indicator of personal values.

To start with, factor analysis was run on the questions that investigate the level of religiosity. The results are presented in Table 1<sup>1</sup>.

Table 1 Factor analysis on religiosity as a personal value

Rotated Component Matrix	Component	
	1	2
church answers to: moral problems (v115, Q29A)	,139	,839
church answers to: family life problems (v116, Q29B)	,098	,878
church answers to: spiritual needs (v117, Q29C)	,149	,826
church answers to: social problems (v118, Q29D)	,042	,809
do you believe in: God (v119, Q30A)	,694	,038
do you believe in: life after death (v120, Q30B)	,592	,113
do you believe in: hell (v121, Q30C)	,920	,083
do you believe in: heaven (v122, Q30D)	,923	,088
do you believe in: sin (v123, Q30E)	,867	,043
do you get comfort and strength from religion (v130, Q37)	,540	,237

<sup>1</sup> All of the questions related to religiosity (v109 to v135) were included in the factor analysis. Original analysis produced eight dimensions. The questions which a) have the factor loadings less than the 0.5 level, b) were alone under a single factor and c) produced similar factor loading scores under two dimensions were excluded from the analysis and finally these two dimensions were produced.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Cronbach's Alpha values for Component 1 and 2 are 0,798 and 0,866 respectively. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is equal to 0,801. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Sig. < 0,000.

According to the results of Table 1 two additive indexes were created for the parcel of religion on public (Component 2; v115, v116, v117 and v118) and personal life (Component 1; v119, v120, v121, v122, v123 and v130). The proposed component names fits to an important contextual fact of Turkish political structure. In Turkey, Islam has usually been discussed mainly under the distinction of public and private spheres (Toros, 2010). This is not surprising since Turkey is among the rare examples of countries that managed to install and execute the mechanisms of democracy in a predominantly Muslim society and a well-established secular state. So, when politics is the question, there is a very sensitive balance with these spheres. As a rule of thumb for the continued existence of the defined political system there is a tendency to keep religion within the sphere of private matters so that it will not spill over to the public sphere. Accordingly, guided by this contextual fact, independent variables for this study are organized as described above. This formulation in turn, will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the political attitudes and their influence on promoting or barring the existence of a democratic political culture. For the independent variable of conservatism the study employed the question number 59 (v200).

### c. *Political values*

As mentioned in the theoretical section nationalism and Islamism were chosen as the political values for this study. The results of factor analysis on the related variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Factor analysis on nationalism and Islamism as political values

Rotated Component Matrix	Component	
	1	2
important: to have been born in [country] (v276, Q80A)	,777	-,019
important: to respect [country nationality] political institutions and laws (v277, Q80B)	,665	,092
important: to have [country nationality] ancestry (v278, Q80C)	,780	,134
important: to be able to speak [country language] (v279, Q80D)	,834	,118
important: to have lived in [country] for a long time (v280, Q80E)	,839	-,002
how proud are you to be a ... (country) citizen (v256, Q72)	,552	,331
religious leaders and influence government decisions (v134, Q41B)	-,088	,724
politicians and God (v135, Q41A)	,067	,756

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Cronbach's Alpha values for Component 1 and 2 are 0,826 and 0,562 respectively. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is equal to 0,819. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Sig. < 0,000

Based on this analysis two indices were created on nationalism (Component 1; v256, v278 and v279) and Islamism (Component 2; v134 and v135). Similar research strategies are used by a number

of scholars including Esmer (2008), Inglehart and Norris (2003) and Al-Braizat (2002) for the analysis of Islamism.

*d. Media*

This study analyzed the effect of media on voting by using the question on following politics in media (v281)

*e. Issues*

As a salient issue support for the European Union (EU) membership was included in the analysis. This issue was examined under the variables of v257 v258 v260 v261. The results of the factor analysis on these questions are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3 Factor analysis on EU questions

Component Matrix	Component 1
EU fears: loss of power (v257, Q73D)	,920
EU fears: loss of jobs (v258, Q73E)	,901
EU fears: loss of social security (v260, Q73A)	,898
EU fears: lose national identity/culture (v261, Q73B)	,891
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. No rotation used, single component extracted. Cronbach's Alpha value for the Component is 0,924 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is equal to 0,823. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Sig. < 0,000	

Based on this analysis a single index was created on the EU issue (Component 1; v257, v258, v260 and v261)

*f. Socio-economic factors (control variables)*

This study analyzed the respondents' socio-economic status under four categories: age (v303), income (v353M\_cs), education (v336\_cs) and gender (v302). Questions on income and education were recoded: the 15-level income variable was transformed into three categories as "low", "middle" and "high". Similarly the 12-level education variable was recoded into four categories of "none" "primary", "secondary" and "university" levels.

Where necessary the questions included in the analyses recoded in the same direction with the dependent variable. That is to say if a value of an independent variable increases, the tendency in vote choice for a particular party increases. All of the indexed variables are combined after the standardization process (subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation) and averaged. For the convenience of exposition they are also converted to a scale extending from zero to one (Treiman, 2009, p. 249).

### *Dependent Variable*

Dependent variable of this study is the reported vote intention (v264). Originally the dependent variable includes all of the parties that competed in the 2011 election. However since this study only focuses on the parties that are represented in the TGNA, it is recoded as a multinomial variable with four categories of AKP, CHP, MHP and BDP.

### *Sampling*

The EVS 2008 used representative multi-stage sampling method, the adult population of Turkey (18 years old and older) was sampled and a net sample size of 2384 respondents was interviewed. The field work was conducted between 26.11.2008 and 01.03.2009 on the basis of detailed and uniform instructions prepared by the EVS advisory groups.

### **Analysis and Findings**

Since different political parties will be compared in the analysis, the model here necessitates a method that allows for a polychotomous dependent variable. Although there are a number of alternative techniques for such kind of an estimation, the flexibility and utility of multinomial model over others were displayed a number of times within the literature (R. M. Alvarez & Nagler, 1998; Dow & Endersby, 2004). Hence this study will use the multinomial logistic regression model for the estimation. The equation is presented below:

$$V_i = a + bInc_i + cEdc_i + dAge_i + eGen_i + fIde_i + gNat_i + hIsl_i + jRel_i + kCon_i + lMed_i + mIss + u_i$$

where:  $V$  is the vote intention;  $Inc$  is income;  $Edc$  is education;  $Age$  is the age;  $Gen$  is the gender;  $Ide$  is the ideology,  $Nat$  and  $Isl$  are the political values representing nationalism and Islamism,  $Rel$  and  $Con$  are the personal values representing religiosity and conservatism,  $Med$  is the media,  $Iss$  is the issue.

Before putting forward the results of the multinomial regression analysis it would be worthwhile to present the descriptive characteristics of the data.

Table 4. Percentage Distributions of Declared Vote Choice

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
<b>AKP</b>	508	53,3	53,3
<b>CHP</b>	230	24,1	77,4
<b>MHP</b>	157	16,5	94,0
<b>BDP</b>	57	6,0	100,0
<b>Total</b>	952	100,0	

Table 4 presents the weighted frequencies and the percentages of the parties represented at the TGNA. Weighting is done according to 2007 general election results. The closeness of these figures to the 2011 election results can be interpreted as an indication of the representativeness power of the data.

Table 5. Percentage Distributions of Gender, Income, Education and Age by Political Parties Represented at the TGNA, 2009

		AKP	CHP	MHP	BDP	%	N
<b>Income</b>	<b>Lower</b>	66,8%	10,6%	3,7%	18,9%	100,0%	322
	<b>Middle</b>	63,3%	23,7%	10,3%	2,7%	100,0%	439
	<b>Upper</b>	54,2%	31,9%	11,0%	2,9%	100,0%	273
<b>Education</b>	<b>None</b>	79,7%	7,0%	,7%	12,6%	100,0%	143
	<b>Primary</b>	66,9%	19,2%	6,7%	7,2%	100,0%	655
	<b>Secondary</b>	46,7%	32,1%	15,6%	5,7%	100,0%	212
	<b>Uni. or higher</b>	35,1%	45,7%	13,8%	5,3%	100,0%	94
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-22</b>	47,6%	22,6%	16,7%	13,1%	100,0%	84
	<b>23-34</b>	61,3%	22,4%	5,8%	10,4%	100,0%	326
	<b>35-49</b>	60,2%	21,6%	11,1%	7,1%	100,0%	352
	<b>50+</b>	68,8%	23,2%	4,8%	3,2%	100,0%	314
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	56,9%	23,9%	9,7%	9,5%	100,0%	503
	<b>Female</b>	66,3%	21,1%	7,0%	5,6%	100,0%	603

According to Table 5, the AKP and BDP voters display a profile with low income and lower levels of education. For CHP and MHP this situation is reversed. Unlike the AKP and BDP voter, the CHP and MHP voter display a profile with higher income and high levels of education. Age seems to be important for BDP and MHP. Both of the parties receive more votes from younger voters compared to the elderly ones. For AKP and CHP voters are distributed among age groups approximately in equal terms.

Table 6. Mean Numbers of Independent Variables Other Than the Control Variables by Political Parties, 2009

	AKP	CHP	MHP	BDP	Min	Max
<b>Personal Values</b>						
Religiosity						
<i>Public life</i>	7,03	6,26	6,73	7,10	4	8
<i>Private life</i>	11,94	11,63	11,68	11,83	6	12
Conservatism	2,02	2,06	2,21	1,51	1	3
<b>Political values</b>						
Islamism	6,21	5,70	6,38	5,90	2	10
Nationalism	20,99	20,87	21,36	15,78	4	24
<b>Media (Following News)</b>	3,39	3,77	3,52	3,81	1	5
<b>Ideology (Left-Right)</b>	1,42	,59	1,57	,54	0	2
<b>Issues (EU)</b>	14,31	13,20	13,79	17,08	4	40

For Table 6 higher mean values indicates higher levels of religiosity, conservatism, Islamism, nationalism, more frequent follow up of news in the media, right-wing ideological orientation and support for the EU. Based on this information there seems to be two camps for the levels of religiosity: While AKP and BDP find place on the higher end of the scale, CHP and MHP are located

on the lower part for both private and public life values. BDP considerably differs from other parties on the conservatism and nationalism variable. This is also true for BDP for the Issues variable. There seems to be minor differences for the Media variable among the parties. Ideologically AKP and MHP are located on the right side of the scale where BDP and CHP find place on the left side.

Table 7. Multinomial Regression Estimation results: Case Processing Summary

		N	Marginal Percentage	
Parties	AKP	363	60,2	
	CHP	153	25,4	
	MHP	55	9,1	
	BDP	32	5,3	
			100,0	
Valid		603	25	
Missing		1781	75	
Total		2384	100	
<b>Model Fitting Information</b>				
<b>Model</b>	<b>-2 Log Likelihood</b>	<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Intercept Only	1,239E3			
Final	825,203	414,245	36	,000

According to the Table 7, the model fits the data well. However, only one fourth of the available observations were used for the analysis. This is due to the missing data problem. For each individual observation, when any one of the variables used in the equation is missing, this observation (even if it contains responses on some of the other variables of the equation) is dropped out entirely from the analysis. After applying this rule –case wise deletion- 603 observations were included in the final analysis. The estimates of the vote function are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. The Multinomial Estimates of the Vote Function

	AKP						CHP				MHP	
	CHP		MHP		BDP		MHP		BDP		BDP	
	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.
<b>Religion – Public Life</b>	,686	,257	,678	,360	4,455	,072	,987	,979	6,491	,025	6,575	,040
<b>Religion – Private Life</b>	,008	,012	,858	,967	,031	,170	102,19	,208	3,725	,477	,036	,412
<b>Conservatism</b>	1,348	,093	1,347	,203	,487	,088	,999	,998	,362	,018	,362	,032
<b>Islamism</b>	,661	,593	2,317	,332	5,900	,309	3,508	,248	8,932	,204	2,546	,625
<b>Nationalism</b>	2,480	,248	1,763	,569	,000	,000	,711	,772	,000	,000	,000	,000
<b>Media</b>	,967	,726	,979	,869	1,388	,133	1,013	,930	1,436	,110	1,418	,160
<b>Ideology</b>	,065	,000	1,854	,038	,045	,000	28,505	,000	,687	,507	,024	,000
<b>Issues</b>	,522	,205	,652	,461	,615	,619	1,248	,760	1,178	,872	,943	,958
<b>Gender (Female)</b>	1,414	,194	,984	,037	,977	,400	,354	,009	1,177	,791	3,322	,077
<b>Income</b>	1,222	,282	,501	,128	1,664	,417	1,172	,574	,586	,200	,500	,136
<b>Education</b>	1,803	,003	1,432	,061	,716	,554	,870	,624	,419	,066	,482	,159
<b>Age</b>	1,803	,200	1,569	,179	,756	,336	,973	,050	,966	,158	,993	,788
p <0.05	p <0.1	Top row represents the reference category										

Before proceeding to the interpretation of the results, I want to provide some basic explanations on the multinomial regression output. Table 8 uses the odds-ratio -Exp(B)- values for comparisons and covers all possible comparisons between the four parties. Technically “odds-ratio interpretation is based on the ratio of the probabilities that the dependent variable takes on a value

of one category of the dependent variable as opposed to the reference category”(Carkoglu & Kalaycioglu, 2007, p. 181). To put it in a simpler way a value of the  $\text{Exp}(B)$  which is greater than 1 implies that the probability of being the comparison category is greater than the probability of being in the reference category. In other words if an independent variable has an  $\text{Exp}(B)$  value greater than 1, the respondent is likely to belong to comparison category rather than the reference category.

#### *Comparison 1: AKP vs. CHP*

Four variables are reported as significant within this comparison: Religion – Private Life, conservatism, ideology and education. Starting with the religiosity in private life, since the  $\text{Exp}(B)$  is smaller than 1 we may argue that respondents who are less religious in their private life tend to vote CHP rather than the AKP. To put it in numbers, keeping all other variables constant, every additional unit in the category of religiosity in private life, decreases the odds-ratio of voting for CHP by 92 percent as opposed to voting AKP. The  $\text{Exp}(B)$  for the conservatism variable is 1,348, a number greater than 1. So voters who are more conservative (the respondents who do not want their society to change) chose CHP rather than AKP. In numeric terms one unit of increase in the conservativeness scale increases the odds-ratio of voting CHP compared to AKP around 35 percent. Third significant variable is ideology. According to the figures every additional unit in the category of ideology, which is a left to right scale, decreases the chances of voting CHP instead of AKP by 93.5 percent. Last significant variable is education: a unit increase in the scale of education increases the chances of voting CHP instead of AKP by 80 percent.

#### *Comparison 2: AKP vs. MHP*

In this comparison three variables are reported as significant: ideology, gender and education. The  $\text{Exp}(B)$  value of 1,854 indicates that a unit increase on the ideological scale, which is moving from left to right, increases the chance of voting to MHP instead of AKP by 85 percent. When gender is concerned being a female reduces the chances of voting to MHP instead of AKP by approximately two percent. And lastly when education level is analysed, similar to the previous comparison category, increase in education works against AKP: a unit increase in the scale of education increases the chances of voting MHP instead of AKP by 43 percent.

#### *Comparison 3: AKP vs. BDP*

This comparison produced significant results for the four of the independent variables: Religion – Public Life, conservatism, ideology and education. For the religiosity in public life variable, keeping all other variables constant, every additional unit in the relevant scale, increases the odds-ratio of voting for BDP by 4 times as opposed to voting AKP. When conservatism is concerned a single unit increase in the conservatism scale reduces the chances of voting for BDP instead of AKP by half. For the ideology and nationalism variables both parties display strong opposite positions: moving one unit from left to right in the ideology scale reduces the chance for voting BDP instead of AKP by 95 percent. When nationalism is in question there is a nearly perfect negative relationship between the AKP and BDP.

#### *Comparison 4: CHP vs. MHP*

Three variables are reported as significant within this comparison: Ideology, gender and age. According to the figures these parties seem to be polarized on the ideological scale. Moving one unit to right on the ideological scale increases the chance of voting to MHP instead of CHP 28 times. Additionally being female decreases the chances of voting to MHP around 65 percent compared to CHP. Lastly every additional age decreases the chance of voting to MHP instead of CHP by around three percent. That is to say a voter, who is 35 as opposed to 25, is nearly 30 percent more likely is a CHP rather than a MHP voter.

#### *Comparison 5: CHP vs. BDP*

In this comparison four variables are reported as significant: Religion –Public Life, conservatism, nationalism and education. All of these variables also have strong effects. First, for the religiosity in public life variable, keeping all other variables constant, every additional unit in the relevant scale, increases the odds-ratio of voting for BDP by 6 times as opposed to voting CHP. Secondly a unit increase in the conservatism index reduces the chance of voting BDP instead of CHP by 64 percent. Thirdly, as in the AKP – BDP comparison, there is a nearly perfect negative relationship between CHP and BDP when nationalism is in question. Lastly a single unit increase in the education scale reduces the chances of voting BDP instead of CHP by 58 percent.

#### *Comparison 6: MHP vs. BDP*

Five variables are reported as significant within this comparison: Religion –Public Life conservatism, nationalism, ideology and gender. This makes MHP-BDP comparison very similar to CHP-BDP comparison. For the religiosity in public life variable, every additional unit in the relevant scale increases the chances of voting for BDP by 6 times as opposed to voting MHP. Again with a strong affect, a single unit increase in the conservatism index reduces the chance of voting BDP instead of MHP by 64 percent. Thirdly, as in the CHP – BDP comparison, there is a nearly perfect negative relationship between CHP and BDP when nationalism is concerned. Ideology variable produces a similar strong result: one unit of increase in the ideology scale -moving right- reduces the chances of voting to BDP instead of MHP by 98 percent. That is to say a voter, who moves from left to centre or centre to right on the ideology scale, is nearly 100 percent more likely is a MHP rather than a BDP voter. Lastly being female increases the chances of voting to BDP instead of MHP by three times.

## **Conclusion**

Above findings underline a number of important facts. First and foremost, the chosen variables are proven to be relevant for understanding the voting behaviour in Turkey. Still, as expected, their power varies. Nationalism and ideology variables have the strongest effects in differentiating the vote choice among parties. For the nationalism variable, it is evident that BDP voters clearly contrast with all of the other three parties. Apparently this strong differentiation will sustain the legitimacy problem of BDP within the Turkish political system which was mentioned in the theoretical part. Additionally, as indicated in Table 6 the voters of AKP, CHP and MHP recorded high levels of nationalism. Although nationalism is not documented as statistically significant in

differentiating the voters of these parties, it is still possible to argue nationalism is an important factor for all of these three parties and the Turkish political system as a whole. The other variable for assessing the political values, namely Islamism, is statistically insignificant for all parties and thus does not have any explanatory power in voting.

Like nationalism, voters also use left-right distinction as a main criterion for their vote choice. According to the findings AKP and MHP voters are on the right and CHP and BDP voters are on the left side of the political spectrum and statistical power of this distinction is high. Additionally MHP voter differs from AKP voter by being on far right on the scale. Parallel to the literature cited, these findings prove that the left-right division is still a valid factor for Turkish voters.

Conservatism seems to be the other critical factor in identifying political parties. To recall, this study described conservatism as a personal value which is defined by resistance to change in the society. In that sense AKP and BDP voters differ from CHP and MHP, where first two party voters demand change. Although there is no statistically significant difference between CHP and MHP voters on being conservative, the AKP voter, compared to the BDP voter, demand change more powerfully. This finding may explain the insistent manoeuvre of AKP on the Kurdish question. Considering this parallelism on the vote base, AKP may benefit considerably on the condition of the resolution of this chronic problem of Turkish politics. A second parallel pattern between AKP and BDP can also be observed in the variables investigating the personal values. The level of religiosity differentiates AKP and BDP from CHP and MHP voters. Additionally BDP's peculiarity is being more religious on public life compared to AKP. Sociological explanation of this result is beyond the scope of this work. However what is important here is the specification of another common voting ground between the AKP and BDP voters.

For the media variable although BDP differ from other parties (slightly over the 0.1 level of significance in comparisons) analysis did not produce statistically significant results in differentiating the vote choice in conventional boundaries. Opinion about the EU (Issues variable) also falls short to detect the vote choice. This may be due to the declining support and interest in the EU as a salient issue for Turkish citizens.

Lastly findings reveal the fact that education levels clearly set AKP voter apart from the CHP and MHP voters: Voters with low levels of education prefer AKP instead of CHP and MHP. This is also true when CHP and BDP voters are compared; BDP voters display low levels of education compared to the CHP voters. This observation constitutes the third common ground between the AKP and BDP voters, which is low levels of education, accompanied with the religiosity and conservatism. Among the other remaining variables of the model, gender seems to matter for MHP most. Being a male increases the chances of voting to MHP rather than the other three parties significantly. Startlingly income level did not produce significant results for any of the compared parties.

This study with a replicable methodology compared the impact of different factors that are salient in voting behaviour and checked the magnitudes of these factors for different political parties by using a public database. The results demonstrated the fact that the independent variables employed in this study contours the voting behaviour in Turkey. Moreover, as expected theoretically, the magnitude of this effect varies among the political parties. Surely there is

considerable room for the improvement of the model proposed in this study. This piece can be considered as an attempt to broaden the knowledge found in the current literature. By offering a voting model for Turkey, it contributes to the strong body of empirical and theoretical research on voting behaviour. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the growing interest in voting behaviour in the under-studied democracies of the world.

**Acknowledgment:** The author wants to thank to the PERL, Political and Economic Research Laboratory (*Siyasi ve Ekonomik Arastirmalar Laboratuvari*–SEAL) of Atılım University, for the research support provided throughout the study.

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