

Does Ideology Matter? Turkish Public Opinion and Government in Action*

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Introduction

Recently conducted interviews by voting age people have unearthed that social conformity have reached a level of intolerance in several Anatolian cities, where right-wing nationalists and religious vigilantes make life miserable for those who seem to lead non-traditional life styles.¹ Similar research conducted by Yılmaz Esmer,² Ali Çarkođlu and Ersin Kalaycıođlu,³ and Hakan Yılmaz⁴ have also documented that the voters have gone through a re-alignment and shifted their attitudes toward increasing levels of conservatism and Sunni Islamism in the recent decades. Such a shift of public opinion would necessarily mean that a new center of gravity has emerged in the Turkish realm of politics and policy making. The earlier found centripetal tendency of ideological orientation prevalent among the Turkish voters⁵ has now been replaced by a pronounced right wing frame of mind. Turkish voters have come to register more openly Sunni religious understanding of life styles, traditional, rural, agricultural values and norms of social interaction, and a distinct proclivity for respect for the elderly, family values, domestic roles for women, docile youth respectful of their family elders and the like.⁶ A marked tendency toward resuscitating the values and lifestyles of an undefined past also appears as the modal responses of the voting age population in surveys. Under these

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¹ Binnaz Toprak (proje sorumlusu), İrfan Bozan, Tan Morgül, Nedim Şener, *Türkiye'de Farklı Olmak: Din ve Muhazakarlık Ekseninde Ötekileştirilenler*, (Istanbul, Boğaziçi University Bilimsel Araştırmalar Projesi, no.11124, December 2008): passim.

² Yılmaz Esmer (1995), "Parties and the Electorate: A Comparative Analysis of Voter Profiles of Turkish Political Parties," in Çigdem Balim et. al. (eds.) *Turkey: Political, Social and Economic Challenges in the 1990s*, (Leiden, New York, Köln: E. J. Brill): pp. 74-89, and Yılmaz Esmer (2002), "At the Ballot Box: Determinants of Voting Behavior," in Sabri Sayari and Yılmaz Esmer (eds.) *Politics, Parties, and Elections in Turkey*, (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner): pp. 91-114.

³ Ali Çarkođlu and Ersin Kalaycıođlu, *The Rising Tide of Conservatism in Turkey*, (New York, Macmillan - Palgrave, 2009): passim, and see also Ersin Kalaycıođlu, "Politics of Conservatism in Turkey" *Turkish Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, (June 2007): pp. 233-252.

⁴ Hakan Yılmaz, "Turkish Conservatism and the Idea of Europe" in Thierry Fabre and Paul Sant Cassia (eds.) *Between Europe and the Mediterranean: The Challenges and the Fears*, ed., New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, pp. 137-161, and "Conservatism in Turkey," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Spring 2008, pp. 57- 65.

⁵ Üstün Ergüder, "Changing Patterns of Electoral Behavior in Turkey," *Boğaziçi University Journal*, 8-9, (1980-81): 45-81, and Ersin Kalaycıođlu "Elections and Party Preferences in Turkey: Changes and Continuities in the 1990s," *Comparative Political Studies*, 27: 3 (October 1994): pp. 402-424.

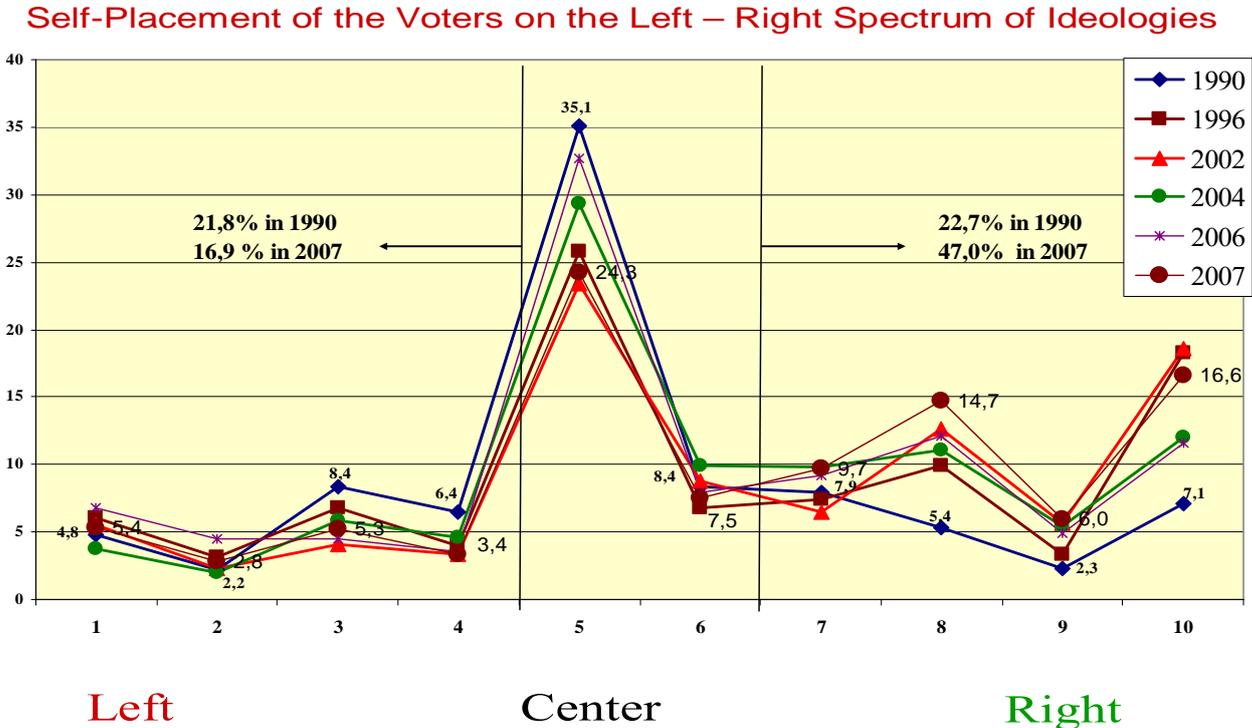
⁶ Ali Çarkođlu and Ersin Kalaycıođlu, *The Rising Tide of Conservatism...*: pp. 75 – 96.

circumstances it is plausible to expect to observe change of attitudes, expectations, and demands of the public from the government toward new policy priorities and directions. Unfortunately we have little if any research that focus on the nexus between the state of mind (ideology) of the Turkish voters and their policy expectations from the government, on the one hand, and the government policies, on the other. This paper sets out to examine the relationship between the ideological traits and policy expectations of the voters during the election campaign of the last general election in Turkey in the summer of 2007.

Voter Re-alignment and Ideology in Turkish Politics

Turkish politics has gone through a major voter re-alignment that started in the 1990s and by 2007 the Turkish voters have shifted their stance on the left –right ideological spectrum to the right. Figure 1 provides a summary image of how the Turkish political opinion shifted from the center to the right since the end of the Cold War. In 1990 about 22 percent of the voters depicted their self ideological placement as the left, and another 23 percent placed themselves on the right, and the rest 55 percent picked their self – placement as the center of the left – right spectrum in Turkey. During the 2007 national election campaign about 17 percent depicted their place as the left, about 47 percent as the right, and the rest 36 percent picked their self-placement as the center of the left – right spectrum (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Changing Ideological Spectrum in Turkey (1990 – 2007)



Source: Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "Politics of Conservatism in Turkey," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, (June 2007): p. 235.

It seems as if that the major difference between Turkish voting behavior in the Cold War versus the voting behavior in the post Cold War era was not that in the former times the voters failed to support the right of center parties and suddenly in the 1990s they began to extend their support toward them. In the Cold War era most voters seemed not to be disinclined to vote for the right-of-center parties, however, they considered themselves as “centrists.” Their party preferences at the polls seemed to be less ideological and more tactical. However, in the 1990s plurality of the voters began to self identify with the right, and an unprecedented number of voters (almost 20 percent) declared themselves as “extreme right wing” (chose 10 on the scale in Figure 1). In the post Cold War era the Turkish voters seemed to be voting for the right wing parties as they started to possess right wing mentality at the same time. At first sight the voting decisions seemed to become less tactical and more ideological. However, at the same time identity began to emerge as a major source of political discourse in the Turkish media and politics, while clashes over ethnic and religious identity began to gain increasing importance in the politics of the country. Since the 1990s ethnic terror and religious mobilization have contributed to the shaping of political issues, thinking, deliberation and action in Turkish politics. The rise of the PKK as a major source of threat and conflict in Turkish politics, which coincided with the rise of the *tarikats* (religious brotherhoods) in Turkish society, economy and politics provided ample evidence of the developing importance of identity in Turkish socio-political life.

In the meantime, the Turkish economy had begun its transformation from a mixed to liberal market economy in 1980. However, major steps in privatization and liberalization of the economy were taken not only in the 1980s but also in the 1990s, and beyond. Indeed, the performance of the economy also seemed to have mattered in the voting decisions.⁷ As such, we may also suspect that performance of the government in the realm of macro economics also mattered in the attitudes of the people toward the policies adopted and promoted by the political parties of the right and the left. Therefore, ideological realignment of the Turkish voting age population also seemed to coincide with the re-surfacing of ethnic and religious identities in Turkish politics.⁸ Therefore, if we are to assess the impact of ideology on attitudes toward policy positions and the policy choices of the political parties in Turkey, we also need to consider the role played by ethnic and religious identity on the popular attitudes toward socio-economic and foreign policies of Turkey. The following part of this paper focuses on the relative role of ideology among several factors,

⁷ Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, “Justice and Development Party at the Helm: Resurgence of Islam or Restitution of Right of Center Predominant Party?” (Unpublished paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Midwest Political Science Association at the Palmer House, Chicago, Illinois during April 3-6, 2008).

⁸ See Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, “Justice and Development Party at the Helm: Resurgence of Islam or Restitution of Right of Center Predominant Party?” (Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Conference of the Midwest Political Science Association at the Palmer House, Chicago, Illinois during April 3-6, 2008).

mentioned in the preceding paragraphs above, in determining the socio-political and foreign policy preferences of the voters in Turkey.

Ideology, Identity, and Socio-economic Policy Preferences

A host of policies pertaining to the management of the economy, social welfare, human rights standards and other democratizing political reforms and the like have constituted the major issues of Turkish politics during the last two decades in Turkey. The sudden realignment of the ideological make up of the Turkish voters coincided with these changes. Therefore, one obvious logical inference is that the rightward shift in the mind set of the voters also provided for the shift in policies toward free market reforms, democratization of the political system, and other socio-cultural orientations in political attitudes and their policy consequences in Turkey. The null hypothesis in this case is that the occurrence of the two phenomena, ideological shift to the right of the people and the changes in socio-economic and cultural policies of the Turkish state are not related, they happen to be a mere coincidence. The rightward ideological shift of the people and the changes in socio-economic, cultural and political changes and reforms occurred due to completely different reasons, although they occurred at the same time frame in the country.

The end of the Cold War also provided a new political environment for ethnic and religious identities to play a more pronounced role in the socio – economic, and cultural policies of the country and the democratization of the political system. The new socio-political milieu of Turkey should be expected to have played some role in determining the way people oriented themselves to the political events of the day. The emerging importance of ethnic and religious identity should also be expected to have played some role in defining the political - ideological orientations of the Turkish voters. In fact, there seems to be some evidence that the left – right positioning of the people coincide with their ethnic and religious identity. Secularly oriented voters have been considered as leftists, while the pious Sunnis seemed to have affiliated themselves with the rightists in Turkey.⁹ Again, those who identified themselves with Kurdism (*Kürtçülük*) have often been considered as leftists, while those identified with Turkism (*Türkçülük*) have also been identified with the right of the left – right spectrum in Turkey.¹⁰ If we depart from these earlier findings, we

⁹ Ali Çarkoğlu, “The nature of Left – Right Ideological Self-placement in the Turkish Context,” *Turkish Studies*, vol. 8., no. 2, (June 2007): p. 267 concludes that “... The left and the right as reflected in the determinants of self – placements along the L – R scale have no tangible socio-economic basis such as economic deprivation but have instead bases in ethnic and sectarian differences.” He then goes on to argue that “... left is characterized by progressive, tolerant, democratic attitudes with low levels of religiosity and critical evaluations of the economic policy performance of government.” (p. 268) He goes on to argue that the right wing individuals have lower levels of social tolerance, less democratic and more authoritarian tendencies who tend to “.. approve of Shari’a rule in the legal system of the country...” (p. 269).

¹⁰ Field surveys indicated that the self perceived ideological positioning of the sympathizers of the Democratic Turkey Party (DTP), which has been touting rights for the Kurdish ethnics in Turkey, systematically placed that

should be able to find a systematic relationship between religious and ethnic identity and ideology as positioning on the left – right spectrum in Turkish politics. Therefore, ideology as represented by the self – placement of the voting age population on the left – right spectrum then emerges not as a fully independent source of policy preferences of the voters. Therefore, it seems warranted to hypothesize that ethnic and religious identity influence and in part help to construct political ideology (left – right positioning of the voters) in Turkey. The relationship between political ideology and policy preferences may not be any more than a spurious relationship, while ethnic and religious identities determine both political ideology and policy choices of the voters.

There is little reason if any to assume that economic satisfaction and expectations are dependent upon ethnic and religious identities of the voters. We can safely assume that economic satisfaction with the performance of the government emerges as an exogenous independent variable that determines the policy preferences of the people. Economic satisfaction and expectations may be considered as a separate source that influences the ideas of the people to shift toward adopting an ideological perspective that is in agreement with the economic benefits people perceive in the performance of the party in government.¹¹ However, evidence presented by Ali Çarkoğlu indicates that such a connection is hardly strong. Under the current circumstances, it is not implausible to incorporate economic satisfaction and expectations of the government as a separate exogenous source that influences socio-economic policy preferences of the voters, but not their ideological predispositions.

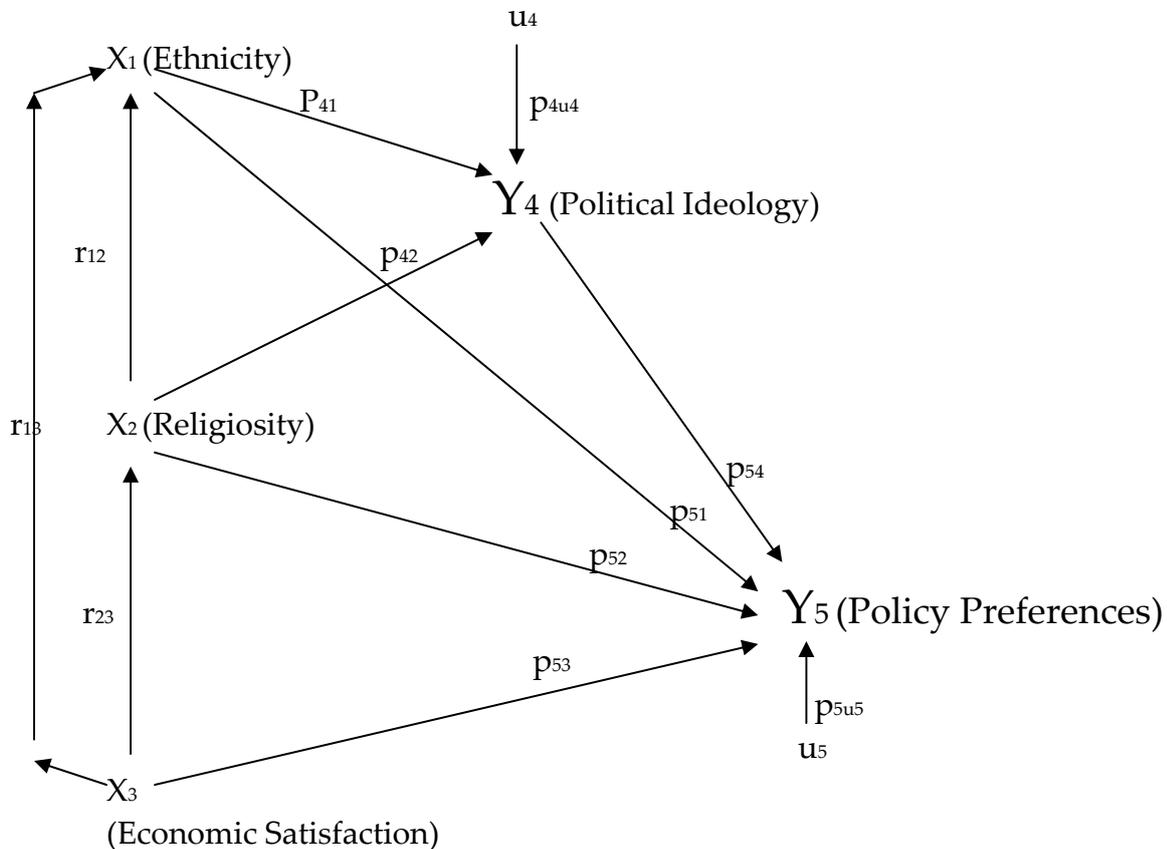
Consequently, it is plausible to posit a causal model that consists of the three exogenous variables of ethnic identity, religious identity, and economic satisfaction, and two endogenous variables of political ideology (left – right spectrum) and socio-economic and cultural policy orientations (see Figure 2). The dependent variable in Figure 2 is simply stated as “policy preferences” in the plural though we will test the model with popular attitudes toward different policy preferences, namely economic policies including attitudes toward social welfare policies, culture policies pertaining to religion and *laiklik*, attitudes toward the handling of human rights issues by the government in the following. Therefore, we do not have one measure of the

party in the far left of the left – right spectrum in Turkey (see Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, “Politics of Conservatism ...”, (June 2007): p. 239 (fig. 2)).

¹¹ Although Ali Çarkoğlu in his above-mentioned study argues that left – right self – placement of the individual voters is totally independent of tangible socio-economic basis (loc. cit.: p. 267), he later asserts in the same article that “being critical of the economic performance of the government” is related to left – right positioning of the voter (loc. Cit.: p. 268). In this paper therefore, it is his second proposition that pertains to satisfaction from and expectations of economic performance of the management of the macro economy by the government is what is incorporated in this study as a potential source of left – right self placement of the individual voter in Turkey.

dependent variable, but several measures for attitudes of the voters toward different policy domains.

Figure 2: A Causal Model of Determinants of Policy Preferences



Simultaneous Equations:

$$Y_5 = p_{51} X_1 + p_{52} X_2 + p_{53} X_3 + p_{54} Y_4 + p_{5u5} u_5.$$

$$Y_4 = p_{41} X_1 + p_{42} X_2 + p_{4u4} u_4.$$

The Data and the Setting

The data for this study are collected in a national field survey of voter attitudes, values, beliefs, orientations, and reported behavior concerning party preferences during the July 22, 2007 general elections in Turkey. Our sampling procedure took target sample size as 2000. First, Turkish Statistical Institute's (*Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu*-TUIK) NUT-1 regions are adopted and the target sample was distributed according to each region's share of urban and rural population according to registered voter records for 2002 election. We used TUIK's block data and decided

to take the 200 blocks of equal size. We targeted to reach 10 voters from each block. We applied probability proportionate to population size (PPS) principle in selecting neighborhood and villages from each TUIK-1 region of urban and rural localities. All neighborhoods and villages are separated into NUT-1 regions and PPS selection was applied to select neighborhoods and villages. For every one of these blocks we also picked a randomly selected a replacement in accordance with PPS for cases where the 10 planned interviews could not be completed in the primary selected neighborhood or village. From each of these neighborhoods block addresses are obtained from TUIK. 10 addresses from each neighborhood were given to the fieldworkers and all addresses were asked to be reached. When 10 interviews could not be completed after two visits to each address the remaining interviews were completed from the replacement block via the same procedure. In rural areas the selected villages were visited and addresses were obtained from the village headman (*muhtar*). If 10 interviews from a village cannot be completed its replacement village was visited and the same procedure was applied. In selecting the individual to be interviewed from each household an alphabetical list of all residents above the age of 18 was first formed. Then the alphabetically the first name was selected for interview. If this individual was not available for interview in the household a second individual in the same alphabetical order was selected for interview. Individuals who were replacements of the first selection were noted in the dataset for tests of significant difference. In order to take account of cancellations after the fieldwork controls at least two interviews were conducted from the replacement lists from each urban block and village. The surveys were conducted in the month before the general elections, in the heat of the election campaign period, when the voter attention in political parties, candidates and political issues of the day was at a peak. A total of 2018 prospective voters were interviewed at their households, and the resulting sampling error was +/- 2.3%.

Dependent Variable(s)

As already indicated in the preceding the dependent variable for this paper consists of popular attitudes toward different public policies in Turkey. Since it is the goal of this paper to assess the role political ideology in determining the policy preferences of the people, it is plausible to assume that in one policy domain, such as macro economic policy the role of ideology may be less and economic satisfaction and prospects may be more, while in another such as secularism, the role of ideology may be the more important source of policy preferences than other factors. Therefore, multiple measures of popular attitudes toward different policies are constructed and presented in the following (see Tables 1a and 1b, and Table 2). A set of items concerning attitudes toward economic policies concerning privatization, taxation, labor market regulation, agricultural subsidies, foreign capital investment and social welfare expenditures were tapped. Eleven point scales indicating how far each respondent supported or rejected economic practices concerning the above

mentioned six policy areas were constructed and presented to the respondents. Each respondent was requested to register their attitudes per economic policy realm by indicating where they stand on the eleven point scales presented to them. The results of the enquiries are presented in Table 1a.

The same procedure was followed for six social policy domains which included abortion, family planning, foreign policy, human rights, immigration, and secularism. The registered responses are presented in Table 1b.

Table 1a: Attitudes towards Economic Policy (Percentages, 2007)

Categories	Privatization ¹	Labor Market Regulation ²	Taxation ³	Agricultural Policy ⁴	Social Welfare ⁵	Foreign Capital Investment ⁶
0	6,2	29,4	41,8	43,9	43,4	12,0
1	3,4	14,6	19,4	18,7	18,8	5,1
2	3,2	8,0	8,2	9,6	7,8	6,6
3	2,6	4,8	4,2	4,4	4,2	4,8
4	3,1	3,5	2,4	3,2	4,7	3,5
5	16,7	15,4	7,8	8,0	10,5	21,2
6	5,3	3,7	2,3	2,3	1,8	5,6
7	8,0	4,3	2,7	2,4	2,3	7,3
8	11,1	5,1	2,4	2,2	1,8	8,0
9	8,7	2,6	2,0	1,2	,9	6,6
10	29,1	7,6	6,1	3,4	3,2	16,7
Missing	2,7	1,2	0,8	0,8	0,5	2,6
Total (%)	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Total (n)	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018

Notes: (1) "All economic enterprises owned by the state should be privatized = 0," and "state should own a significant number of economic enterprises = 10."

(2) "The first priority the State should be job creation even though it may risk increasing inflation = 0," and "there are more important priorities of the state such as keeping the parity of the TL up and inflation rate down than job creation = 10."

(3) "The amount of tax one pays should increase as one's income increases = 0," and "everyone should pay the same rate of tax irrespective of one's income = 10."

(4) "Agricultural subsidies should follow otherwise farmers and peasant will not be able to survive = 0," and "agricultural subsidies should be terminated for no sector should be specially supported to the detriment of the others = 10."

(5) "State should provide for all such welfare expenditures as education and health," and "social welfare expenditures on education and health should be privately funded = 10."

(6) "So long as it contributes to production and job creation it does not matter whether capital used is national or international. =0," and "To protect our economic independence foreign capital needs to be restricted = 10."

Table 1b: Attitudes towards Socio-political Policies (Percentages, 2007)

Categories	Human Rights ¹	Secularism ²	Foreign Policy ³	Family Planning ⁴	Abortion ⁵	Immigration ⁶
0	13,6	31,5	8,2	10,2	12,1	5,4
1	6,4	12,7	5,0	3,7	5,2	3,4
2	5,1	7,5	3,9	2,8	5,4	2,8
3	3,6	4,7	4,3	3,2	4,0	2,8
4	2,9	4,1	4,1	3,3	3,8	3,3
5	11,9	14,8	16,4	14,3	25,4	26,7
6	3,3	4,2	4,4	4,3	4,4	6,5
7	5,6	4,3	6,5	4,8	4,4	7,8
8	11,0	4,2	9,5	9,1	6,6	8,1
9	7,5	2,8	7,4	8,2	5,6	6,1
10	28,0	8,3	27,8	35,4	21,3	24,8
Missing	0,9	1,0	2,5	0,0	2,0	2,3
Total (%)	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Total (n)	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018

Notes: (1) "Crimes should be severely punished even if it violates human rights = 0," and "in fighting crime human rights cannot be slighted = 10."

(2) "All relations between the state and religion should be severed = 0," and "state should be influential on religious affairs = 10."

(3) "Foreign policy should have the priority of promoting close relations with the EU = 0," and "the priority of foreign policy should be the preservation of economic and political independence, even if that means deteriorating relations with the EU = 10."

(4) "Families should be encouraged to have more children, and the State should provide more money to such families = 0," and "Family planning should be encouraged so that families do not have more children than they can provide for = 10."

(5) "If she so desires a woman should be left free to abort a pregnancy whenever she wishes = 0," and "A woman should not be permitted to carry out an abortion of her pregnancy whenever she wishes = 10."

(6) "Foreigners who live in Turkey should be given more incentives to settle in Turkey = 0," and "Government should prevent foreigners from settling in our country = 10."

The eleven point attitude scales on economic and social policy reported in Tables 1a and 1b were then submitted to a factor analysis run. The outcome of the factor analysis run is presented in Table 2. The twelve economic issues probed in the preceding yielded four different economic and social policy bundles or dimensions, which represents attitudes toward what are to be called as economic étatism, laiklik (*laïcité*), value of life, and welfare state in the rest of this paper. The factor scores calculated per dimension reported on Table 2 are then calculated and saved as the dependent variables of this study. These four dimensions, each representing a different policy realm are incorporated as four dependent variables of this study in the following.

Table 2: Attitudes of the Turkish Voters toward Socio-economic policies (Factor Analysis, 2007)

Items	Dimensions			
	Welfare State	Etatism	Human Rights	Laiklik
Human rights protection in fighting crime	,084	,002	,776	,012
State in the Economy	-,096	,555	,329	,006
Separation of state and religion	,416	-,027	-,091	,606
State in providing inflation	,560	-,055	,277	,229
Progressive taxation	,606	-,112	,030	,211
EU preponderance in Turkish Foreign policy	-,045	,588	,169	-,078
State subsidy for agriculture	,786	,033	-,088	-,080
Welfare state	,806	,062	,011	-,115
National vs. international capital	,191	,666	,065	-,011
Family planning	-,025	,303	,596	-,086
Abortion	-,093	,038	-,003	,844
State should facilitate immigration of foreigners	-,168	,659	-,309	,167

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Independent Variables

The causal model specified in Figure 2 incorporates four independent variables, three of which are exogenous and one of which is endogenous variables. Ethnicity, religiosity and economic expectations and prospects are the three exogenous variables and political ideology is the only endogenous variable of the model. The measures of these independent variables as incorporated into the causal model are shown in the following.

Ethnicity

In this paper ethnicity is measured by reference to mother tongue and knowledge of Turkish, Kirmanç or some other language. In the following the respondents' answers to the question on what language they spoke with their mother as children at home are presented (see Tables 3 and 4). Those who spoke some Kurdish dialect with their mother while growing up and who are still fluent in some dialect of Kurdish constitute about 11.9 percent of our sample. In this paper ethnicity is measured as those whose tongue is some dialect of Kurdish versus others, who overwhelmingly are fluent only in Turkish. The former category of respondents is assigned "1" in the data set, while the others are assigned "0".

**Table 3: Language Spoken with Mother at Home
(First Mentioned)**

Language	Frequency	Percent
Turkish	1700	84,2
Kirmanç	140	6,9
Arabic	21	1,0
Zaza	18	,9
Laz	7	,3
Other	22	1,1
No Response	110	5,5
Total	2018	100,0

**Table 4: Language Spoken with Mother at Home
(Second Mentioned)**

Language	Frequency	Percent
Turkish	48	2,4
Kirmanç	33	1,6
Arabic	2	,1
Zaza	4	,2
Laz	2	,1
Other	4	,2
Missing	1925	95,4
Total	2018	100,0

Religiosity

The feelings toward religion and religious observance of the voters are measured through a set of questions that the respondents answered in the pre-election survey of 2007. The questions posed are listed as items that were submitted to a principal components factor analysis run, and they are as follows:

- “1. Do you belong to a religion?
 2. Over the last year, other than funeral services, how often were you able to go to mosque for worship?
 3. Irrespective of how often you actually worship, how religious do you consider yourself to be?
 4. Can people freely practice their worship in accordance with the stipulations of their religion?
 5. Are the religious people under oppression in Turkey?
 6. Would you like to see a *Şeriat* (Sharia) based religious state founded in Turkey?”

The items do not indicate that they load on a single dimension, for three linearly independent dimensions emerged from the factor analysis run (see Table 5). One dimension consists of freedom of conscience, another consists of faith in religion, and the third one emphasizes *Şeriat* based practice and rule in Turkey, which may best be referred to as political Islam. The factor scores that correspond to each dimension are separately computed and summed up to produce an index of overall religiosity, which in turn is used in the estimation of the path coefficients of the causal model as specified in Figure 2.

Table 5: Religiosity in Turkey

Items	Freedom of Conscience	Faith	Political Islam
1. Belong to a religion	,046	,866	-,184
2. Attend mosque services to worship	,008	,143	,749
3. How religious does the R feel	,005	,732	,413
4. Freely practice religion or worship	-,861	-,039	,038
5. Religious people are oppressed	,830	,010	,167
6. Desire <i>Şeriat</i> state in Turkey	,105	-,084	,691

Satisfaction with the Performance of the Economy

Evaluations, perceptions and reactions to the economic policies of the government are operationalized by means of a principal factor analysis of six items that tapped the following:

- “1. Over the last year how much of an impact did the economic policies of the government have upon your FAMILY’s economic condition?
 2. On a similar scale could you evaluate the impact of the government policies upon TURKEYS economic condition?
 3. How satisfactory is your PRESENT personal economic condition?
 4. How will your FAMILYs economic condition change over the next year?
 5. How will TURKEYs economic condition change over the next year?
 6. In the past year, how has the economic welfare of your household fared?”

The first five items were eleven point scales that ran between “very bad = 0” and “very good = 10”. The last items was a five point scale that ran between “could only survive with debt= 1” and “able to save some income = 5”. When these six items were factor analyzed through a principal components procedure a single dimension of economic satisfaction was extracted, as shown in Table 6. Factor scores for the single dimension of Economic Satisfaction were computed and used in calculating the path coefficients of the model specified in Figure 2 of this paper.

Table 6: Satisfaction with the Economic Performance of the Government

Items	Economic Satisfaction
1. Over the last year how much of an impact did the governments economic policies have upon your FAMILYS economic condition	,801
2. On a similar scale could you evaluate the impact of the government policies upon TURKEYS economic condition	,836
3. How satisfactory is your PRESENT personal economic condition	,764
4. How will your FAMILYs economic condition change over the next year	,805
5. How will TURKEYs economic condition change over the next year	,817
6. In the past year, how has your household fared?	,421

Political Ideology: Positioning on the Left – Right Spectrum

To measure political ideology of the Turkish voters the respondents were asked if made sense to them to place themselves on a ten item scale that ran between the most left “1” and the most right “10” (see Table 7). Only about 4 percent of the respondents were unable to place themselves on the left – right ideological spectrum and they were eliminated from following the data analysis in this paper.

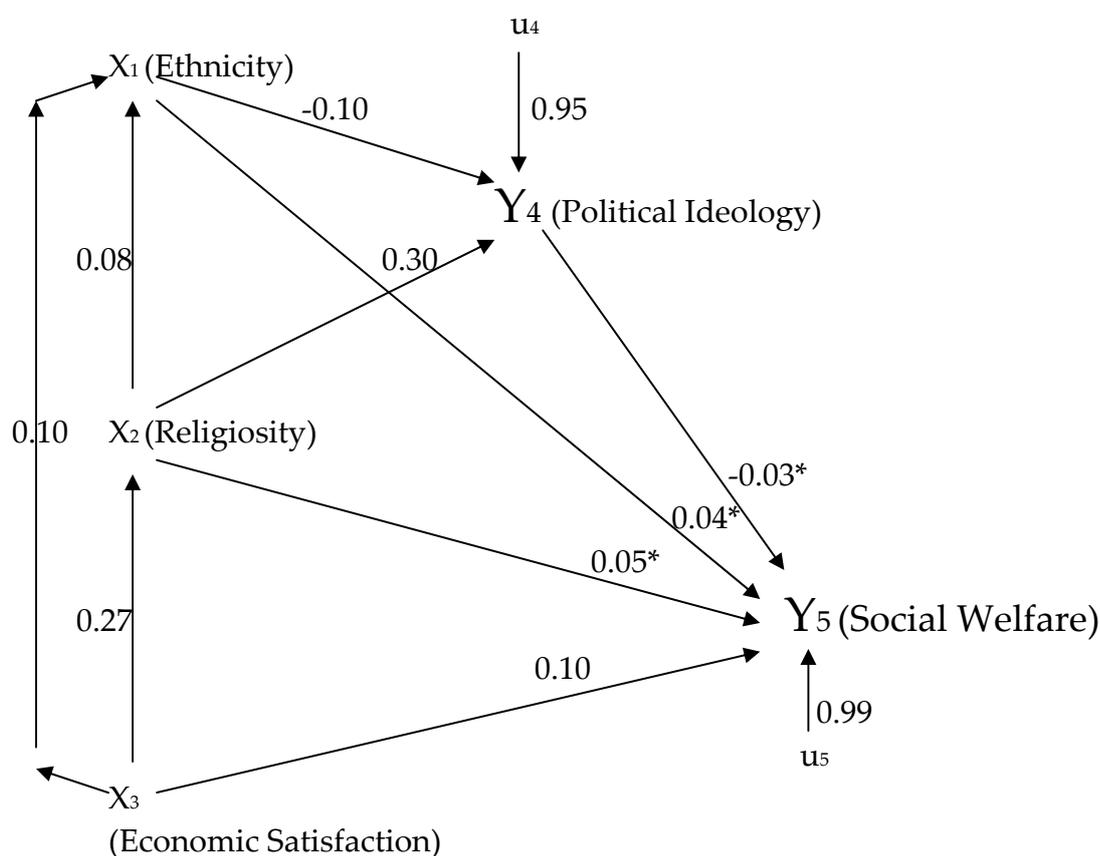
Table 7: The Self-placement of the Voters on the Left – Right Spectrum (2007)

Items	Frequency	Percent
1 Most Left	116	5,7
2	56	2,8
3	102	5,1
4	68	3,4
5	498	24,7
6	148	7,3
7	194	9,6
8	304	15,1
9	121	6,0
10 Most Right	328	16,3
Don't Know/ No Response	83	4,1
Total	2018	100,0

Findings

The results of the data analysis reveal the following path coefficients, which are presented in the four figures presented below (see Figures 4 through 6). Except for *laiklik* policies none of the causal models actually explain much. Except for social welfare policies, political ideology, in more specific terms where the individual voter places himself on the left – right spectrum in Turkey seems to matter modestly. In fact, political ideology seems to be deeply influenced religiosity and economic satisfaction levels of the voters, while ethnicity seems to play less of a role in determining political ideology. Nevertheless, Kurds tend to place themselves on the right of the left – right spectrum, and similarly more pious Sunni Muslims also tend to do so. It is also of little surprise that those who are economically satisfied tend to place themselves on the right of the left – right scale as well (see Figures 3 through 6).

Figure 3: Political Ideology and Attitudes toward Social Welfare Policies in Turkey (2007)



Simultaneous Equations:

$$Y_5 = 0.04^* X_1 + 0.05^* X_2 + 0.10 X_3 - 0.03^* X_4 + 0.94 u_5; R^2 = 0.02$$

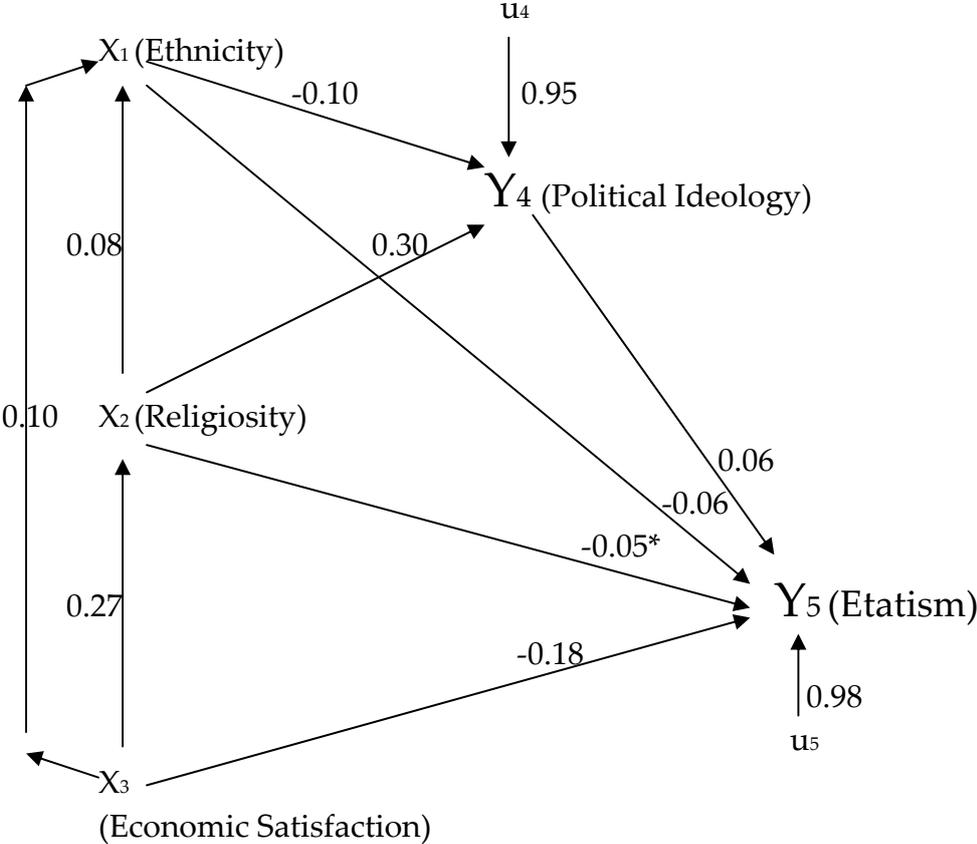
$$Y_4 = -0.10 X_1 + 0.30 X_2 + 0.95 u_4.$$

n = 1543.

Note: (*) Statistically insignificant at 0.05 level of significance.

The only determinant of attitudes of the voters toward social welfare policies seems to be economic satisfaction of the voters (see Figure 3). Those who seem to be satisfied with the handling of the government of the Turkish economy seem to be positively inclined to support social welfare policies of the government. Religiosity, ethnicity, and political ideology do not seem to matter. No strong cues seem to be given to the political parties by religious and ethnic communities, or those who are ideologically motivated (see Figure 3).

Figure 4: Political Ideology and Attitudes toward Economic Etatism in Turkey (2007)



Simultaneous Equations:

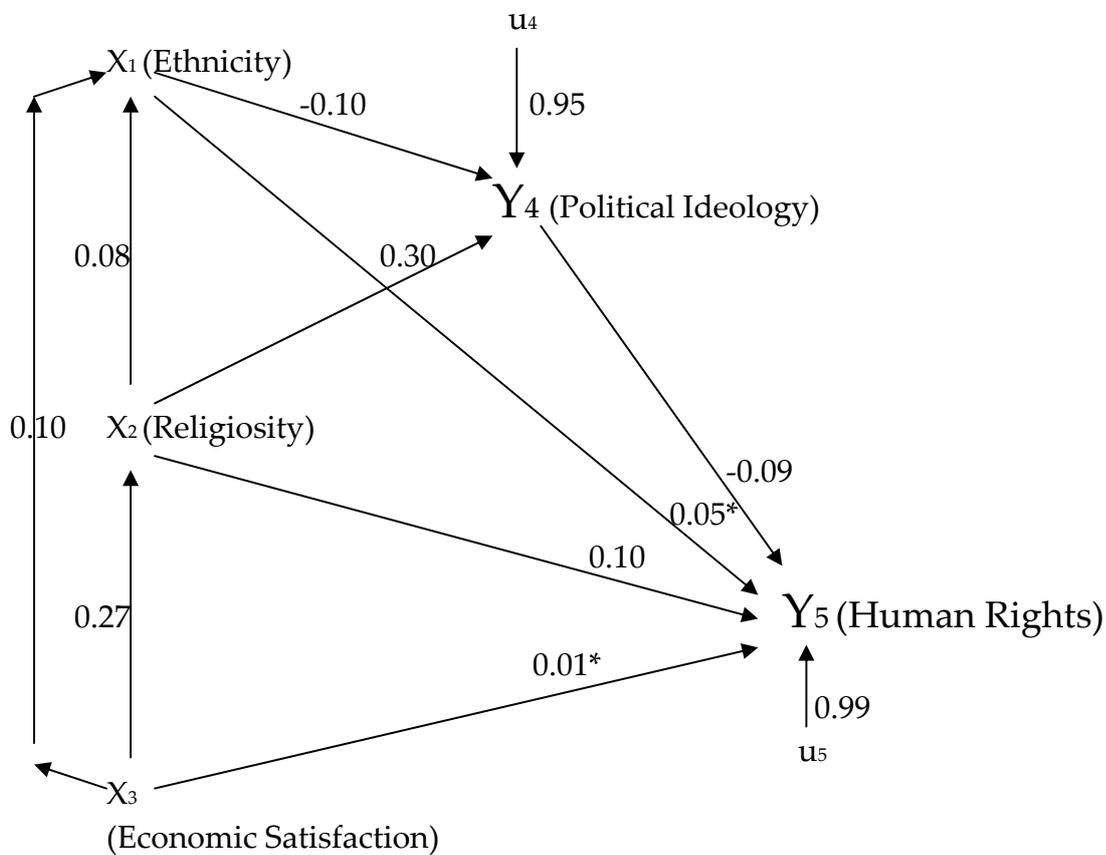
$$Y_5 = - 0.06 X_1 - 0.05^* X_2 - 0.18 X_3 + 0.06 X_4 + 0.94 u_5; R^2 = 0.04$$

$$Y_4 = -0.10 X_1 + 0.30X_2 + 0.95 u_4. \quad n = 1543.$$

Note: (*) Statistically insignificant at 0.05 level of significance.

Economic étatism does not seem to be influenced by levels of religiosity. However, Kurds seem to be least impressed by such economic measures as privatization and liberal market practices and thus more sensitized to state led growth and investment (see Figure 4). Economically satisfied seem to be most inclined to support liberal market practices, privatization, foreign capital investments, and least inclined to support state investment and intervention in the economy (see Figure 4). However, it is interesting to note that those who consider themselves on the right of the left – right spectrum are more inclined to be étatist, although they also seem to be supportive of the anti-étatist Justice and Development Party (AKP) government at the polls.¹²

Figure 5: Political Ideology and Attitudes toward Human Rights Policies in Turkey (2007)



Simultaneous Equations:

$$Y_5 = 0.05^* X_1 - 0.10 X_2 + 0.01^* X_3 - 0.09 X_4 + 0.94 u_5; R^2 = 0.02$$

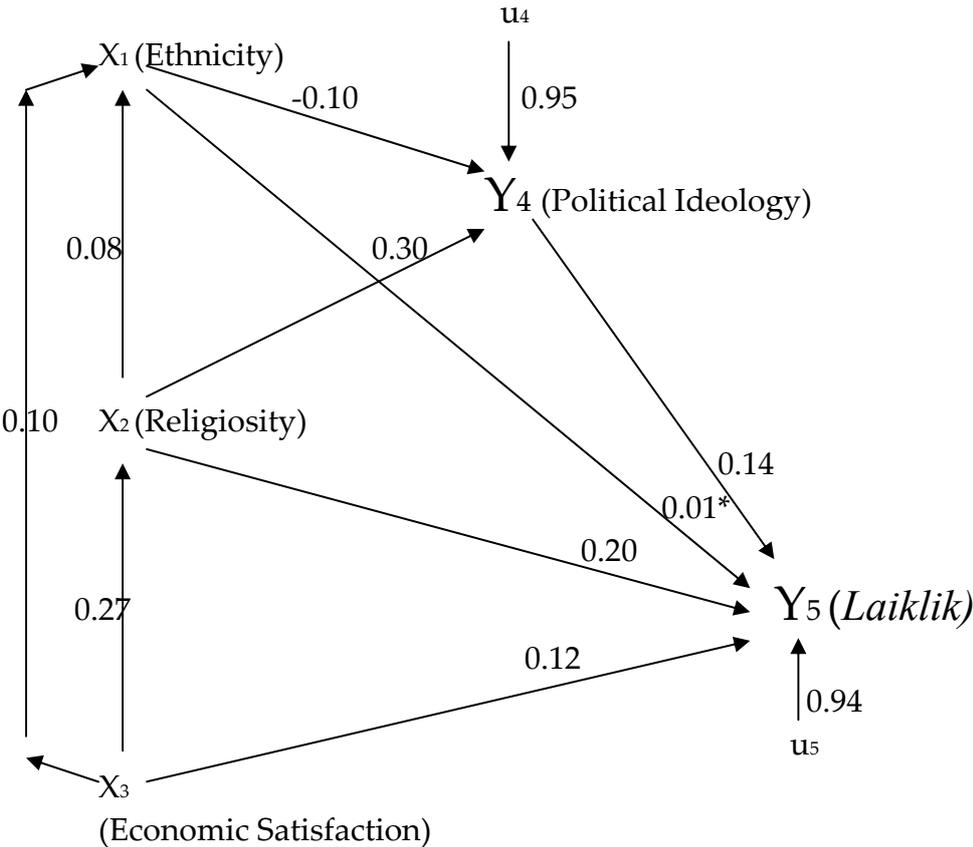
$$Y_4 = -0.10 X_1 + 0.30 X_2 + 0.95 u_4. \quad n = 1543.$$

Note: (*) Statistically insignificant at 0.05 level of significance.

¹² Ali Çarkoğlu, "Ideology or Economic Pragmatism?: Profiling Turkish Voters in 2007," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2, (June 2008): pp. 332 -338.

Human rights policies seem to be most in demand by the secular (*laik*) and economically dissatisfied voters, whereby ethnicity and religiosity seem to be playing no role in determining attitudes toward the human rights policies of the government (see Figure 5). It seems as if it is the secular left and the pious Sunni religious communities who show some inclination to promote sensitivities toward human rights issues for completely different reasons. The former do not tend to vote for the governing AKP. The latter has a relatively narrow agenda pertaining to its standards and understanding of religious practice and lifestyle, the promotion of which do not seem to enhance democratization but cause new battles over the *laiklik* policy between the secular and Islamist political forces in the country. Hence, the AKP in government made a few moves on the *türban* issue and more recently on the Imam – Hatip Lycees, the former of which almost led to its own closure by the Constitutional Court, while the latter seems to have met some success in the Higher Educational Council (YÖK) for the time being.

Figure 6: Political Ideology and Attitudes toward *Laiklik* (*Laïcité*) in Turkey (2007)



Simultaneous Equations:

$$Y_5 = 0.01^* X_1 + 0.20 X_2 + 0.12 X_3 + 0.14 X_4 + 0.94 u_5; R^2 = 0.11$$

$$Y_4 = -0.10 X_1 + 0.30 X_2 + 0.95 u_4. \quad n = 1543.$$

Note: (*) Statistically insignificant at 0.05 level of significance.

Finally, cultural policies pertaining to *laiklik* are deeply influenced, as expected, by religiosity, economic satisfaction levels of the voters, but unexpectedly, not by ethnicity in Turkey (see Figure 6). Political ideology as the self placement of the voters on the left – right scale also seemed to matter. It seems as if those who consider themselves as rightists seem to be supportive of such policy reversals as establishing ties between the state and religion in Turkey. Anti – *laik* policies seem to be more at home with the more religious Sunni voters, who also seem to be overwhelmingly located at the right of the ideological spectrum in the country.

It seems as if political ideology plays some independent role influencing policy preferences in cultural realms of policy making as it augments the impact of ethnic and religious identity and economic satisfaction on policy preferences of the voters. Although political ideology makes an impact on the policy preferences of the voters, it is hard to argue that political parties and most specifically the one in government takes note of such preferences during the elections. More research is needed to understand the nexus between the policy preferences of the voters and the actual policies designed and followed by political parties in government in Turkey. Here, all we were able to establish is that political ideology seemed to matter non-economic policy areas, although political ideology constituted one independent source of influence on policy preferences of the voters, its impact was relatively modest. Economic policy preferences are even less influenced by political ideology, though the direction of that influence seemed to run counter to what the AKP governments have been following as economic policies.

Conclusion

Ideology matters in cultural policies, but not as much on economic policy, social welfare or human rights policies. Indeed, we can further argue that it is the *laiklik* policy realm in which ideology seems to play some but humble role, as a source of influence that goes beyond religion or economic concerns in influencing attitudes toward policies that determine the relationship between the religion and State (*Din ve Devlet*). Not only being religious but also being a rightist seems to have some specific and independent influence on where one stands in the *laiklik* policies and practices in Turkey, which differs systematically and meaningfully from those who are secular and leftists. Economic satisfaction with the government policies seem to matter less than either religiosity or ideology on determining where one stands on the relations between religion and state in Turkey. I tend to consider this finding to represent the influence of the fundamental *kulturkampf* in Turkey between the cultural characteristics and life-style of the Center versus the heterodox, tradition minded Periphery. It seems as if it is the findings presented in Figure 6 that most clearly demonstrates the continuing role of Center versus Periphery in Turkish

politics. It is much less than what it used to be, but it still persists to influence culture policies and most specifically those policies that relate to the boundaries of religion and the state.

Figure 5 also seems to give a similar impression of the independence of religious identity and political ideology. Those with higher levels of religiosity and those who place themselves on the left of the Left – Right spectrum seem to show greater sensitivity to value of life or human rights issues and policy preferences. It seems as if this is also another incident where identity seemed to veer away from ideology. The major valence issues that deeply divided the Turkish society, such as the garb of tradition bound women, and the status of the Imam – Hatip Lycees (IHL) have promoted sensitivities toward human rights issues among the religiously minded. Similarly, those who place themselves on the left, especially the Kurds and the Alevis have also been most affected by the human rights abuses of the government and of the state. Both of these groups, usually at odds with each other, seem to be supportive of a similar human rights agenda for entirely different reasons.

Figures 3 and 4 indicate that economic policies as well as social welfare issues are more profoundly influenced by perceptions of economic satisfaction and expectations of the government in its management of the economy. Neither ethno - religious identity nor political ideology seem to matter in determining the attitudes of the Turkish voters toward economic policies. The dissatisfied seem to resist privatization and liberal market reforms, and similarly economically satisfied seem to be supportive of the social welfare practices of the government. Political stance and ethnic or religious identity seem to be highly marginal in determining the reactions to economic and social welfare policies of the government.

The only interesting and paradoxical finding of this paper emerges in the findings presented in Figure 4. The pious Sunni Muslims and the right wing voters, who constitute the plurality of the vote and an overwhelming majority of those who voted for the governing AKP in the 2007 national elections also seem to be quiet resolutely standing against improving relations with the EU, privatization, foreign capital and immigrants (globalism) in Turkey. However, the AKP has been championing privatization, globalism, improving relations with the EU since its rise to power in 2002. Therefore, it seem to be very clear that neither the voters seem to be paying much attention to the very substance of the economic model the AKP is promoting so long as the Turkish economy seems to be growing, nor does the AKP care about what sorts of economic priorities the bulk of their supporters have. It looks as if the government enjoys a huge area of maneuver once they are in power in what they carry out as economic policy. The only matter that should be of any concern for the government party is the end result, if they are perceived as doing a good job so far as managing the economy goes, their supporters tend to vote for them, even if they totally disagree in the substance of the economic policy in

question. Intriguingly enough, now that Turkey has been experiencing a huge and unprecedented level of unemployment, negative growth of its industry and economy, one wonders how the voters will react to the AKP in government in the next chance they get to vote in the national polls. That may give us another chance to observe whether religion, ethnicity, and ideology are more influential one the vote than how the government impacts the macro economic indicators of the country, or not.