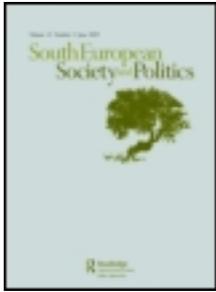


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Kulturkampf in Turkey: The Constitutional Referendum of 12 September 2010

Ersin Kalaycıoğlu

The referendum of 12 September 2010 saw the resurfacing of the main cultural cleavages in Turkish society, resulting in a major kulturkampf between the more socio-cultural liberal and secular coastal provinces and the more religious conservative hinterland. The AKP and some Islamist and Turkish nationalist fringe parties supported the ‘yea’ vote, the rest of the political parties supported ‘nay’, and the Kurdish nationalists boycotted the referendum. Individual-level statistical analysis of the vote indicates that partisanship, ideological splits, economic satisfaction and religiosity played a major role in influencing vote choices. A highly divided society, producing a 60–40 divide across a host of political issues, seemed to have emerged, helping the governing AKP get its way through heightened conflict.

Keywords: Turkey; Referendum; Secular–religious Divide; AKP; Economic Satisfaction; Identity; Party Identification

Another 12 September came, passed and left an indelible mark on the Turkish political psyche. 12 September 1980 was the date of the last military coup in Turkish politics, the legacy of which still persists through the 1982 Constitution and the related political laws. More than 90 per cent of Turkish voters participated in the 1982 referendum, and of these approximately 90 per cent voted in favour of the Constitution. Ever since, none of the major political parties and interest groups, except for the military, has respected or supported the 1982 Constitution, which has been amended 17 times to make room for a more democratic regime in Turkey. Prior to 2010, the constitutional articles amended amounted to 68 out of 177; with the 2010 amendments, this reached 53 per cent of the total. The referendum of 12 September 2010 resulted in the acceptance of amendments to 27 constitutional articles, with 72 per cent of the voters casting valid ballots and 58 per cent voting in favour. The 2010 referendum thus appears to be an

appendage to a long series of political changes and reforms of the Turkish Constitution. However, of all those changes on only four occasions (1987, 1988, 2007 and 2010) did these amendments necessitate a popular vote (referendum). Although this was neither the first nor the last attempt at modifying the 1982 Constitution, what differentiated the 12 September 2010 referendum was the political bickering and divisions it precipitated, with voters in the western and southern coastal parts of the country mainly voting against it while the central, northern and eastern inhabitants voted overwhelmingly for it. Why was there such division, controversy and conflict over the amendment of a constitution that all political parties disown and vow to change?

Background to the 2010 Referendum

The 2010 referendum was called because of the impasse in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM). In both 2007 and 2010, the constitutional amendments were promoted by the government of the economically liberal and religious conservative AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*—Justice and Development Party), which had more than 60 per cent but less than two-thirds of the parliamentary seats. Under article 175 of the Constitution, this was enough for it to pass its proposals through the legislature with the support of its own party group, but not enough to make them binding without a referendum. The AKP tabled the constitutional amendments without seeking any compromise with the other parliamentary parties. It was then little surprise that they received no support from the other parliamentary parties: the secular and social democratic CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*—Republican People's Party), the ethnic Turkish nationalist MHP (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*—Nationalist Action Party) and the ethnic Kurdish nationalist BDP (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*—Peace and Democracy Party). Thus, the motion to amend the 1982 Constitution sailed through the legislature as a partisan bill, received support as a partisan bill and was presented as a partisan proposal to the popular vote. Therefore, the recent constitutional amendments through referenda have become examples of the enhanced partisanship and elite conflict in Turkey since 2007. Why?

The essential reasons seem to lie in the long-running *kulturkampf* between the secularists and the Islamic revivalists. This has intensified since 2007, due to a variety of factors emanating from the electoral laws, voting behaviour, elite political culture and the strategies of political party leaders. The overall relationship between the governing AKP and the main opposition parties deteriorated with the Presidential elections in the National Assembly in 2007. At that time, the AKP parliamentary group had more than a simple majority but less than two-thirds of the votes in the National Assembly. Its candidate for President of the Republic, the then Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gül, could easily have been elected. However, the CHP and top military commanders raised objections concerning Mr Gül's secular credentials, precipitating a political and constitutional crisis.

Through a convoluted legal argument, the main opposition CHP was able to halt the process of voting in the legislature and applied to the Constitutional Court (CC),

on the grounds that there should be a two-thirds majority present in chamber at the outset of the process for voting to start at all. The CC approved the appeal. The AKP put forward a constitutional amendment for direct election of the President by the electorate rather than the National Assembly. However, the then President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, vetoed the bill. The AKP called an early election on 22 July 2007 and also overrode the Presidential veto, meaning that President Sezer had to submit the constitutional amendments to a popular vote (article 175). As a result, Turkey went through both a national election in July and a constitutional referendum in October 2007. The AKP won the election with 46.5 per cent and the October 2007 referendum with 70 per cent.

With these victories at the polls, the AKP leadership seemed to gain self-confidence. Soon afterwards, the party leader and Prime Minister (PM), R. Tayyip Erdoğan, called for a relaxation of the ban on the *türban* (a style of donning the headscarf by women) at the universities. With the support of the MHP, a constitutional amendment to remove the headscarf ban received more than four-fifths of the votes in the TBMM, over the objections of the CHP, which appealed to the CC to annul the amendment. Soon after, in March 2008 the Public Prosecutor (PP) of the Supreme Court (*Yargıtay*) appealed to the CC to impose a ban on the AKP on the grounds that it was functioning as a focal point of activities against the secular regime of the Republic in violation of article 2 of the Constitution. In 2008 the CC decided on both these cases, ruling that the lifting of the *türban* ban was unconstitutional and that the AKP was indeed guilty of being a focus of activities against the secular regime of the Republic, although the Court did not go so far as to ban the governing party. Thus the AKP was branded as a political party with dubious secular credentials and constitutional legitimacy and by late 2008 Turkey began to move toward a deepening political legitimacy crisis.

In the meantime, the Istanbul police had unearthed a cache of hand grenades in an Istanbul shantytown in June 2007. A series of arrests led to a group of former special operations personnel of the police and the military, who seemed to have conspired to destabilise Turkey through a series of bombings and assassinations. They apparently aimed at tarnishing the image of the AKP government as incapable of providing political stability on the one hand, and promoting religiously motivated violence on the other. The special prosecutors assigned to the case argued that this conspiracy was the work of an organisation called *Ergenekon* (the name of the legend of the birth of the Turkish people), and that it was connected to a major plot for a military coup attempt. The Turkish media started to refer to this case as the '*Ergenekon* trail', and in the last four years several waves of arrests have resulted in accusations against journalists, lawyers, businessmen, priests and academics, as well as members of the former and current defence and security establishments, as culprits in that terror organisation and its coup plot. Now with several hundred defendants, many of who have been in custody for more than two years—often with very little sensitivity for legal procedures and the *habeas corpus* rights of the defendants—the case began to look increasingly to the opposition political parties and their sympathisers like a tool of intimidation of

opponents of the AKP government. The political opposition and an increasing number of journalists started to criticise the case as a ‘political trial’.¹

AKP spokespersons began to refer to the case as evidence of a plot by the military, while also incriminating the CHP and MHP as providing moral, political and even legal support for it and further arguing that the High Courts were acting in concert with the military to undermine and even threaten to ban the AKP. By 2010, the Justice Minister and Ministry officials serving on the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) had come into conflict with the High Court judges and prosecutors who were also serving as members of the Council over a host of issues. The Supreme Court (*Yargıtay*) and *Conseil d’etat* (*Danıştay*) also came under systematic attack from the AKP government, accused of being agents of the anti-AKP, anti-democratic, pro-military (authoritarian) forces. When PM Erdoğan declared that he was the prosecutor of the *Ergenekon* trial, and the leader of the official opposition CHP, Deniz Baykal, responded that he was the barrister for the defendants, it became clear that the *Ergenekon* trial had become a political football. By the time of the local elections in March 2009, the Turkish political elites had begun to view each other as ‘friend versus foe’ in a ‘no-holds-barred war’—terms once used to describe Turkish elite politics of the 1950s (Frey 1975) which seem to have been reincarnated in the 2000s. In the eyes of the opposition, the AKP’s secular credentials and thus right to govern became questionable, while the AKP and its supporters in the media began to question the democratic credibility of the parliamentary opposition parties through the prism of the *Ergenekon* trial. By early 2010 Turkish parliamentary politics had become deeply divided, polarised, intensely confrontational, and marked by mutual hatred and distrust.

The Amendment Package and the Campaign

It was in this context that the AKP government announced new democratisation overtures to the Kurds, the *Alevi*s and the Roma (gypsy) communities of Turkey. Among these, the Roma overture was supported by the Roma community, and it seemed as if some improvements in the latter’s legal status had been accomplished. The *Alevi* overture seems to have led nowhere so far. The Kurdish opening was renamed as the democratic overture, then as national unity and eventually as the national unity and fraternity overture by the PM, but seems to have accomplished nothing yet. In fact, for a while it looked as if a compromise had been reached with the terror organisation of PKK (*Partiye Karkeren Kurdistan*—Kurdish Workers Party) and/or its legal frontline associations. However, when a group of 34 PKK terrorists dressed in battle fatigues received a victors’ welcome after crossing the border with Iraq on 19 October 2009, the uproar against the government was so great that the AKP changed its tone within 24 hours. PM Erdoğan, who had lauded the welcome of the PKK terrorists one day, on the next began publicly to condemn the same event. The Kurdish-democratic-national unity and fraternity overture had come to a standstill by early 2010.

It was at this time that new rumours began to surface in the media about a potential new appeal by the Public Prosecutor to the Supreme Court to demand the closure of the AKP. Immediately, the AKP parliamentary group initiated a constitutional amendment package rendering party closures more difficult, if not impossible, for parties with parliamentary groups (i.e. with more than 20 seats in the TBMM). The same package foresaw drastic changes in the composition of the HSYK and the CC. The government announced that it welcomed proposals for other democratisation measures to be included in the package. They began to tour some of the major interest groups, asking them to hand in their proposals for constitutional amendments within two to three days. When the CHP claimed the AKP was going after hoax military coup plotters while failing to try those who had actually carried out coups, such as the commanders of the military coup of 12 September 1980, the AKP moved swiftly to include the lifting of the limitations on litigation against the coup makers of the 1980 in the package. In consequence, a package of 27 articles amending the 1982 Constitution was constructed and swiftly motioned as a bill in the TBMM in April 2010.

The amendment package as initially formulated included changes on party closures, increases in the size of the HSYK (increased to 22 members from seven) and the CC, new election rules for CC members and 12-year term limits. Another amendment concerned individual appeals to the CC, which prior to 2010 were only possible through an application by lower courts. The other 24 articles included removal of the temporary articles of the 1982 Constitution that protected the coup leaders and their associates from litigation. One amendment extended the right of collective bargaining for the unions of state employees but banned their right to strike. The amendment concerning positive discrimination for women was criticised by feminist organisations as a hollow gesture. Protection of minors had already been covered by various laws and the amendment hardly made a new contribution.² An amendment concerning the right to privacy was also heavily criticised by the opposition as a farce, for it had become clear that almost all citizens of Turkey could be placed under electronic surveillance by the executive branch since 2005. Other amendments concerned the right to travel abroad, making it impossible for anyone to be stopped at the border without a court order; the introduction of the Ombudsman; and minor changes concerning the loss of deputy status in the TBMM. The decisions of the Higher Military Council on the promotion and firing of military personnel were brought under judicial review, a change that received no major criticism from any political party. Disciplinary decisions and sanctions of state employees have also been brought under judicial review without provoking any debate. Several minor changes also had to be made to the previous changes made by the 2007 constitutional amendments, such as reducing the tenure of the TBMM from five to four years and related provisions concerning the intra-parliamentary elections of the Speaker, commission chairs and such like. Finally, the Economic and Social Council, where business interests gained representation, was also amended at the request of the Turkish Employers' Union (TISK).

The amendment package went through the TBMM with the support of the AKP parliamentary group alone. The changes pertaining to political party closures failed to find enough support among the AKP deputies and were dropped from the package. The other amendments should be categorised into two groups: those which would lead to the enlargement of the HSYK and the CC, allowing them to be filled with conservative judges who would be more in tune with the AKP's conservative agenda on the one hand, and all the other 24 amendments on the other. The latter did not cause much controversy. They did not bring any major novelties and were not resisted by any major segment of the political elites or the masses. The criticisms levelled at them may best be summed up as concerning their shallowness or meekness. In contrast, the two amendments on the HSYK and CC generated intense controversy, for the opposition saw them as a new plot by the AKP government against the judiciary and argued that the latter would come under the tutelage of the executive branch after the referendum. The debates in the TBMM between the government and the opposition were highly heated, and mutually demeaning. The three parliamentary opposition parties voted against the amendments while the AKP majority voted in favour. The President signed the amendments and presented them to a popular vote, which is a stipulation by the 1982 Constitution (article 175). So, the referendum was set for 12 September 2010.³

The campaign for the 'yea' and the 'nay' votes focused on the two major issues of the size and composition of the CC and HSYK. The other amendments got, at best, scant attention, if any. The AKP spokespersons presented the package as a new initiative to democratise Turkey, to empower the nation (instead of the state—i.e. the military, bureaucrats and judges), to undermine the secular elites and their alien ideas, to hold the state elite accountable for the political execution of PM Adnan Menderes in 1961,⁴ and to hold the coup-makers of 1980 accountable. The CHP opposition and its new leader, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, argued that the AKP's main goal was to stuff the CC and HSYK with its supporters and control the judiciary, ensuring that if in the future the CC works as a Grand Jury and tries the AKP elite the latter will have their cronies as judges. The CHP campaign also stressed governmental corruption and the AKP's alleged hidden agenda to create an authoritarian regime in democratic disguise under PM Erdoğan. The Turkish nationalist MHP campaigned against the AKP government's Kurdish overture and argued that the AKP posed a threat to national solidarity. The Kurdish nationalist BDP declared a boycott of the referendum, arguing that the amendments failed to address the most pressing issues and ignored such critical issues as the abolition of the 10 per cent threshold for parliamentary representation established in the Election Act of 1983.

Explaining the Vote

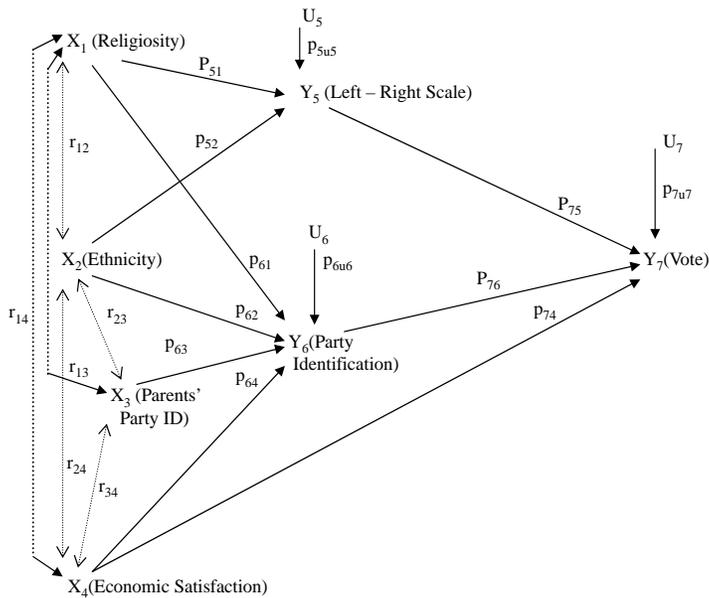
It was clear that by early 2010 the Turkish political elites had become deeply divided around the secular–religious fault line. Under the circumstances, we should not expect the voters to diverge from the *kulturkampf* that deeply influences the voting

practices of the Turkish electorate.⁵ Turkish society is deeply divided along cultural lines into two large communities. On the one hand are those whose lifestyles are shaped on the basis of an image of the good society with science and human rationality at its core, which we may loosely refer to as a ‘Secular Image of Good Society’. On the other hand are those whose lifestyles are based on the core values of tradition and religion (mainly Sunni Islam), which may best be referred to as a ‘Conservative Image of Good Society’. These overarching societal gatherings are also deeply influenced by sectarian (Sunni versus Alevi) and nationalist (ethnic Turkish versus ethnic Kurdish) divisions. These create further socio-cultural and political fault lines dividing the Turkish adult population into several blocs, whose lifestyles, values, attitudes and political behaviour differ sharply along these fault lines. The politicians have mastered symbolisms, verbal and body language, and policy suggestions that maximise their appeal to different cultural blocs.

In elections, economic interests, how these are influenced by government policies and expectations on how they are expected to be influenced in the future also enter voters’ calculations and the cultural basis of voting behaviour gets somewhat more complicated. Consequently, maximising a political party’s vote just by playing with cultural symbols, values and images would be ameliorated by the impact of economic interests. Therefore, other factors come into play at election times.

Research has so far indicated that ideological differences shaped under the influence of religiosity and ethnicity are a major source of voting behaviour at general elections in Turkey.⁶ Research in the 2000s also found that party identification (as a major outcome of political socialisation that is deeply influenced by voters’ parental party identities) also shapes voting preferences in Turkey. Finally, several articles point to the role played by economic satisfaction, which may best be defined as a retrospective and prospective evaluation of the governing party’s (or parties’) management of the macro economy, as a third source of voting preferences of the Turkish electorate (Başlevent, Kirmanoğlu & Şenatarlar 2005, Çarkoğlu 2007b, Başlevent, Kirmanoğlu & Şenatarlar 2009, Kalaycıoğlu 2010a). Therefore, in the following it is suggested that partisan identities created through the political socialisation of the individual voter, political ideology developed through the influences of the cultural context in which the individual voter operates, and economic satisfaction mainly determined voters’ choices in the 12 September 2010 referendum (see Figure 1).

In the past, the impact of parental partisan identity was more visible, especially for such political parties as the CHP or MHP, whose roots travel back a few generations in Turkish politics. The chances are that some members of the voting-age population grew up in homes where either their father or mother or both identified with one political party or the other. Such a link does not apply to the AKP, which was established on 14 August 2001. However, the AKP leadership has taken pains to explain that it is following the path of the 1950s DP (*Demokrat Parti*—Democrat Party) and of 1980s PM Özal. If this argument has not fallen on deaf ears, the chances are that those who identify with the AKP also come from family backgrounds where either or both parents demonstrated some identification with the main political



Simultaneous Equations:

$$Y_7 = p_{74} X_4 + p_{75} Y_5 + p_{76} Y_6 + p_{7u7} u_7$$

$$Y_6 = p_{61} X_1 + p_{62} X_2 + p_{63} X_3 + p_{64} X_4 + p_{6u6} u_6$$

$$Y_5 = p_{51} X_1 + p_{52} X_2 + p_{5u5} u_5$$

Figure 1 A Causal Model of Voting Behaviour in Turkey.

Source: Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "Justice and Development Party at the Helm: Resurgence of Islam or Restitution of the Right-of-Center Predominant Party?" *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, (March 2010): 32.

parties of the right in Turkish politics. We may also speculate that some who grew up in political Islamist family backgrounds, with parents who supported previous Islamist parties (such as the Welfare or National Salvation Parties), may identify with the AKP as well. It is hypothesised here that parental party identification functions as one source of party identification for the Turkish voters, which in turn determines their vote for the call of the corresponding party. It was argued in one recent article (Kalaycıoğlu 2008) that party identity is not solely shaped by parental party identification, but also by such factors as religiosity, ethnicity and even satisfaction with the way the economy works. This would potentially create support for a specific party and help build a psychological bond with it. Therefore, multiple sources of party identification are possible and thus need to be hypothesised as potential determinants of party identification (see Figure 1).

A second source of voting behaviour is political ideology, which is often characterised by self-definition of the voter on the left–right spectrum. Research also indicates that such a divide is closely related to religiosity (Çarkoğlu 2005). It has also

been revealed that those who feel themselves to be more religious tend towards self-placement on the right, while those who feel more secular tend to place themselves on the left of the spectrum.⁷ Therefore, it is hypothesised here that ideology functions as an independent source of the direction of the vote, though ideology itself is also influenced by how religious or secular a voter feels and acts (see Figure 1).

Third and finally, it is hypothesised that those who are more satisfied with the economy during the course of a government would be motivated to develop some form of specific support for the governing party (or coalition). In due time, this can create a proclivity toward identification with the governing party and supporting what it stands for at the polls (see Figure 1).

It is assumed in this paper that three major sources of voting behaviour were at play in Turkey on 12 September 2010 and that they were mainly shaped by political ideology, political socialisation and economic satisfaction as shown in Figure 1. In fact, religious and ethnic factors also influence these sources of voting behaviour and should be taken into account when theorising. That is the main reason why this paper employs a causal model to explain voting behaviour in Turkey for the 2010 referendum.

The Survey

The individual level of analysis adopted in the preceding model was tested through a national field survey of attitudes, opinions and reported behaviour conducted in October and November 2010 as part of an international study for the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP).⁸ The dependent variable for the research was voting preferences in the 12 September 2010 referendum. Respondents answering in the affirmative to the question ‘were you able to vote during the 12 September 2010 referendum?’ were asked whether they voted ‘yea’ or ‘nay’. The former were coded as ‘1’ and the latter as ‘0’ and used as the binary dependent variable of this study. The causal model employed in this study has four exogenous variables and three endogenous variables, including the dependent variable, which has already been explained.

Exogenous Variables

Religiosity. The exogenous variable of religiosity was measured through a series of questions pertaining to belief, prayer, worship and socio-political issues of religious practice. The answers were subjected to a principal components analysis, the results of which indicated that religiosity as operationalised in this paper has three separate dimensions (see Table 1). However, the factor scores of each dimension were summed to yield an overall religiosity index, which was used in the tests of the causal model as a measure of the exogenous variable of religiosity in Figure 1.

Ethnicity. The second exogenous variable was measured by reference to mother tongue and knowledge of Turkish and other languages spoken in Turkey. In the following, the respondents’ answers to a question concerning the language they spoke with their mother as children at home are presented. Those who spoke some Kurdish dialect with

Table 1 Religiosity in Turkey (2010)

| | Dimensions | | |
|---|----------------|-----------------|------------|
| | Faith (Itikad) | Political Islam | Folk Islam |
| How frequently does one worship? | 0.331 | 0.516 | 0.192 |
| Ever enrolled in a <i>Kuran Kursu</i> (courses to teach the Holy Kuran especially to children)? | 0.103 | 0.352 | 0.007 |
| Desire for Shari'a State? | -0.070 | 0.319 | 0.083 |
| Life after death | 0.711 | 0.250 | 0.177 |
| Heaven | 0.911 | 0.097 | 0.098 |
| Hell | 0.917 | 0.107 | 0.090 |
| Religious miracles | 0.792 | 0.223 | 0.107 |
| Resurrection after death | 0.776 | 0.115 | 0.067 |
| Female state employees should be permitted to wear headscarves if they so wish | 0.245 | 0.891 | 0.033 |
| Female university students should be permitted to wear headscarves if they so wish | 0.264 | 0.878 | 0.045 |
| Religious wedding (<i>imam nikahı</i>) | 0.149 | 0.118 | 0.887 |
| Naming a newborn infant with religious ceremony | 0.153 | 0.111 | 0.883 |

Notes: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

their mother while growing up or who are fluent in some Kurdish dialect constitute about 16 per cent of our sample, while 84 per cent of our sample indicated that they speak Turkish as a first, second or third language, but not Kurdish. The former category of respondents is assigned '1' in the data set, while the others are assigned '0' as the measure of ethnicity in this paper.

Parents' Party Identification. The third exogenous variable is parents' party identification. Three different measures are used in the estimation of the causal model. The first consists of all those voters who reported that their parents had identified with the economically liberal and socially conservative DP of 1945–60; the economically liberal and socially conservative AP (*Adalet Partisi*—Justice Party) of 1961–82; the AP successor party, DYP (*Doğru Yol Partisi*—True Path Party) from 1984; the economically liberal and socially conservative ANAP (*Anavatan Partisi*—Motherland Party) from 1983; or the political Islamist parties, the MSP (*Milli Selamet Partisi*—National Salvation Party) of 1973–82; the RP (*Refah Partisi*—Welfare Party) of 1984–98; or the FP (*Fazilet Partisi*—Virtue Party) of 1998–2001. The second consists of those who reported that their parents identified with the CHP of 1923–82

and 1993 onwards, SHP (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti*—Social Democratic Populist Party) between 1983 and 1997, and the democratic left DSP (*Demokratik Sol Parti*—Democratic Left Party) from 1984. The third and final measure consists of those voters who responded that their parents identified with the ethnic Turkish nationalist CKMP (*Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi*—Republican Peasant Nation Party) of 1958–69 or the MHP of 1969–82 and 1993 onwards. We need these three measures to predict the parental influence (political socialisation effect) on the party identification of voters who identify with the governing AKP and the two main opposition parties, the CHP and MHP. Those identified with the Kurdish nationalist BDP report only 11 parents with any identification with a former Kurdish nationalist party, which is too small for any statistical analysis. Therefore, in the following path analysis, we only focus on those who identify with the AKP, CHP and MHP.

Economic Satisfaction. The fourth and last exogenous variable is economic satisfaction. This variable is measured by reference to the previous and prospective (expected) evaluations of the economic performance of the governing party. The responses given to questions concerning the retrospective influences of the government's handling of the Turkish economy on the country, the respondent and his or her family and to similar questions concerning expectations of the government's economic policies produced five 11-point scales. These scales were submitted to a principal components analysis, which produced a single dimension of economic satisfaction (see Table 2). The factor scores produced from this principal components analysis are used as the measure of the exogenous variable economic satisfaction in the following estimation of the path coefficients of the causal model.

Endogenous Variables

The two endogenous independent variables of the causal model are political ideology and voters' party identification. Political ideology is measured through the responses that the respondents gave to a question on self-placement on a 10-point left–right

Table 2 Economic Satisfaction in Turkey (Factor Scores) (2010)

| Items | Economic satisfaction |
|--|-----------------------|
| How have the government's economic policies influenced your FAMILY during the last one year? | 0.890 |
| How have the government's economic policies influenced TURKEY during the last one year? | 0.888 |
| How satisfactory is your economic situation now? | 0.859 |
| How do you expect your FAMILY's economic situation will be in one year's time? | 0.893 |
| How do you expect TURKEY's economic situation will be in one year's time?? | 0.901 |

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

scale, where '1' indicates the extreme left and '10' indicates the extreme right. The responses given are presented in Table 3. The valid responses on this scale were used as the measure of the respondents' political ideology in the estimation of the path coefficients of the causal model.

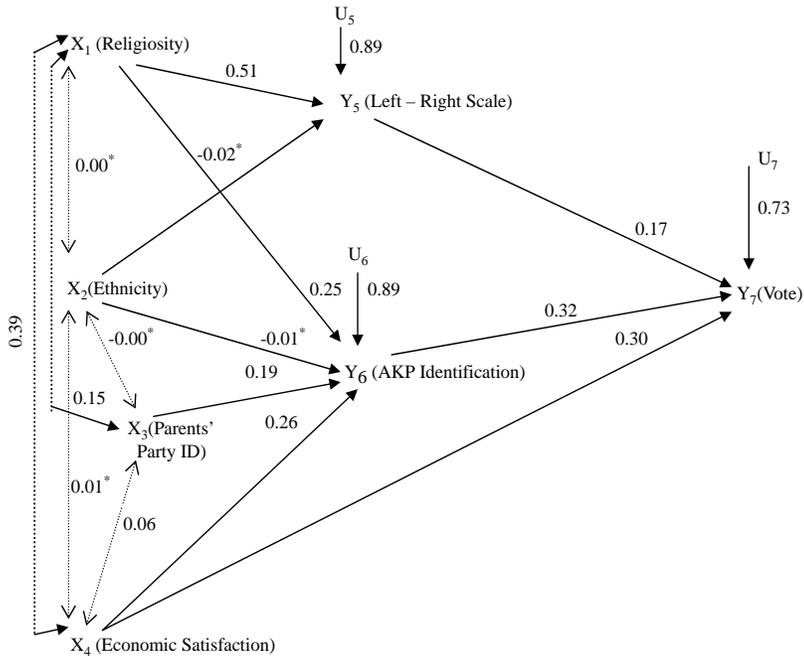
The respondents' party identification was also categorised into three groups, of those who identified with the AKP, with the CHP, and with the MHP respectively. Therefore, three binary variables have been employed in the following analysis. In the first, all those who identified with the AKP are coded as '1' and all others as '0', in the second those identified with the CHP are coded as '1' and all others as '0', and in the third those identified with the MHP are coded as '1' and all others as '0'. In each of these cases, parents' party identification consisted of the corresponding parental party identifications.

Findings

The three versions of the causal model were employed to estimate the path coefficients in the following. The first application is valid only for those voters who identify with the AKP versus the rest. The results indicate that about half the variance in the referendum vote could be explained by political ideology, party identification (political socialisation) and economic satisfaction variables. The 'yea' vote in the referendum seems to have been cast by those who placed themselves on the right of the left–right spectrum, and those who come from relatively high levels of religiosity (see Figure 2, p_{51} and p_{75}). It is also a matter of fact that those who identified with the AKP tended to vote 'yea'. Similarly, those who reported relatively higher scores of economic

Table 3 Left–Right Spectrum (Self-Placement of Turkish Voters) (2010)

| We often hear of left and right when political issues are discussed. If your opinions can be represented on such a left–right spectrum, please do so, on the following scale. | Frequency | Per cent | Valid per cent | Cumulative per cent |
|---|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------------|
| 1 (Extreme Left) | 88 | 5.3 | 6.5 | 6.5 |
| 2 | 64 | 3.8 | 4.7 | 11.2 |
| 3 | 78 | 4.7 | 5.8 | 17.0 |
| 4 | 54 | 3.2 | 4.0 | 21.0 |
| 5 | 310 | 18.6 | 22.9 | 43.9 |
| 6 | 156 | 9.4 | 11.5 | 55.4 |
| 7 | 124 | 7.4 | 9.2 | 64.6 |
| 8 | 178 | 10.7 | 13.2 | 77.8 |
| 9 | 129 | 7.7 | 9.5 | 87.3 |
| 10 (Extreme Right) | 172 | 10.3 | 12.7 | 100.0 |
| Total | 1353 | 81.3 | 100.0 | |
| Don't know/No response | 312 | 18.7 | | |
| Total | 1665 | 100.0 | | |



Simultaneous Equations:

$$Y_7 = 0.30 X_4 + 0.17 Y_5 + 0.32 Y_6 + 0.73 u_7, (R^2 = 0.47; n = 1665).$$

$$Y_6 = 0.25 X_1 - 0.01^* X_2 + 0.19 X_3 + 0.26 X_4 + 0.89 u_6.$$

$$Y_5 = 0.51 X_1 - 0.02^* X_2 + 0.89 u_5.$$

Figure 2 Voting Behaviour in the Turkish Referendum of 12 September 2010 (Solution for those Identified with the AKP).

Note: (*) Statistically not significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

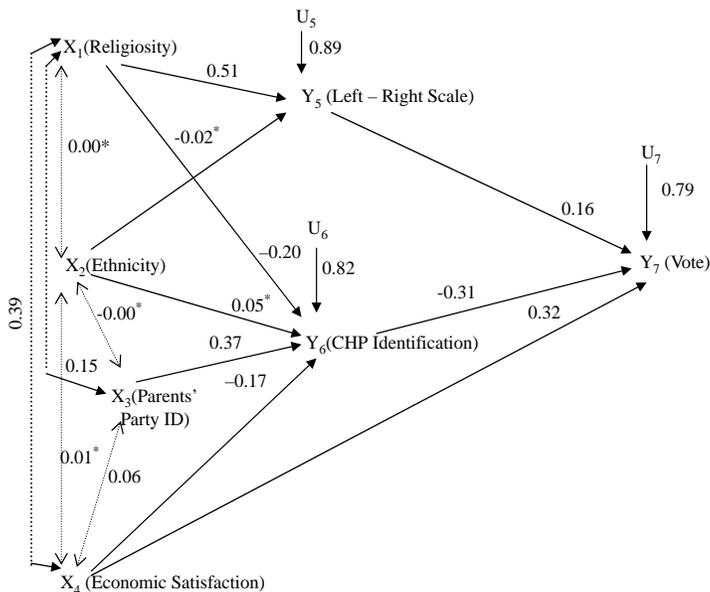
X_3 (Parents' Party identification is measured as parents who had been identified with any of the following parties: Democrat Party (DP), Justice Party (AP), the True Path Party (DYP), Motherland Party (ANAP), or the National Salvation (MSP), Welfare (RP) or Virtue Parties (FP) in the past.

Y_6 is operationalized as voters identified with AKP coded as "1", all others as "0".

Path coefficients are OLS estimates, and arithmetic means substituted instead of missing values.

satisfaction also tended to support the constitutional amendments mainly promoted by the AKP. It seems as if there were ideological, psychological and rational—economic (instrumental) motives behind support for the 2010 constitutional amendments.

Those respondents who identified with the CHP tended to vote 'nay' in the referendum (see Figure 3, p₇₆). Those who seemed to be economically dissatisfied and those with secular values were also inclined to identify with the CHP (see Figure 3, p₆₁, p₆₄, and p₇₆). Those who voted 'nay' in the referendum seemed to be secular, economically dissatisfied and mostly left-of-centre.



Simultaneous Equations:

$$Y_7 = 0.32 X_4 + 0.16 Y_5 - 0.31 Y_6 + 0.79 u_7. (R^2 = 0.38; n = 1665).$$

$$Y_6 = -0.20 X_1 + 0.05 X_2 + 0.37 X_3 - 0.17 X_4 + 0.82 u_6.$$

$$Y_5 = 0.51 X_1 - 0.02 X_2 + 0.89 u_5.$$

Figure 3 Voting Behaviour in the Turkish Referendum of 12 September 2010 (Solution for those Identified with the CHP).

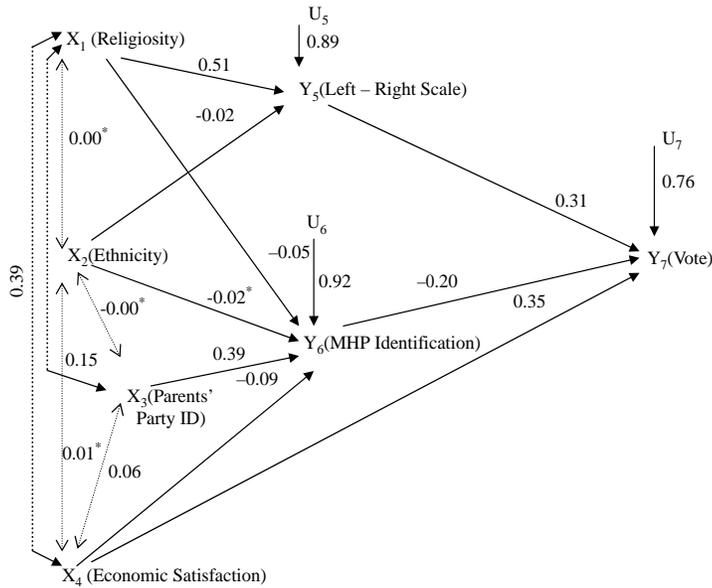
Note: (*) Statistically not significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

X_3 (Parents' Party identification is measured as parents who had been identified with any of the following parties: Republican People's Party (CHP) or the Democratic Left Party (DSP).

Y_6 is operationalised as voters identified with CHP coded as "1", all others as "0".

Path coefficients are OLS estimates, and arithmetic means substituted instead of missing values.

Those respondents who identify with the MHP were also dissatisfied with the way the economy is managed by the government (see Figure 4, p₆₄). However, these respondents were influenced by religiosity to a much lesser extent than the AKP supporters. The most important determinant of MHP party identification emerges as political socialisation, indicating this is learned in the family and/or the social network in which the family was embedded (see Figure 4, p₆₃, p₆₁ and p₄₁). Interestingly enough, no evidence emerged for the impact of ethnicity on the referendum vote of the MHP supporters. It seems as if ethnicity has such a small amount of variance that it fails to correlate with party identification for the MHP supporters. As I have argued above, a statistical analysis would be meaningless in the case of the ethnic Kurdish nationalist respondents due to their relatively small number. There was also an



Simultaneous Equations:

$$Y_7 = 0.35 X_4 + 0.31 Y_5 - 0.20 Y_6 + 0.76 u_7, (R^2 = 0.34; n=1665).$$

$$Y_6 = -0.05 X_1 - 0.02^* X_2 + 0.39 X_3 - 0.09 X_4 + 0.92 u_6.$$

$$Y_5 = 0.51 X_1 - 0.02^* X_2 + 0.89 u_5.$$

Figure 4 Voting Behaviour in the Turkish Referendum of 12 September 2010 (Solution for those Identified with the MHP).

Note: (*) Statistically not significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

X_3 (Parents' Party identification is measured as parents who had been identified with any of the following parties: Republican Peasant Nation Party (CKMP) or the Nationalist Action Party (MHP).

Y_6 is operationalised as voters identified with MHP coded as "1", all others as "0".
Pearson product-moment correlations are used to estimate path coefficients.

effective boycott organised by the BDP in the ethnic Kurdish nationalist stronghold in the south-east. The ethnic nationalist voters seemed to have stayed out of the referendum, voting neither 'yea' nor 'nay'. However, where the Kurds voted in large numbers, the 'yea' vote reached record highs. In fact, in those parts of the country where Kurdish voters did not live in any sizeable numbers, such as the north-western Thracian provinces of the country, the 'nay' vote seems to have skyrocketed. An examination of the cartographic distribution of the aggregate vote gives the impression of a north-west–south-east axis, with the two ends of the continuum voting in diametrically opposite directions. It is virtually impossible for the north-western–western–southern versus the south-eastern–eastern–northern and central Anatolian voters to have understood the same things from the 12 September 2010 referendum.⁹

It seems as if the analyses reported here support the hypotheses of this study, which argued that political ideology, political socialisation (party identification) and economic satisfaction were the main determinants of the vote in the 12 September 2010 referendum. Under these circumstances, it is plausible to argue that the secular–religious *kulturkampf* and its ideological repercussions played a major role in explaining the referendum results.

When all the effects of all the independent variables are considered, economic satisfaction emerges as the most important factor, with political socialisation as the second most effective source, followed by the impact of political ideology and religiosity (see Table 4). Economic satisfaction seems to be the most important determinant of the referendum vote for AKP supporters, whereas political ideology was the second most important determinant for MHP supporters. It seems as if the AKP and MHP supporters are set apart by their contrasting images of the government’s management of the macro-economy, although their ideological positions on the left–right spectrum are not that different.

In view of these findings, it seems as if the CHP supporters seemed inclined to vote ‘nay’ under the influence of their political socialisation (which in turn is deeply influenced by their secular values and parental party identification), their left-leaning stand on the ideological spectrum, and dissatisfaction with the government’s handling of the economy. MHP supporters seemed to have been equally dissatisfied with the government’s macro-economic management, while their political socialisation and right-wing though nationalist stand on the ideological spectrum also seemed to have mattered in their proclivity to vote ‘nay’. The AKP supporters seemed inclined to vote ‘yea’ for they seemed to be satisfied with the government’s economic performance, while the AKP’s ideological position also seems to be running parallel with their political socialisation to reinforce a positive motivation towards supporting the governing party’s position on the political issues of the referendum.

The conservative, right-wing mindset of the Turkish voters identified in earlier studies has been most instrumental in the referendum outcome. The country’s ideological divide became deeper and wider with the 12 September 2010 referendum.

Table 4 Total Effects of Independent Variables on the Referendum Vote (Turkey, 2010)

| Independent variable | AKP supporters | CHP supporters | MHP supporters |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Religiosity | 0.17 | 0.14 | 0.17 |
| Ethnicity | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Parents’ party identification | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.08 |
| Economic satisfaction | 0.38 | 0.37 | 0.37 |
| Political ideology (Left–Right spectrum) | 0.17 | 0.16 | 0.31 |
| Respondent’s party identification | 0.32 | 0.31 | 0.20 |

Note: Coefficients reported in this table are total effects coefficients, which consist of direct and indirect effects of the exogenous and endogenous independent variables on the dependent variable (Y_7) reported in Figures 2, 3 and 4. The signs are removed from the calculations to better show the relative weight of each independent variable.

The latter seemed to be welcomed as democratisation by right-wing, conservative voters, but as a threat to their lifestyle or ideology by the secular and the ethnic nationalist Turkish voters, while ethnic nationalist Kurds stood aside.

Conclusion: Divide et Impera

The results of the 12 September 2010 referendum indicated that the *kulturkampf* along the religious–secular divide, which is married with left–right ideological orientations, was again effectively at work. The macro-view of the vote also indicated that a geographical divide, with the western ‘naysayer’ provinces versus the rest, emerged to an extent not visible in national or local elections. What is amazing in the macro-image of the vote distribution across the provinces is that even the voters in Aydın (which is not only on the Aegean coast but is also the birthplace and constituency of the late PM, Adnan Menderes), voted ‘nay’ in overwhelming numbers. Such observations tend to reinforce the picture of the referendum as less about democratisation and popular accountability of the former elites, than a different manifestation of the *kulturkampf* between the secular and conservative images of the Good Society and those who adhere to them in Turkey.

The AKP government also represents economic policies mostly rooted in the ideology of the liberal market economy. Economic satisfaction with these policies also seems to provide a sharp dividing line. The economic evaluations reported here are individual perceptions and expectations, which may be positive even for those on the lowest rungs and negative for those even on the highest rungs of the social order. Economic satisfaction with the government’s handling of Turkey’s macro-economic indicators seems to have major electoral consequences in national and local elections and the last referendum.

Considering the preceding data analyses as a whole, it seems as if the imposition of a religiously overlaid social conservative agenda, married with a *laissez faire, laissez passé* ideology for the upwardly mobile small business class, is approved by the majority and simultaneously resisted by other secular, socially liberal, but economically complacent strata which feel deeply threatened by an imminent attack on their lifestyles and that this characterised voting behaviour in the referendum.

In this overwhelming *kulturkampf*, the ethnic nationalists were shunned as a secondary divide within society. It seems that the AKP was able to forge a relatively large, socially conservative, religious (non- or even anti-nationalist) and economically satisfied community of voters to ward off the challenges of both the Turkish ethnic nationalists in central and northern Anatolia and of the Kurdish ethnic nationalists in the east. There secular, socially liberal lifestyles constitute the dominant concerns and even values, and are threatened by the same AKP rhetoric that mobilises huge masses in the central, northern and eastern ‘Kur’anic belt’ of Turkey to rally around the AKP flag.

The aftermath of the referendum seemed not to have alleviated the fears of the secular communities or reinforced the self-confidence of the conservative ones. The

appointments of judges to the CC were received with a feeling of *déjà vu*, for their similar partisan manner to the appointments of university rectors by the President.¹⁰ The majority of the newly appointed judges are conservatives. The HSYK elections were a charade, with an almost public ballot, which seemed to have pushed the intimidated judges and prosecutors into supporting the Justice Ministry's list.¹¹ The undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice (who is a career bureaucrat and a member of the executive branch of government) was elected as the presiding Chairman (*Başkan*) of the HSYK and assumed the duty of the non-partisan/independent Minister of Justice during the campaign for the June 2011 elections. Government critics in the media, especially the investigative reporters who implicated cronyism by the governing AKP and several religious organisations, police mishandling of the evidence concerning the January 2007 murder of the Armenian–Turkish journalist Hrant Dink, or the increasing role of religious activists in the ranks of the police and the military, began to come under police surveillance, pressure and even incarceration. By March 2011 the police began to go after even unpublished (draft) manuscripts that incriminated government–Islamist interest group connections. These documents began to be denigrated as evidence of terrorist agitation by the alleged *Ergenekon* terror organisation. According to the Press Freedom Index, Turkey's freedom of the press rankings dipped to 138th globally (Reporters Without Borders 2010). In Freedom House's annual survey of political rights and civil liberties, Turkey's overall freedom ranking stayed, as in 2009, in the 'partly free' category (Freedom House 2011). The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index ranked Turkey only as a 'hybrid regime' (Economist Intelligence Unit 2010).

International Women's Day on 8 March 2011 was anything but a celebration in Turkey, with women's organisations declaring that there are about five 'honour killings' of women per day in Turkey. In the 2011 parliamentary election campaign, the issue of women candidates again emerged on the agenda. The number of women deputies increased from 50 (9%) to 78 (14%), which may improve their chances of effective action if they can cooperate across party lines and achieve some affirmative action deals for women out of the National Assembly now. However, no women's organisation has referred to the 1982 Constitution and the recent amendments as a cause of such a development. Although the Constitution now stipulates that the government take all necessary measures to protect minors, chilling news about the ill treatment of children appeared in the press during March 2011 and the experts who appeared in the media argued that the status of children was not getting any better. Since the referendum of 12 September 2010, the Social and Economic Council had yet to meet, so it is uncertain what the business community gained. The military seem to have accepted the amended articles that relate to them without any objections. State employees were able successfully to go through the motions of collective bargaining. The necessary legal steps are in the process of being taken to accommodate the CC to the requirements of the amended constitutional provisions and the Ombudsman's office is in the process of being established. There seems to be some effort at starting litigation against the members of the military junta of 12 September 1980, though many lawyers argue that such interrogations will lead nowhere. The new HSYK has been systematically

relocating those judges and prosecutors whose decisions have not been in line with government wishes; in March 2011 a judge who decided against the demolition of a sculpture that the PM Erdoğan considered a ‘monstrosity’ was removed a few days later and assigned to another court by the HSYK. While the governing AKP argued this was the work of the independent judiciary (meaning that the HSYK chaired by the Minister of Justice is independent of the government), the opposition cried foul. The *kulturkampf* continues as democracy starts to show an erosion of quality toward more hegemonic party rule. This was noticed by the annual report issued by the European Parliament on 9 March 2011, whose official reception by the AKP government included slights, smears and a public declaration that it will be ignored.

The overall picture in the aftermath of the referendum is so murky that it seems an exaggeration to call the latter a move toward further consolidation of democracy in Turkey. It appears that conservative values, attitudes and behaviour, from honour killings of women to the prohibition of alcohol consumption by those under 24 years old, ill treatment of children, arrests of prosecutors or journalists to protect the reputation of religious communities and the like are coming to predominate in Turkish society. A conservative government and the values it represents are gradually establishing its agenda in the policy domain of Turkish politics. There seems to be more licence given to conservative activists in and out of government bureaucracies. In contrast, the secular and social liberals express more concern, anxiety and fear regarding these developments. The conflict between the secular and conservative communities in Turkey seems to be deepening and widening.

In conclusion, the referendum of 12 September 2010 once again proved that the Turkish political system is operating under deep divisions over cultural fault lines and an intense *kulturkampf* that not only coincides with that divide, but is also very effectively exploited by politicians. It is possible to forge a plurality or even a majority and win a vote, but not without dividing the country sharply along its cultural fault lines of divergent and irreconcilable lifestyles. No single party can now emerge to bridge the cultural fault lines, and without a coalition of political parties working together in government and in the TBMM Turkey cannot create the elite convergence over a series of sharply divided cultural issues, values and lifestyles, which would function as the infrastructure for the grand constitutional compromise of a consolidated democratic regime.

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Notes

- [1] For a thorough examination of this case by a journalist, see Jenkins (2009).
- [2] An Islamist journalist had been charged with sexual harassment of a fourteen-year-old girl a few months before, and the overall attitude of the right-wing press and the AKP spokespersons

on that issue hardly showed any sensitivity to the victim's rights. Many brought up the overall attitude of the government and the media to that court case during the referendum campaign.

- [3] For an analysis of the pre-referendum process, see Turan (2010).
- [4] Adnan Menderes was Prime Minister of the Democrat Party government from 1950 to 1960. He was arrested after the military coup of 27 May 1960, tried by the military government, found guilty and executed with two other former DP government members. Since 1961, Menderes has been considered a 'martyr', especially in his home province of Aydın.
- [5] For an application of this model to the 2007 elections see Kalaycıoğlu (2010a).
- [6] See the following articles for further analysis: Kalaycıoğlu (1994), Esmer (2002), and Çarkoğlu (2007a).
- [7] This proclivity was first identified as part of a multivariate statistical analysis by the mid-1990s and later on rediscovered in several studies. See Kalaycıoğlu (1994) *passim*, and Çarkoğlu (2005) *passim*.
- [8] The survey adopted the NUTS-2 regions of the Turkish Statistical Institute (*Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu-TUIK*). The target sample was distributed according to each region's share of urban and rural population on the basis of recent registered voter records. We applied probability proportionate to the population size (PPS) principle in selecting household addresses from each TUIK-2 region of urban, township (*belde*) and village localities. All neighbourhoods were separated into urban, township and villages of NUTS-2 regions and, within these, household addresses were selected on the basis of the application of the proper PPS ratios per region. We used no replacements and requested TUIK select 3500 household addresses, visiting each of them up to three times to conduct face-to-face interviews. Unfortunately 172 of the addresses turned out not to be households, and in 408 households either the occupant was away or no one seemed to live there at the time of the visits. We could not enter a further 142 walled residences. So we had to operate with 2778 addresses in total. The response rate was 60 per cent. A nationally representative sample of 1665 voting-age adults (18 years old or older) were interviewed at their households, and the resulting sampling error was about $\pm 2.5\%$.
- [9] For more on the aggregate results of the referendum, see Kalaycıoğlu (2010b).
- [10] Turkish public university presidents (officially defined as Rectors) are appointed by the President of the country. In 2002–07, the AKP government functioned with President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who was criticised for appointing staunch laicists as rectors. Since August 2007, it seems that the new President, Abdullah Gül, has been acting with the same kind of partisanship, appointing candidates who are conservatives, even when the majority of the university faculty failed to support their candidacy. The continuation of this practice has created an overall impression that Presidential appointments in Turkey are more often than not based on non-meritocratic criteria, such as ideological or partisan affiliations.
- [11] Indeed the election of the new members of the HSYK created a shock even among those judges who had pushed for these changes. Surprisingly, the High Election Council of Turkey, the body that organised the elections, banned any propaganda by the candidates. The government seems to have drawn up a list of candidates, which was leaked to the press and received a huge amount of support at the polls. It looked as if overwhelming number of judges and prosecutors voted for the Director of the Personnel Office of the Ministry, the undersecretary of the Justice Ministry and other top-level bureaucrats. The opposition seemed to have a point. The High Election Council seemed to have failed to take the necessary measures to render the ballots secret. The judges and prosecutors, especially in smaller provinces where only five or six of them served, assumed that their votes would be as good as public. They seemed to have voted in an environment of intimidation. See *Milliyet* daily at <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/hsyk-seciminde-olanlara-bakin/siyaset/siyasetdetay/23.05.2011/1393487/default.htm> which reports

a forthcoming book by Orhan Gazi Ertekin, entitled *Yargı Meselesi Hallolundu* (Judicial Problems Dissolved), which focuses on the efforts of the Ministry of Justice to rig the HSYK elections.

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