The Nature of Left–Right Ideological Self-placement in the Turkish Context

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ABSTRACT   *This essay examines the nature of the left–right dimension in the Turkish context. Using a nationwide representative survey conducted in 2006, the author estimates an ordered logit model to analyze the determinants of self-placements on a conventional one-to-ten left–right scale. The analysis reveals first that the scale does not reflect a fine-tuned grading along the ten-point scale but rather creates ordered categories of "left," "center," and "right." Given this constraint, the issue content persistently reflects the expected impacts of issues and demographic variables upon self-placements. Lastly, the author underlines the importance of religiosity and qualifies its impact upon ideological self-placements.*

Individuals possess a series of problems that define their linkage and involvement in mass electoral politics. The most fundamental of these is one concerning the acquisition, processing, and interpreting of information that is relevant to electoral politics and decisions to be made therein. The nature of this problem and the inherent solution for its practical, if not theoretical, resolution is defined by two critical characteristics. One is the fact that individuals have no rational incentives for involvement in mass politics and therefore no incentives for bearing of the costs involved in acquisition and processing of political information. This is the so-called "paradox of voting."[1] Second is the presence of inherent and insolvable uncertainty in all aspects of electoral behavior. Complex issues make individuals' preferences very hard to sensibly organize. By the same token, candidates or parties are at best ambiguously positioned on this complex set of issues. Predicting the behavior of a massive number of voters in the dynamic setting of a fast-changing political agenda is an equally daunting task for an average citizen with modest education and intellectual capacity. Given the problematic nature of information processing in uncertain mass politics, how a mass democracy effectively functions becomes a critical question.

Theoretical Foundations

In his seminal book, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Anthony Downs provides an insightful clue to this profound question and suggests that ideologies

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are simplifications of political complexities.[2] Downs's solution is an economic answer to the costly problem of decisionmaking in the uncertain political world:

> [A] voter finds party ideologies useful because they remove the necessity of his relating every issue to his own philosophy. Ideologies help him focus attention on the differences between parties; therefore they can be used as examples of all the differentiating stands. With this shortcut a voter can save himself the cost of being informed upon a wider range of issues.[3]

Furthermore, Melvin J. Hinich and Michael C. Munger emphasize that "the cleavages between parties separate along simpler, more predictable lines than an n-dimensional policy space would imply, even if what voters care about is the n-dimensional space."[4] A simplified low-dimensional space thus represents the underlying conflicts not only more economically for the voters, but also accurately, rendering them more predictable.

In an influential article, Philip Converse approached the issue from a different methodological angle but reached similar conclusions.[5] Based on extensive data that showed a lack of intellectual consistency and information, he argued that "a few crowning postures serve as a sort of glue to bind together many more specific attitudes and beliefs and these postures are of prime centrality in the belief system as a whole."[6] John Zaller followed similar lines and argued that "ideology … is a mechanism by which ordinary citizens make contact with specialists who are knowledgeable on controversial issues and who share the citizens' predispositions."[7] Earlier, Zaller argued that values rooted in personality, philosophy, ideology, gender, experience, religion, occupation, ethnicity, or a simple interest in politics refer to stable individual predispositions to accept or reject particular types of arguments.[8] These few core fundamental attitudes towards general moral and political principles shape individuals' attitudes and decisions concerning transient daily political issues.[9] As such, Downs' earlier definition of ideology as "a verbal image of the good society and the chief means of constructing such a society" is once again emphasized.[10] In short, either from the analytical approach of the spatial voting models or from a more empirically based approach of the Michigan school, a similar functional understanding of ideology is reached. As such, ideology does not refer to the legacy of an intellectual school such as Marxism, conservatism, or liberalism but rather:

> [I]t is an agglomeration of views of different specialists sharing a common predispositional bent … there is no particular need for members of the general public to know technical details of the expert debate on these issues, or to know why a given set of policies is conservative or liberal, in order to take positions on them that are consistent with their ideological predispositions.[11]

From a Downsian perspective, Zaller offers a specific cost-saving function of the specialist elites for the masses that help them make practical sense of the complexities of daily politics.

The left–right (L-R) ideological dimension is a widely used conceptual tool that helps summarize ideological characteristics of individuals in mass politics. Dieter Fuchs and Hans Dieter Klingeman argue that the L-R schema functions as a general simplifying mechanism for the reduction of the complexities of the world of politics; it orients the masses to politics and acts as a tool of communication between themselves as well as among the political elites who aim to mobilize them.[12] Simon Hix views the L-R schema as an invention enabling simplification into a simple dichotomy or a single continuum.[13] L-R helps summarize party programs and label issues in an intelligible way for the masses.[14]

The L-R Schema in the Turkish Context

Although there is plenty of evidence that L-R fulfills the functions of ideology in simplification and cost-saving for the masses in an uncertain and complex political world, there is little study of its usefulness or cross-country traveling capacity into the contexts of developing democracies. The use of L-R in Turkish electoral politics as a campaign tool, in addition to serving as an explanatory framework in academic studies, is relatively new. Although the intellectual roots of Turkish left and right ideologies go further back, party politics witnessed L-R terminology primarily in the aftermath of the 1960 coup. This event prepared a liberal constitutional framework for the political involvement of the working classes, particularly in left-wing organizations. The right-wing rhetoric of patriotic/nationalist orientations and of a religious conservative twist has had a longer and more prominent standing, dating back to the pre-Republican era. However, rhetorical similarities, as well as similarities in the nature and structure of the respective constituencies of both left and right in Turkish politics as compared to other Western democracies, are at best ambiguous.

The conceptual framework that is most prominently used in analyzing Turkish politics—that is, the center–periphery framework of Şerif Mardin—offers a convenient, if not a well concerted, linkage to the L-R agenda. Mardin's framework[15] is an interpretation of the socio-political history of Ottoman Turks as reflected on modern Turkish politics. Mardin applies the Lipset and Rokkan methodology[16] in a careful and subtle way and presents an influential framework for the analysis of Turkish electoral and party politics.[17] According to this framework, Turkish politics is built around a strong and coherent state apparatus run by a distinct group of elites dominated by the military and bureaucracy. The "center" is confronted by a heterogeneous and often hostile "periphery," composed mainly of peasantry, small farmers, and artisans. The "center" is built around Kemalist secular principles. It represents a state-run nationalist modernization program. The "periphery" reflects the salient features of a subject and parochial orientation, to use Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's terminology.[18] It is built around hostile sentiments towards the coercive modernization projects of the center and includes regional, religious, and ethnic groups with often-conflicting interests and political strategies.

Predominantly rural Turkey of the 1950s with its mostly isolated villages and limited mass education, transportation, and communication facilities was perhaps a

more fitting model for the center–periphery framework. Since then, significant advances have been made on all dimensions of development, which may be taken as a reflection of the integration of the periphery with the center. It has been observed that: "Typical villagers of earlier decades, who lived in closed communities and had little contact with outsiders, are fast disappearing. Rather the typical villager is more likely to have relatives or former neighbours in the big cities of Turkey or Europe."[19] Though Turkish society, which has largely been integrated through widened access to communication and transportation, is more open than in the past, the extent of its transformation into a modern social order is not so clear. Yılmaz Esmer provides some clues as to the extent of differentiation between the value systems of the center and the periphery.[20] The level of trust in different institutions is slightly lower for the more educated representatives of the center than for those respondants in the periphery with relatively less education.[21] More significant differences are observed in respondents' evaluations of the shortcomings of democracy.[22] In the rural areas, respondents seem to be much more supportive of a "powerful" leader and military rule. Similarly, while the highly educated representatives of the center seem to believe in the legitimacy of the democratic system in the country, among the peripheral representatives the legitimacy of the democratic system is considerably lower. More striking are the huge differences between the center and the periphery representatives' overall levels of tolerance in social relations. Esmer's overall tolerance index shows that the less-educated representatives of the periphery are significantly less tolerant than those in the center, who have a greater degree of education.[23]

On the political front there is ample evidence of the continuity of center–periphery cleavage. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu's analysis of the data gathered in the 1990 Turkish Values Survey reveals "the continued importance of the conflict between the values of the centre versus the values of the periphery," which has come to be signified by religiosity.[24] In addition to religiosity, other typical variables reflecting peripheral traits—such as ethnicity and place of residence—are also found to be significant in the voting decisions of Turkish voters in determining party choice.[25]

Similar conclusions are obtained on the basis of a two-dimensional analysis of the election manifesto data in the multiparty election period.[26] However, the subtleties of the rhetorical content of the manifestos are reflective of an emerging L-R expression. Continuing along a multidimensional explanatory framework, we argued that Mardin's center–periphery construct still maintains the overall salient characteristics of Turkish politics that shape and reshape the modern-day party system's constellations of electoral preferences.[27]

Even a cursory evaluation of the Turkish party system in the multiparty era would reveal a striking degree of congruity between center–periphery explanations and broad historical patterns. The closing of the Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti, DP) and the execution of three from its top leadership by the military junta had a prime implication for the organization's electoral politics.[28] The over-encompassing peripheral umbrella of the DP with clear right-wing ideological tenets effectively collapsed and gave way to increasingly potent ultra-nationalist and Islamist parties

within the party system. The typical centrist elements of the party system in the 1950s and 1960s within the organizational umbrella of the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) slowly transformed it into holding a left-wing stand à la Turca. The relatively more marginal elements of the left also exploited the electoral system of the early 1960s, which was congenial towards smaller parties, in order to effectively earn seats in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, TBMM). More importantly, the CHP adopted a left-of-center (*ortanın solu*) position that resembled the growing social democratic movement in Europe at the time. Under the leadership of Bülent Ecevit, the CHP increasingly took on a sharp left stance, facing the equally polarized right-wing of the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP) and the pro-Islamist National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi, MSP). The more centrist Justice Party (Adalet Partisi, AP) was the largest of the right-wing parties in the 1970s and was forced to join two Nationalist Front (Milliyetçi Cephe) coalition governments, which had disastrous consequences. The resulting uncontrollable political violence in the country ultimately led to the third military takeover in 1980. Although the reflections of a rural parochialism with strong ethnic and sectarian elements still remained salient, the L-R expressions nevertheless rose to dominance in conceptualizations of the nature of Turkish politics in the late 1970s. This was not only an academic undertaking but more strikingly a widespread popular understanding of politics at large. Laymen on the Turkish streets increasingly used L-R terminology to express opinions, to build broad categories of political positions, and quite frequently to appeal for group solidarity in the mass political sphere.

The military regime of 1980 aimed at destroying ideological stances and dissolving the leadership cadres, who were to be replaced by colorless political machines with wide-ranging nationalist developmental objectives. Not surprisingly, this naïve project largely failed, but in the process it, to a large extent, made the masses apolitical. Additionally, it effectively opened the ground for ideologically weakened centrist-left and right-wing parties, which were transformed into purely patronage distribution machines with overtly corrupt practices.[29] As a result, the center of the Turkish political space has miserably collapsed since the 1980s, giving way to a resurgence of the once-marginal ultra-nationalist and pro-Islamist parties.

The pro-Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, RP) became the largest party in the system in 1995, leading to a disastrous coalition that was strongly opposed by the secularist establishment led by the massively popular military. The ultra-nationalist MHP became the second largest party of the system in 1999. Following the closure of the RP by the Constitutional Court, there was an eventual split in the rank and file of the pro-Islamist leadership. This allowed former Istanbul mayor Tayyip Erdoğan to form the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) from a younger generation of the Nationalist View (Milli Görüş) elite. The AKP toppled the centrist establishment in the 2002 elections, obtaining about one-third of the popular vote but capturing nearly two-thirds of the TBMM seats due to the peculiar election system that requires nationwide electoral support of 10 percent of the population for gaining access to TBMM seats.

From the time when the pro-Islamists rose to prominence in mid-1990s, the new meaning of center-right and its fit into the L-R framework has remained on the agenda. Where do these newly formed parties stand on the L-R spectrum? Of what kind of center and periphery could one talk in Turkish politics in the late 1990s, approaching the new millennium?[30]

Despite widespread popular debate on these questions, as well as the existence of a systematic data collection within the L-R framework, an empirical analysis of the ideological orientations of Turkish voters has not been much studied.

Ever since Üstün Ergüder and Selçuk Özgediz's first systematic study of Turkish electoral behavior in the context of the 1977 general elections, L-R has been widely used in academic studies.[31] Nearly three decades of survey research provides evidence that corroborates the historical depiction of developments on the electoral scene described above.[32] However, against the same historical background the relevance of L-R becomes even more questionable than before. The essence of this skepticism is both historical as well as conceptual and is based on very little empirical evidence. It has also been argued that although L-R remains by and large the dominant dimension in the Turkish electoral space, its meaning may be undergoing a rapid change, and a multidimensional framework offers a better explanation than a single L-R depiction of the ideological space.[33] Multidimensional analyses show two dimensions that command the ideological competition in the Turkish party system.[34] The first and relatively more dominant dimension is the secularist versus pro-Islamist cleavage. It is noteworthy that this cleavage largely overlaps with center versus periphery formations in Turkish politics and also with left–right orientations, thus being similar in many respects to Western European traditions. The second dimension is ethnic cleavage, setting the Turkish and Kurdish identities in opposition to one another and reflecting pieces of a larger reform debate in the country around the Copenhagen political criteria for EU membership.

One critical advantage of the L-R framework is long-term availability of data that are collected in accordance with the international standards by adopting a one-to-ten scale in nationwide representative surveys that allow for across-time analyses of trends. However, despite this advantage, L-R in the Turkish context has only been used either in a descriptive manner or as an independent variable in explaining voting behavior and never—to the author's knowledge—as a dependent variable to be explained.[35] This essay aims to fill this gap and to offer an empirical model that accounts for determinants of self-placement along the conventional one-to-ten L-R scale. The essay also attempts to address two main questions. The first concerns the content of L-R self-placements: what are the determinants of individuals' self-placements along the one-to-ten scale? What specific attitudinal, issue preference, and demographic characteristics can be diagnosed among these factors? The second concerns the quality of measurement by a one-to-ten scale: what level of measurement does the scale offer? Is it inherently an interval, ordinal, or categorical level of measurement? Are the categories of the one-to-ten scale significantly different and equidistant from each other in the minds of the respondents?

Data and Methods

Data for the ensuing analyses were collected as part of the *New Faces of Turkish Politics* project carried out together with Ersin Kalaycıoğlu.[36] The field survey of socio-political attitudes and political choices was conducted during late March, April, and early May of 2006 in 23 of the 81 provinces of Turkey. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 1,846 respondents at the age of 18 and above. The sample of respondents were determined through a multi-stage stratified cluster sampling technique, which provided equal probability of selection per voting age population (18 years and older) who were citizens of Turkey. The primary sampling units were the provinces of Turkey, which were grouped according to the regions of the Turkish Statistics Institute (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, TUIK). Accordingly, Istanbul is a region of its own and all other provinces are grouped under 11 additional regions. Sample interviews were distributed to the regions according to the urban–rural population shares for each region. Then two representative provinces from each region were selected according to the Probability Proportionate to Size (PPS) principle. Ten interviews were targeted from each village and urban block, so a total of 200 villages and blocks were selected in the sample. In accordance with the urban and rural population shares, 68 villages and 132 urban blocks were randomly selected from the village and block lists obtained from TUIK. Then, ten households were randomly randomly selected per census track or block. The interviewers then randomly selected a respondent per household.

The L-R self-placement is obtained on a one-to-ten scale that posits the left-most position as "one," while the right-most position is "ten." Respondents were asked to pick an integer point between these two extremes that best reflects their personal conviction. As such, the measurement of L-R positions of respondents via the scale can best be thought of as an inherently rank-order measurement. Although a given respondent scoring "one"—therefore placing him or herself at the left-most position—shows fewer right-wing tendencies compared to someone picking "two" on the same scale, it is simply not known how many fewer right-wing ideological tendencies he or she has. Moreover, it is also not known whether the larger right-wing tendencies of someone scoring "four" as opposed to "three" are of equal magnitude compared to someone who chooses "two" as opposed to "one." In other words, equal differences in the scores do not necessarily correspond to equal differences in the underlying L-R tendencies of the respondents. Hence, they represent categories of L-R that are simply ranked from the lowest to the highest. As such, using ordinary least squares estimation methods is not justified. Instead, an ordered logit model was used to estimate the determinants of informality for the four samples.[37]

The ordered logit model is based on a measurement model in which a latent variable y^* is mapped onto an observed variable y. In this case, the observed variable is the L-R index, representing the underlying unobserved L-R ideological tendency. The observed L-R self-placement is thought of as providing incomplete information about the underlying ideological stance y^* according to a measurement equation:

$$y_i = m \text{ if } t_{m-1} \leq y^*_i < t_m \text{ for } m = 1 \text{ to } J.$$

Specified as such, the measurement problem takes the form of estimating the t's—or the thresholds or cut points—with the help of a structural model, using a set of independent variables whose differential impacts on the likelihood of being placed into one ranking as opposed to another can also be estimated.

In this case, the threshold parameters have significant substantive importance. If it is assumed for a moment that the estimation revealed only two statistically significantly different threshold parameters, no matter which one of these one-to-ten thresholds they may be, it would then be concluded that the underlying measurement of the ideological positions is one that only nominally differentiates left from right. On the other extreme, ten statistically significant thresholds could be obtained. Then the concern would be whether or not the estimated distances between them are equal and whether the estimated range of observations within a given rank overlaps with preceding and following ranks. Assuming on the one hand that the threshold separating "two" from "three" is twice the distance that separates "eight" and "nine," it will be inferred that a movement from "two" to "three" is reflective of a more important right-wing ideological reorientation than a move from "eight" to "nine." If, on the other hand, the confidence intervals around the estimated thresholds are overlapping across different rank-ordered categories, substantive distinction between them would effectively disappear.

A significant advantage of using the ordinal logit model is due to the fact that the effects of independent variables on the L-R dependent variable are allowed to be non-linear. What this means is that when, for example, the respondent's income increases by a unit, its impact will not be identical at all points along the one-to-ten scale. For example, a unit increase in income is expected to be largest around the mid-range of the one-to-ten scale as compared to its left or right extreme values. Since the respondents at the mid-range of the one-to-ten scale are of the lowest ideological commitments, their likelihood of switching from one point on the scale to another is greatest, while at the extreme ends the commitments are much stricter and thus likelihood of switching from one point to another is expected to be much lower.

Should the distances between thresholds be equidistant to one another? In one cross-section of data at one point in time, the equidistance principle is not of much practical significance. Respondents may have a much smaller underlying L-R ideological commitment that defines switching from one to another between "two" and "three" compared to between "six" and "seven." As long as these distances remain more or less the same across different time periods or across different polities, they simply reflect different cognitive processes at work along different points on the scale. However, if these distances between the same two points on the scale change over time or between different polities, they show that the cognitive processes at work that evaluate the same two points on the scale do not remain constant over time or over different polities. That is a serious problem that renders comparability of the results across time and space very difficult.

It should also be noted that the significance of the threshold estimates also depends on the number of observations at different points on the one-to-ten scale. In Turkey there are many fewer people selecting the left-most points on the scale compared to those who choose extreme right-wing positions. Accordingly, the statistical significance of the extreme left thresholds is much less likely to be significantly different than the other points on the scale. That is a factor that simply restricts the number of points on the scale.

A related issue concerns the discriminatory power of the estimated thresholds across the ten-point scale. One could obtain significant threshold estimates that on average are significantly different from one another. However, if the standard errors of these estimates are too large, there would be categories that lie within the confidence intervals of other threshold coefficients, thus making the substantive distinction between them problematic.

Results

Tables 1 and 2 below provide the estimates of the model for the self-positioned L-R index values. First, an ordered logit model is estimated by using the conventional one-to-ten L-R scale (Equation I). The overall fit of the model from Equation I is quite satisfactory considering the pseudo-R^2 values. With the exception of the first threshold parameter, all thresholds are significant.

However, two problems still remain concerning the threshold estimates. First is the fact that estimated stretch—that is, the difference between the left-most and right-most estimated thresholds—is quite narrow. Not surprisingly, as the stretch gets narrower, the standard errors of the estimated thresholds create overlapping ranks. Figure 1 below provides a picture of the estimated threshold values and their
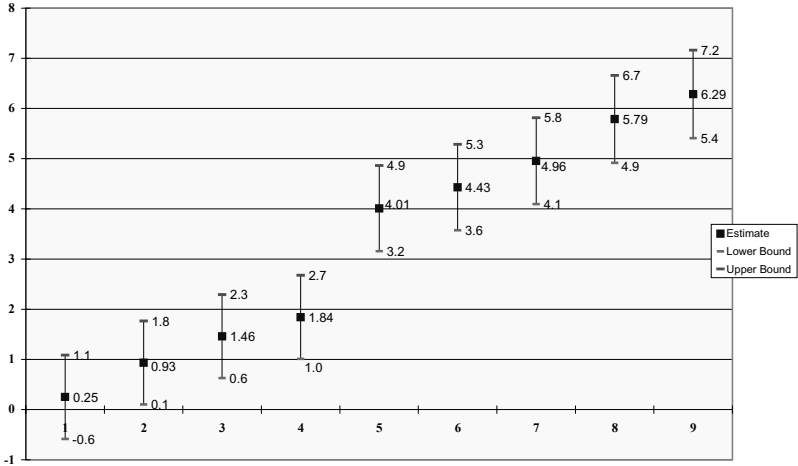
Figure 1. Estimated confidence intervals around the threshold parameters.

associated 95 percent confidence intervals. What is striking in this picture is that with the exception of the estimated jump in threshold value from rank "four" to "five," all consecutive confidence intervals do overlap. This suggests that individuals trying to make up their minds as to where to place themselves on the L-R scale actually are faced with ambiguous unobserved thresholds.[38] In other words, although all thresholds except the first turn out to be statistically significant, since the estimated stretch is too narrow, the confidence intervals of the estimated thresholds overlap and effectively create just three rank-ordered categories along the L-R dimension.

Indeed, when the predicted categories—or for every individual, the response category that has the maximum estimated probability for a factor/covariate pattern—are obtained, it can be seen that only the left-most and right-most and category "five" are predicted by the model. In other words, for no individual does the model predict a higher probability for the first, fifth, and tenth categories. Figure 2 clearly shows the reason why only rankings "one," "five" and "ten" turn out to be the only predicted ones. As indicated above by Figure 1, three ranges appear as effective thresholds: clearly up to rank "five," rank "one" has the highest average predicted probability. Rank "five" dominates all others on average and within its threshold range. Between ranks "six" and "ten," once again, rank "ten" has the highest on average predicted probability. As such, only three rankings are predicted. This obviously cannot be good news for L-R since it indicates that every category along the one-to-ten L-R scale has no substantive meaning in the calculations of the individuals who seem to group themselves predominantly as left, center, or right-wing.

Given the limited three-category ranking capability of the L-R dimension, the determining factors that shape placements along these three rankings can still be seen. Table 2 provides estimation results in detail by omitting the threshold parameters
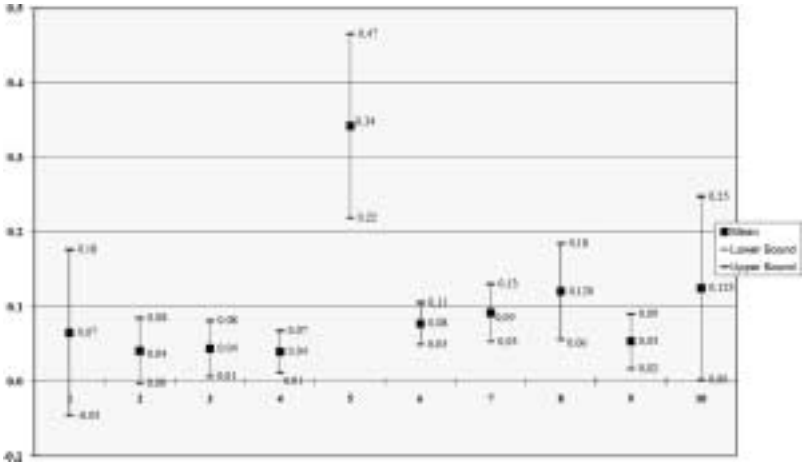

Figure 2. Mean estimated cell probabilities for response categories and their standard errors.

Table 1. Estimated Threshold Parameters from the Ordered Logit Model

	Threshold parameters									
										Total
Equation I	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	stretch
Estimate	0.25	0.93	1.46	1.84	4.01	4.43	4.96	5.79	6.29	6.54
Level of significance	0.56	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	

	Left	Center
Equation II	(1–4)	(5)
Estimate	1.88	4.08
Level of significance	0.00	0.00

	Equation I	Equation II
Pseudo R^2		
Cox and Snell	0.37	0.34
Nagelkerke	0.37	0.39
McFadden	0.11	0.20

estimates. Those coefficients with a positive estimated coefficient tend to push individuals towards the right end of the L-R spectrum, and those with a negative one tend to go to the left end. It can be seen from these estimates that their impacts upon rank-ordered self-placements are in accordance with the expectations. For example, minority rights rhetoric in evaluating factors that shape party choice has a left-leaning impact. Similarly, democratic values and tolerance together with support for reform are all associated with relatively more left-wing self-placements. It can also be seen that the right-most impact of general evaluations of social change comes from the position that supports returning back to past values and customs. Individuals supporting this category occupy the right-most position, and any other choice on that question creates relatively more left-wing positions. Higher interpersonal trust, happiness, and supportive evaluations of state authoritarianism raise the likelihood of right-wing self-placement along the L-R spectrum. Strikingly, however, no measure of socioeconomic status such as ownership of different goods or household income turns out to be significant. In other words, L-R self-placements are shaped primarily by attitudinal predispositions rather than clear-cut socioeconomic background variables. The critical impact of education here is also most likely to be significant, due to its influence over the value systems of individuals. Those who are not primary school graduates are relatively more left-wing compared to the rest of the sample.

It is also worthy to note that ethnic and sectarian backgrounds of individuals consistently appear significant in differentiating people's self-placements along the L-R scale. Those individuals who are of Kurdish ethnic background or who show signs of Alevism are relatively more left-wing. What then seems to occur is that minority identity affiliations are associated more with left-wing orientations than right-wing ones. The fact that increasing support for democratic values, reform, and

change also exerts leftward tendencies in self-placements is indicative of the progressive nature of the left-wing orientations, as they are reflected in individual self-placements. In other words, Sunni Turks with less education who are more trusting but less supportive of reform and democratic values are associated with right-wing self-positioning, while those of Alevi or Kurdish background with relatively higher levels of education and tolerance, and who have supportive predispositions towards reform and democratic values, are more prone to self-position themselves on the left-wing end of the L-R spectrum.

Critical retrospective evaluations of the government's performance concerning the economy also increase the likelihood of left-wing self-placement. As far as the individuals and their L-R self-placements and attitudinal characters are concerned, some sort of progressive twist in individuals of left-wing orientation is obtained, whereas those individuals who lean towards the right appear more religious, more state-centered and authoritarian, and less tolerant. One peculiar aspect of the Turkish right-wing that is related to social change concerns institutional change that would base the legal system on the rules of Shari'a. Individuals who are supportive of this change in the Turkish legal framework are more likely to self-place themselves towards the right end of the L-R scale.

Given the above-underlined problems of the overlapping structure of the threshold estimates, the same model was also run with a truncated L-R scale. That is, the L-R self-placements were recorded as "left" if an individual self-placed between "one" and "four" on the conventional one-to-ten scale, as "center" if the individual was at "five," and "right" if he or she was between "six" and "ten," as suggested by the above analysis of the thresholds. Table 2 shows that although the coefficient estimates vary from Equation I to Equation II, the qualitative implications of these changes do not alter any of the substantive conclusions. However, one additional advantage of using this three-category rank-order scale of left–center–right is that the estimated thresholds no longer overlap. The number of observations within every rank is large enough to allow for precise enough estimates that unambiguously separate one rank from another.

One last issue that should be addressed using the framework offered by the ordered logit model is the relative significance of different variables upon individual self-placements. What is the substantive impact of, for example, religiosity in shaping the self-placement decisions of individuals? Could an individual of right-wing predispositions switch from right to left if hypothetically speaking his or her level of religiosity is manipulated? For example, two different scenarios were run, and self-placement predictions for every rank-ordered category were estimated on the L-R scale in accordance with two scenarios. According to scenario 1, minimum right-wing and maximum minority rhetoric in party vote, lowest level of happiness, and very bad retrospective evaluation of economic conditions were used. It is also assumed that the individual is neither Kurdish nor has an Alevi background and is not a primary school graduate. As to his or her predispositions towards social change, it is assumed that he or she advocates a return to old traditions and customs. Lastly, it is assumed that this individual did not have a politically active family in

Table 2.   Ordered Logit Model: Threshold Parameters Omitted

	Equation I		Equation II	
		Level of		Level of
	Estimate	significance	Estimate	significance
Party choice criteria 1: rightist rhetoric	0.17	0.00	0.10	0.08
Party choice criteria 3: minority rights rhetoric	−0.15	0.00	−0.22	0.00
Party choice criteria 5: leadership charisma	0.18	0.00	0.17	0.00
Democratic values (additive)	−0.01	0.03	−0.01	0.01
Interpersonal trust (additive)	0.00	0.04	0.01	0.02
Happiness (additive)	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00
State authoritarianism (additive)	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.00
Tolerance (whom would one want as a neighbor)	−0.01	0.00	−0.01	0.00
Support for reform (additive)	−0.01	0.03	−0.01	0.01
Self-evaluated religiosity (from 1 = not at all religious to 10 = very religious)	0.15	0.00	0.11	0.00
Self-evaluated conservatism (from 1 = not at all conservative to 10 = very conservative)	0.10	0.00	0.10	0.00
Would want a legal system that 1 = would give no place to Shari'a to 10 = strict Shari'a	0.08	0.00	0.05	0.03
Prefers society should radically change	−0.34	0.02	−0.33	0.04
Prefers society should gradually and slowly change	−0.14	0.25	−0.20	0.15
Prefers protecting society from any change	−0.32	0.02	−0.28	0.08
Family identified with a party	−0.18	0.07	−0.28	0.01
Retrospective sociotropic economic evaluations (from 1 = worst to 10 = very good)	0.11	0.00	0.13	0.00
Did not speak Kurdish with their family in their childhood	0.75	0.00	0.72	0.00
Does not show any signs of Alevism	0.36	0.01	0.45	0.00
Is not a primary school graduate	−0.22	0.02	−0.29	0.01
Ownership status	0.00	0.11	0.00	0.23

Excluded variables: age, sex, urban–rural location, dummy variable for those who partici-pated in different protests, dummy variable for those who support EU membership, dummy variable for those who support lifting the turban ban, policy preferences (1 = all economic activity should be carried out by state to 10 = state should have no role in the economy), policy preferences (1 = all political decisions should be made by the central state to 10 = all political decisions should be made by local governments), attitudes towards uncertainty, employment status, dogmatism, anomic attitudes, political efficacy, attitudes towards change, religious liberalism, religious conservatism, self-esteem, attitudes towards customs and tradi-tions, monthly average household income.

childhood and thus has a non-partisan past in the family. These are obviously assumptions that would create a left-leaning individual, and Figure 3 shows that combined with the lowest level of self-evaluated religiosity, the highest likelihood that this individual would pick a point on the L-R scale appears to be the left-most position, "one." Then this individual's level of self-evaluated religiosity is increased from "zero" to "ten" and all other variable values are kept constant at the scenario levels. What is observed is that this hypothetical individual's predicted probability of self-placement at the left-most position of "one" declines and becomes dominated by a steadily increasing centrist ("five" on the one-to-ten L-R scale) position only at about a religiosity score of "eight" on a zero-to-ten scale of self-evaluated religiosity. From that point on, centrist probability is higher than all other rank-ordered categories.

After reaching the highest level of religiosity in this scenario, new elements are then added into the scenario, keeping the religiosity level at its maximum. When, for example, the hypothetical individual becomes more trusting, centrist tendencies continue to rise in his or her self-placement probabilities. Additionally, the condition of being at maximum level of state authoritarianism pushes the centrist tendencies a little higher. The last increase in a centrist probability of self-placement comes with the assumption of zero tolerance for the hypothetical individual. From then on, adding the assumption of maximum conservatism or approval of Shari'a just reduces the predicted probability of a centrist self-placement and increased probability associated with right-most self-placement. However, what is striking is that once the individual is assumed to be predisposed to all the left-wing characteristics, just one additional assumption of right-wing preferences or attitudes cannot tilt the balance and render the predicted probability of right-wing self-placement
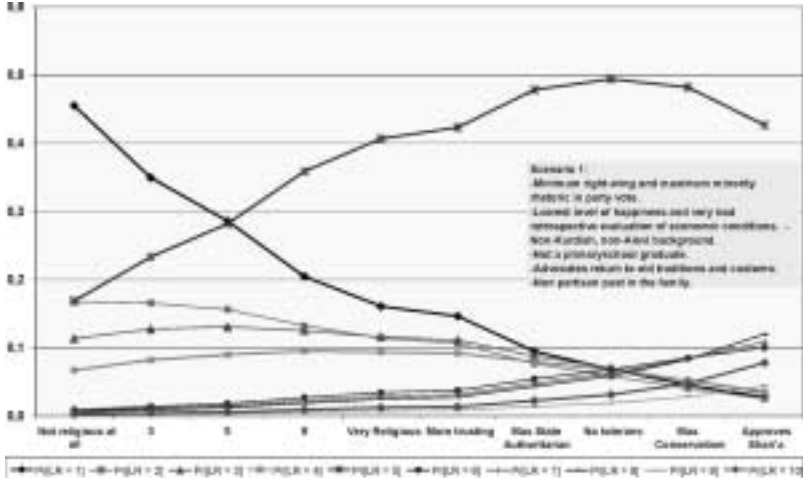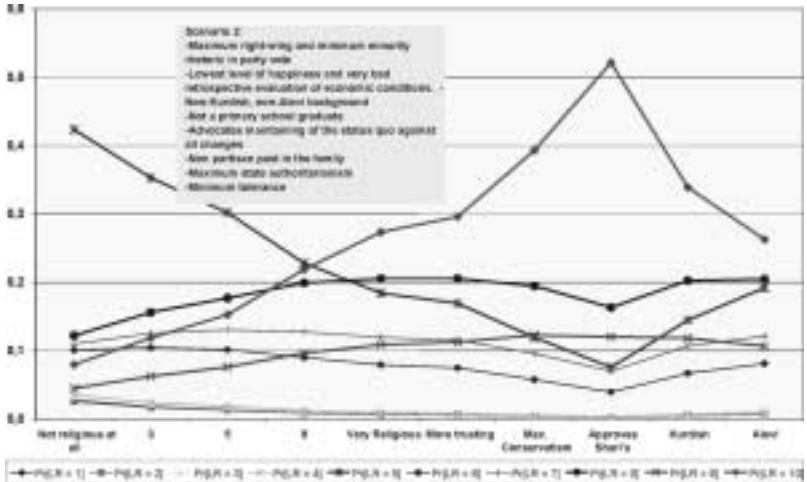

Figure 3. Impact of religiosity on predicted probabilities of L-R self-placement scenario 1.

dominant over the others. Increasing doses of religiosity combined with additional doses of right-wing preferences or attitudes leaves the centrist self-placement still dominant.

A similar scenario that creates a clear right-wing predisposition at the start was also run. What this scenario suggests is that starting with a dominant centrist position and increasing the level of self-evaluated religiosity slowly pushes the individual towards the right-most position. However, besides the right-most position, which tends to rise in probability with the centrist position's probability on decline, other predicted probabilities do not radically change (see Figure 4). When the hypothetical individual finally becomes "very religious," then the predicted probability for the right-most position becomes dominant over the rest of the scale options. Then, additional assumptions about increased trust, conservatism, and approval of Shari'a simply raise the predicted probability of the right-most position. Adding Kurdish and Alevi background decreases it but never makes it dominated by other self-placement options, which remain within the same range of predicted probabilities. Only the predicted probability of the centrist position seems to be sensitive to changes in the scenario, and all other ranks remain almost unaffected.

Conclusions

The analysis above provides new evidence about the nature of L-R ideology for the case of Turkey. The left and the right as reflected in the determinants of self-placements along the L-R scale have no tangible socioeconomic basis such as economic deprivation but have instead bases in ethnic and sectarian differences. Only simple educational differences among the socioeconomic background

Figure 4. Impact of religiosity on predicted probabilities of L-R self-placement scenario 2.

variables seem to matter in shifting individuals along the L-R scale. More striking is the prevalence of attitudinal and policy preference differences. "Left" is characterized by progressive, tolerant, democratic attitudes with low levels of religiosity and critical evaluations of the economic policy performance of the government. "Right," on the other hand, is characterized by more trusting and happy individuals who are of low tolerance levels. Right-wing is also more prone to maintenance of the status quo, more state authoritarianism, and less democracy in its value predispositions. Individuals who approve of Shari'a rule in the legal system of the country also tend to group themselves in the right-wing.

The analyses also suggest that there are primarily three groups of ideological self-placements instead of a one-to-ten scale. In the minds of the people, degradations of ideological orientations between left-most "one" and right-most "ten" is too ambiguous. Instead, they seem to use three categories: the left, the center, and the right. The magnitudes of influence exerted by the explanatory variables upon individual self-placements are such that switching from left to right is very unlikely. Instead, increasing, for example, the levels of religiosity can only make an already left-wing individual somewhat centrist but not rightist. A centrist individual who experiences increasing religiosity could eventually self-place him or herself on the right-wing. In other words, once a left, center, or right-wing predisposition is settled in an individual, change in that dominant predisposition seems quite difficult to achieve.

The above-presented estimation of a rank-ordered logit model also suggests that the conventional L-R scale might just be too complicated for the Turkish layman. The fact that only three rank-ordered categories are suggested by the estimated model instead of the presently used ten-point ranking can be taken as a sign of unease on the part of the respondents who were given this scale for evaluation. These respondents seemed to suggest that they simplified the ten-point scale into three ranks of left, center, and right. However, no matter whether a ten- or three-point classification along the L-R dimension is used, the mental or intellectual nature of these self-placements suggests a significant degree of congruence with the expectations concerning the nature of the L-R dimension. The left attracts tolerant, democratically oriented, progressive change-seekers with low religiosity, some degree of economic complaints, and a low level of interpersonal trust, while the right is more trusting, happy but conservative, religious, and seeks maintenance of the status quo with some degree of authoritarianism and lack of tolerance.

At least two further questions concerning the implications of these findings require further research. One concerns the apparent nature of shifting preferences of self-placements along the L-R scale since the 1980s. The diagnosis commonly agreed upon is a continual shift towards the right end of the spectrum in Turkey, and that the "meaning" of L-R has changed. It is impossible to disagree with the latter and difficult to agree with the former. It is difficult to agree that people are shifting from left to right since there is no panel data evidence of that phenomenon. Turkish society is aging, and with age a move towards the right could be observed. Individuals looking into the political world of Turkey throughout their lifespan see and interpret what they see differently. Therefore, as long as panel data remain

unavailable, what is necessary is perhaps to see the world through the eyes of similar individuals at two points in time and consider how these hypothetical individuals would behave. Such a hypothetical judgment might reveal the convincing power of the shifting ideological positions hypothesis keeping the changing meaning of the ideological debate constant.

The second and more profound question concerns the multidimensionality of the ideological discourse in the country. The above analysis reveals that a rich array of determinants shape the likelihood of self-placements of individuals along the L-R dimension. Many of these determinants lend themselves to a further in-depth analysis that is likely to reveal relatively independent evaluations of individual positions in a higher dimensional space and the locations of the parties therein. The agglomerating nature of the L-R spectrum might just be forcing individuals to lump fine degradations of different positions into the fewer but more inclusive and over-encompassing ranks that were suggested by the above analysis. If the issue space can be better grasped through more sensitive and accurate measurement frameworks, then its multidimensional character might be better achieved.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. Andre Blais, *To Vote or Not to Vote: The Merits and Limits of Rational Choice Theory* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), pp.2–10.
2. Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).
3. Ibid., p.98.
4. Melvin J. Hinich and Michael C. Munger, *Ideology and the Theory of Public Choice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p.3.
5. Philip Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in David Apter (ed.), *Ideology and Discontents* (New York: Free Press, 1964).
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7. John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.327.
8. John Zaller, "Information, Values and Opinion," *American Political Science Review*, Vol.85, No.4 (1991), p.1216.
9. Anthony Heath, Geoffrey Evans and Jean Martin, "The Measurement of Core Beliefs and Values: The Development of Balanced Socialist/Laissez Faire and Libertarian/Authoritarian Scales," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol.24, No.1 (1993) pp.115–32.
10. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, p.96.
11. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, p.328.
12. Dieter Fuchs and Hans Dieter Klingeman, "The Left–Right Schema," in M. Kent Jennings and Jan W. van Deth (eds.), *Continuities in Political Action* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1990), p.205.
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14. Ronald Inglehart and Hans Dieter Klingemann, "Party Identification, Ideological Preference and the Left–Right Dimensions among Western Publics," in Ian Budge, Ivor Crewe and Dennis Farlie (eds.),

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15. Şerif Mardin, "Center Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?," *Deadalus*, Vol.2, No.1 (1973), pp.169–90.

16. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction," in Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross National Perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1967), pp.1–64.

17. Mardin's work (1973) carries a number of similarities with Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) discussion of historical cleavages in Western polities.

18. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

19. Binnaz Toprak, "Islam and the Secular State in Turkey," in Çigdem Balım (ed.), *Turkey: Political, Social and Economic Challenges in the 1990s* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), p.94.

20. Yılmaz Esmer, *Revolution, Evolution, Status-Quo; Social Political and Economic Values in Turkey* (Istanbul: Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) Publications, 1999).

21. Ibid., p.49.

22. For example, while 37 percent of the rural respondents agree with the statement that in democracies maintenance of public order will be difficult, among urban settlers only 26 percent agree. See ibid., p.80.

23. Ibid., pp.88–90.

24. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "Elections and Party Preferences in Turkey, Changes and Continuities in the 1990s," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.27, No.4 (1994), pp.402–25, at p.422.

25. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "The Shaping of Political Preferences in Turkey: Coping with the Post-Cold War Era," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol.20, No.1 (1999), pp.47–76, at pp.64–66; Ali Çarkoğlu and Binnaz Toprak, *Türkiye'de Din, Toplum ve Siyaset* [Religion, Society and Politics in Turkey] (Istanbul: Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) Publications, 2000), pp.117–18.

26. Ali Çarkoğlu "Turkish Party System in Transition: The Connection Between Macro-Level Party Competition and Agenda Change in Election Manifestoes," *Political Studies*, Vol.49 (1998), pp.544–71.

27. Ali Çarkoğlu and Melvin J. Hinich, "A Spatial Analysis of Turkish Party Preferences," *Electoral Studies*, Vol.25, No.2 (June 2006), pp.369–92. See also Ali Çarkoğlu, "Turkish Party System in Transition" and William M. Hale, "Democracy and the Party System in Turkey," in Brian W. Beeley (ed.), *Turkish Transformation, New Century, New Challenges* (Walkington, England: The Eothen Press, 2002).

28. For a comprehensive overview of the historical development of political participation and electoral politics in Turkey, see Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Turkish Democracy Today: Elections, Protest and Stability in an Islamic Society* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

29. Clientelistic elements in Turkish politics have long been noted. See Sabri Sayarı, "Some Notes on the Beginnings of Mass Political Participation," in Engin D. Akarlı and Gabriel Ben-Dor (eds.), *Political Participation in Turkey: Historical Background and Present Problems* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 1975); and A. Kutad, "Patron–Client Relations: The State of the Art and Research in Eastern Turkey," in Engin D. Akarlı and Gabriel Ben-Dor (eds.), *Political Participation in Turkey: Historical Background and Present Problems* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 1975), pp.61–87 for pioneering accounts. The author's argument here is not that patronage politics were an invention or novelty of the 1980s, but rather that these politics remained as the single most prominent factor stripped of its ideological commitments that were effective during the late 1960s and 1970s.

30. Çarkoğlu, "Turkish Party System in Transition," pp.554.

31. Üstün Ergüder, "Changing Patterns of Electoral Behaviour in Turkey," *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi* [Bogazici University Journal], Vols.8–9 (1980–81), pp.45–81.

32. See the detailed discussion of the L-R research in Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu, *Turkish Democracy Today*, pp.113–60.

33. See Çarkoğlu and Hinich, "A Spatial Analysis of Turkish Party Preferences" and Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu, *Turkish Democracy Today*, pp.113–20.

34. See Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "Türkiye'de Siyaset" [Politics in Turkey], in *Sivil Toplum için Kent, Yerel Siyaset ve Demokrasi Seminerleri* [Seminars in City, Local Politics and Democracy for Civil Society] (Istanbul: World Academy for Local Government and Democracy Publications (WALD), 1998); Hale, "Democracy and the Party System in Turkey" and Çarkoğlu and Hinich, "A Spatial Analysis of Turkish Party Preferences."

35. One notable exception is Emre Yüce's working paper: "Testing the Robustness of the Ten-Point Left–Right Self-Placement Scale across Advanced and Developing Countries," MA essay, May 2004, Penn State University, Department of Political Science, wherein the Turkish case is also used within a comparative context.

36. The project was generously funded by the Open Society Institute–Turkey.

37. For an accessible treatment of the analysis of ordered outcomes, see Scott J. Long, *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables* (London: Sage, 1997).

38. For example, a threshold value of 1.5 corresponds to either rank "three" or "four." Looking at these overlapping thresholds then, one sees that there is an unambiguous left threshold at about 2.7, below which one could pick values from "two" to "four," and beyond which one is likely to be in the realm of center-right self-placement. The right-most threshold is significantly different only from the threshold of "five," beyond which one self-places him/herself as "six," all the way to "ten." Between 2.7 and 4.9 one is at "five," the center. Above 4.9, self-placement effectively indicates right-of-center, while below 2.7 is left-of-center.