

Politics of the Gecekondu in Turkey: The Political Choices of Urban Squatters in National Elections

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This article demonstrates that the victory of the pro-Islamist Welfare Party in Turkey's 1995 general elections resulted mainly from a significantly disproportionate increase in support from urban squatter neighborhoods. But the increase is not due solely to the growth of Islamic ideology, as is commonly believed. Rather, in a move consistent with their past voting behavior, urban squatters shifted their electoral support to the Islamists when the parties representing the "periphery," which traditionally protected their interests, moved to the center, and left them searching for an alternative to address their material needs.

Urban squatter settlements are the products of developing economies' transformation from an agrarian base to an industrial base. In political terms, rapid democratization in many newly industrializing nations has made squatters, whose numbers are rising, an important and sometimes pivotal constituency. For example, urban squatters played a key role in Mexico's democratization process in the late 1980s,¹ and in Brazil² and Chile³ in the early 1980s. In Turkey, the rural-to-urban migrant citizens who populate squatter neighborhoods, or *gecekondu*s, have made a strong national political impact.

At no time was their presence felt more than during Turkey's 1995 national election, which handed victory to Necmettin Erbakan's pro-Islamist Welfare Party (WP).⁴ Islamist parties had existed on Turkey's political fringe for years, but the WP's 21.4 percent share of the national vote in 1995 was unprecedented. The critical shift in voting patterns that enabled the WP to emerge in the lead came from *gecekondu* districts in Turkey.

The media and opposition politicians have characterized this shift as a revival of traditional Islamic sentiments, reminiscent of Iran before the Islamic revolution. But some political scientists in Turkey counter that it is more the result of voter dissatisfaction with mainstream parties combined with the WP's skillful grassroots campaigning.⁵ Indeed, the growing strength of Islam in Turkey is not solely responsible for the WP's

good fortune. Rather, it is grounded in the change in focus by parties that traditionally represented “peripheral” voters (such as squatters) toward the “center” (the elite),⁶ which left urban squatters searching for a party that would better advance their material interests.⁷

The swing in *gecekondu* voting patterns is not new or unique to the WP. The volatility of squatter votes can be traced back to the early days of multiparty elections in Turkey in the 1960s. Squatters, like other peripheral constituencies, have historically been courted by political parties,⁸ which used patronage to mobilize votes from the very beginning of competitive elections.⁹ In most patron-client relations, it is not possible for clients to exit, but Turkish clients, especially those in urban areas, are an exception. Thus, the *gecekondu* was able to throw its decisive support behind the WP in 1995.

Urban Squatters in Turkey

A Critical Voting Base for Political Parties

The *gecekondu* was first defined by the government in 1966 as “dwellings erected on land and lots which do not belong to the builder, without the consent of the owner, and without observing the laws and regulations concerning constructions and building.”¹⁰ *Gecekondu*, which literally means “landed at night,” refers to houses built overnight where migrants settled. At last count,¹¹ the number of squatter dwellings was 1.6 million, with the vast majority — 1.15 million — in Turkey’s seven biggest cities and almost three quarters of a million in Ankara, Istanbul, and İzmir alone. Estimates reveal that there are an estimated 5.14 million voters living in squatter housing, making up 17 percent of the national electorate.¹² This represents a big voting bloc for local and national elections, which is especially significant since the Turkish political system is based on proportional representation.

In order to locate urban squatters within the clientelist political system, it is important to have some information on the national economy and patterns of migration that gave rise to the *gecekondu*s. It is equally important to see how squatters adapt to national and local politics and integrate into urban areas.

The Turkish government played a significant role in creating the urban migration problem in the early days of the Republic. Consistent with the

modernization theory of the 1950s, the government did not oppose urbanization. It viewed it “as a ‘vehicle of economic and social development.’ Urban development, according to Turkey’s national planners, ‘precedes industrialization.’ [The] government also concluded that there was ‘no other alternative’ to ‘allowing massive migrations to urban areas’ because ‘agricultural land [was] at, or near, its maximum utilization.’”¹³

TABLE 1
RATIO AND ANNUAL RATE OF GROWTH OF CITY AND VILLAGE POPULATION
PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION

Census Year	Urban	Rural
1935	23.53	76.47
1950	25.04	74.96
1965	34.42	65.58
1975	41.81	58.19
1985	53.03	46.97
1990	59.01	40.99
1997	65.03	34.97

Source: State Institute of Statistics.

The urban population rose from 24 percent of the total population in 1927 to 53 percent in 1985 and 65 percent in 1997. (See Table 1.) Until the 1950s, rural-to-urban migration was mostly seasonal. After the 1950s, however, permanent migration began to increase, in part due to the loss of agricultural jobs.¹⁴ In a 1990 survey of the urban squatter population, 74.1 percent of the respondents from Ankara, İzmir, and Istanbul — Turkey’s three largest cities — indicated that they came to the city to find a job.¹⁵

The *gecekondu* expanded from 100,000 units in 1950 to 1.25 million in 1983. In fact, in 1983 there were almost six million people living in squatter housing, almost one quarter of the urban population.¹⁶ In Ankara in 1980, nearly three quarters of the homes housed squatters. In İzmir, squatter housing constituted 61 percent of the city’s population, in Adana 51 percent, and in Istanbul 49 percent.¹⁷

Like many developing countries with urban squatter problems, industrialization in Turkey occurred at a much slower rate than urbanization.¹⁸ With the urban workforce increasing faster than the rate of employment opportunities, what was at first underemployment later turned into a large pool of unemployed migrant workers. But that did not prevent more migrants from reaching the cities. Compounding these problems was the fact that many migrants could not afford housing prices, which were inflated due to shortages resulting from the rapid increase in the urban population.

Urban Squatters' Adaptation to National Politics

The experience of the *gecekondu* residents is best understood not as a process of cultural assimilation but one of integration, which Kemal Karpat suggests is a response to marginality.¹⁹ The *gecekondu* is able to survive as a neighborhood if it integrates into the city, and this can only happen if it is outfitted with the proper technology and modern facilities of an urban dwelling — electricity, a sewage system, running water, roads, and transportation. The migrant population in squatter neighborhoods has therefore been quick to organize politically in order to obtain public goods to ensure its survival.

Gecekondu dwellers came mainly from farming communities. They were exposed to the national government primarily through their village elders or *muhtar* (elected village head), or larger landowners, on whom they were commonly economically dependent. Whereas they used to vote according to the instructions of local leaders, once in the city, their passive role was transformed. They enjoyed greater economic independence and were often specifically targeted by political parties. According to Karpat,²⁰ “in the case of the Turkish squatters, the demand-making transform[s] the traditional and mythical *devlet baba* [father state], an aloof, authoritarian semi-deity, into a living government — into a human organization that could be manipulated to do or undo certain acts, especially with regard to the *gecekondu*.”

Squatters, Turkish Political Parties, and Patron-Client Ties

Traditionally, patron-client relations are defined as a relationship between “two parties unequal in status, wealth and influence” and the “formation and maintenance of the relationship depends on reciprocity in the

exchange of goods and services.”²¹ In Turkey, clientelism dates back at least as far as the founding of the Republic, and perhaps even before then with underground political parties. But, patron-client relationships became even more important when Turkey was transformed from a single party system to a multi-party system. In 1946, the Democrat Party (DP) rose to challenge the Republican People’s Party (RPP) — the party, founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, which had its base in the military and elite classes, and had ruled Turkey single-handedly since the Republic’s 1923 establishment. The DP came to “represent the ‘democratic’ periphery” while the “Republican People’s Party represented the ‘bureaucratic’ center.”²² In terms of Turkish politics, this meant that the DP represented the “people” whereas the RPP represented the “state.”

From the 1946 transition to a multi-party system, full-fledged competition for clients began.²³ Sabri Sayarı describes the relationship between Turkish parliamentary deputies and their constituents as based on the “maintenance of vertical networks [that] depends on the downward flow of governmental patronage and on the capability of leaders...to perform brokerage services for their followers.”²⁴ “Deals, trade-offs, and bargains became much more pervasive than in the earlier situations, and client politics flourished on a new level ... it was ... a form that brought a greater portion of the masses into a meaningful relation with the center than had been possible under” the single party rule.²⁵ In this context, the periphery, including the urban squatters, came to be an important voting bloc.

Like the urban immigrant population in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the squatters bargained with the parties over their votes.²⁶ However, unlike the old American machine party politics, Turkish patron-client ties do not last very long and political parties are not able to maintain a permanent stronghold in particular areas.²⁷

Although the DP represented the “people,” the RPP continued to control Turkish politics from the center, and as long as the regime could be protected against the communism, fascism, Islamic fundamentalism, and other threats, and those who represented the periphery did so from an economic perspective avoiding ideological extremes, the center and periphery could co-exist in the political arena.²⁸ Thus, the DP represented the periphery’s material interests and the patron-client relationships were able to survive as long as the economy performed well and the clients’ political support was appropriately rewarded.

However, starting in the early 1970s and lasting until today, a shaky economy threatened to disrupt the stable center-periphery relations:

The upshot of uneven socio-economic performance was the ascendance of the client-entrepreneurial strata, the descent of the salaried, etatist class, and the frustration of a motley of aspiring groups who could not achieve the level of “material want satisfaction” they believed that they deserved. The result was often anger and rage by the excluded and the marginalized and mobilization, initially led by the disaffected, radicalized splinter groups of the etatist constituency and eventually picked up by the “dispossessed” of the “society-under-reconstruction.”²⁹

With a decline in Turkey’s economic health and the proliferation of political parties, urban squatters began to change their party allegiances in response to their perception of what different parties could deliver to them. For example, the Justice Party (JP)³⁰ was able to achieve electoral success in 1965 because of its ability to cater to the urban poor. In fact, much of the JP’s support came from *gecekondu* areas. Ergun Özbudun states that, “such predominant lower-class support for an essentially conservative party may...seem paradoxical. Yet ... it is hardly surprising that the [urban migrants] give their support to a party that they perceive as instrumental in bringing about ... change ... The JP’s domination of the national and most of the municipal governments may also have helped the party in the *gecekondu* areas, which are ... highly dependent upon its favors.”³¹ In a study of the voting behavior of *gecekondu* districts in Istanbul, Karpat observed that in the 1965 and 1969 elections, the overwhelming support for the JP was “surprising since a majority of squatters voted for the RPP while in the village ... Concerns about material welfare seemed to predominate in the choice of party.”³²

According to Özbudun, although most squatters still supported the JP, there was a decline in the JP votes from 1965 to 1969 in the *gecekondu* districts in favor of the RPP (see Table 2). In 1973, the RPP came out ahead in the national election, attracting the urban poor vote by changing from an elite party of the “center” to a “left of center” party of the periphery.³³ “The government of Bülent Ecevit — that is, the Republican People’s Party, which accumulated a plurality of the votes in the national elections of 1973, thanks to the *gecekondu* votes — promised to issue land deeds to all dwellings built until the end of 1973.”³⁴ These would be

TABLE 2
PERCENT OF VOTE SUPPORT FOR THE JP AND RPP AMONG LOW-INCOME
VOTERS IN THREE TURKISH CITIES

	City	Justice Party		Republican People's Party	
		<i>Gecekondu</i>	National Total	<i>Gecekondu</i>	National Total
1965	Istanbul	62.4	52.9	19.1	28.7
	Ankara	52.5		25.8	
	Izmir	72.1		17	
1969	Istanbul	53.8	46.5	21.8	27.4
	Ankara	43.4		30.1	
	Izmir	60.7		22.6	
1973	Istanbul	26.7	29.8	47.5	33.3
	Ankara	27.7		45.9	
	Izmir	36.5		44.2	

Source: (Nelson, 1979) Table 8.8 and State Institute of Statistics.

crucial to squatters who were attempting to establish themselves in cities — a direct material payoff that would inspire support. Support for the RPP increased from 1973 until the 1980 coup d'état. In fact, during that period, *gecekondu* neighborhoods were the RPP's biggest supporters.

The 1980 coup was intended to end the unrest-bordering-on-civil-war that swept the country in the 1970s. It also provided flexibility for a group of technocrats led by Turgut Özal (who later formed the Motherland Party, or MP) to liberalize Turkey's economy by integrating into global markets and working closely with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The squatters, hoping for economic advancement, provided a receptive audience for Özal's promises of a coming *ortadirek* — the creation of a large middle class — and backed the MP early on. But, when the austerity measures and structural adjustment programs imposed by center-right parties in the 1980s hit the urban poor the hardest, the squatters defected, eventually landing at the Welfare Party's door. These historical patterns suggest that urban squatters have allied with different political parties based *not on a difference in ideology*, but on their *material interests*.

The Shift Toward the Welfare Party: Empirical Evidence

Thus far, scholars have only *assumed* that urban squatter neighborhoods voted in favor of the Welfare Party in the 1990s; the link has never been

empirically established. To what extent, then, did urban squatters back the Welfare Party in the 1995 elections?

Independent Variable: The Percentage of Squatter Voters

The independent variable in this study is the percentage of urban squatters in a neighborhood (*mahalle*). In a 1993 nationwide study of the urban squatter population's integration into cities, Birsen Gökçe and colleagues³⁵ identified the number of *gecekondu* housing units in the central districts of each province.³⁶ The researchers first obtained the location and the number of squatter households from municipalities and then confirmed the data by visiting the sites.³⁷ This article uses an estimate of the number of voters from the squatter population based on Gökçe's survey.

In Ankara, the average number of people in a squatter household was 5.7, and the percentage of people over the age of 20 — the voting age — in these neighborhoods was 59.5 percent.³⁸ Thus, the squatter voting age population is estimated to be:

$$\text{Voting Age Population}_{\text{squatter}} = [(\text{Number of Squatter Households} \times 5.7) \times 0.595].$$

And, the percentage of squatter voters in each neighborhood is calculated by:

$$\text{Percentage of Squatter Voters}_{\text{mahallex}} = \frac{\text{Voting Age Population}_{\text{squatter}}}{\text{Total Number of Registered Voters}}.^{39}$$

Election Results: Dependent and Control Variables

This study uses the percentage of voters for the major political parties in the 1995 elections as the dependent variable,⁴⁰ and the percentage of votes for the same party in 1991 as the control variable. Only those political parties that had seats in the parliament and were viable coalition partners are represented in this analysis. These parties are: the Welfare Party (WP, Islamic), the Motherland Party (MP, center-right), the True Path Party (TPP, center-right), the Democratic Left Party (DLP, center-left), and the Social Democratic Populist Party (SDPP)/Republican People's Party (RPP).⁴¹

Methodology

The following model tests for an indication of a positive relationship between the urban squatter neighborhoods and the vote for the Welfare Party:⁴²

$$V_{wp,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 D.SQ. + e.$$

$V_{wp,t}$ = Percentage of overall votes for Welfare Party 1995 national elections;

D.SQ. = Dummy variable coded 1 for neighborhoods with any number of urban squatters and 0 for neighborhoods with no squatters.

The coefficients from this regression indicate an increase in the vote for the Welfare Party in squatter neighborhoods of Ankara. In these neighborhoods, the vote for the WP is an estimated average of 23.42 percent, compared to 17.25 percent in non-squatter neighborhoods. These results indicate a positive relationship between urban squatter neighborhoods and the vote for the pro-Islamist Welfare Party. In neighborhoods with any number of squatters, the vote for the WP tended to be 6.17 percent higher than in non-squatter neighborhoods. Looking at how other political parties fared, the numbers show a leveling or a decrease in support in neighborhoods with urban squatters (See Table 3), indicating that there is less support for mainstream political parties in urban squatter neighborhoods. For example, the vote for TPP indicates an estimated 3.9 percent less support in neighborhoods with urban squatters.

Table 4 illustrates the votes for political parties in Ankara's 327 neighborhoods by dividing the city into three types of neighborhoods: those with low, medium, and high numbers of squatter residents. The results are clear. In medium and high level squatter neighborhoods, there is a disproportionate increase in support for the WP and a drastic decrease in support for the TPP. In neighborhoods with 0-20 percent squatter voters, the vote for the WP was 16 percent, whereas in neighborhoods with a high number of squatter housing, which constitute 35 percent of Ankara's total voting population, the vote for the WP was 26 percent. The MP lost votes in these neighborhoods as well, but to a lesser degree than the TPP. The DLP showed increased support across all types of neighborhoods, though perhaps the DLP picked up the portion of the SDPP votes that did not go to the RPP.

TABLE 3
THE AMOUNT OF SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL PARTIES BASED ON
TYPE OF NEIGHBORHOOD

Party	Type of Neighborhood	Amount of Support
WP*	Non-Urban Squatter	17.25
	Urban Squatter Dummy	23.42
DLP*	Non-Urban Squatter	17.08
	Urban Squatter Dummy	14.24
MP	Non-Urban Squatter*	23.47
	Urban Squatter Dummy	22.99
TPP*	Non Urban Squatter	14.04
	Urban Squatter Dummy	10.14
SDPP/RPP	Non Urban Squatter*	16.28
	Urban Squatter Dummy	16.79

*Significant at .000 level.

TABLE 4
AVERAGE VOTE FOR POLITICAL PARTIES BY THE PERCENTAGE OF SQUATTERS
IN THE 327 NEIGHBORHOODS IN ANKARA

Squatter as % of neighborhood	WP		TPP		MP		DLP		RPP	SDPP
	1991	1995	1991	1995	1991	1995	1991	1995	1991	1995
None-20%										
Low	16.59	14.14	14.46	24.16	23.70	23.83	15.92	10.89	17.14	26.56
20-80%										
Medium	24.41	20.85	9.60	22.21	21.58	23.96	12.56	10.06	16.53	22.61
80-100%										
High	26.00	20.78	8.36	21.84	20.24	23.88	14.44	11.66	16.40	21.38
AVERAGE	22.33	18.59	10.81	22.74	21.84	23.89	14.31	10.87	16.69	23.52

The increase in votes for the Welfare Party in urban squatter neighborhoods is captured by the following model:

$$V_{wp,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 SQ. + \beta_2 V_{wp,t-1}$$

$V_{wp,t}$ = Percentage of overall votes for Welfare Party 1995 national elections;

SQ. = Percentage Urban Squatter;

$V_{wp,t-1}$ = Percentage of overall votes for Welfare Party 1991 national elections.

The decrease in support for mainstream political parties among voters in these neighborhoods is captured in the model:

$$V_{p,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 SQ. + \beta_2 V_{p,t-1}$$

The estimates reported in Table 5⁴³ show that, as anticipated, the direction of the increase in support for the WP is positive in those neighborhoods with a higher percentage of urban squatter voters. The center-right and center-left political parties that fielded candidates in the 1991 national elections lost support in these neighborhoods. A one percentage point increase in urban squatters in a neighborhood is associated with a 0.02 percentage point increase in votes for WP in these neighborhoods. Even though the coefficient of .02 percent for the WP may seem small, many neighborhoods have a 100 percent urban squatter voting population, making the total change in these neighborhoods quite large.

For example, in a 100 percent squatter neighborhood where the WP attracted 17 percent of vote in the 1991 elections (mean value for that year in Ankara), it was anticipated to receive:

$$V_{wp,t} = 2.09 + 0.0202(100) + 1.05 (17) = 21.96$$

percent of the vote in 1995. In a neighborhood with no urban squatters this vote increased only to:

$$V_{wp,t} = 2.09 + 0.0202(0) + 1.05 (17) = 19.94$$

percent. There is a 2.02 percent difference in the increase in votes for the WP between a squatter neighborhood and a non-squatter neighborhood. In the 1995 national elections, the WP received 21.4 percent of the votes nationally — a 4.7 percent increase in votes from the previous election. This increase was enough to make the WP the largest party nationally coming out of the elections. Considering the patterns observed in Ankara's electoral results, this increase came from the votes from both urban

TABLE 5
DEPENDENT VARIABLE:
THE PERCENTAGE OF VOTES FOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN 1995

Party	Model	β	Std.Err	t-value
WP	Constant	2.09	.487	4.27*
	Percent Urban Squatter	0.02	.005	3.78*
	%Vote 1991	1.05	.027	38.94*
DLP	Constant	7.77	.722	10.70*
	Percent Urban Squatter	-0.027	.006	-4.37*
	%Vote 1991	.78	.056	14.04*
MP	Constant	13.42	1.08	12.39*
	Percent Urban Squatter	-0.029	.005	-5.57*
	%Vote 1991	0.41	.044	9.37*
TPP	Constant	1.48	1.05	1.42
	Percent Urban Squatter	-0.047	.005	-8.99*
	%Vote 1991	0.52	.041	12.75*
RPP/SDPP	Constant	-3.52	.64	-5.421*
	Percent Urban Squatter	0.0035	.006	36.82*
	%Vote 1991	0.77	.021	5.94*

*Significant at .000 level.

N = 327

$R^2_{wp} = 0.85$

$R^2_{dlp} = 0.40$

$R^2_{mp} = 0.26$

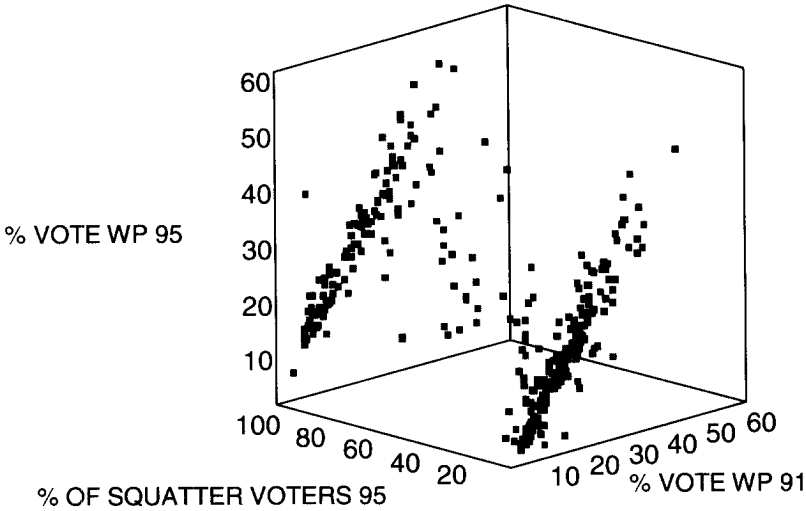
$R^2_{tpp} = 0.48$

$R^2_{rpp/sdpp} = .89$

squatter and non-squatter neighborhoods, captured by the control variable percentage of votes in 1991. A one percentage point increase in the votes for the WP in 1991 is associated with a 1.05 percentage point increase in votes for the WP in 1995. However, the bigger portion of the increase in support for the WP is captured not in the control variable, but in the independent variable: percentage urban squatter.

The regression reported above for the WP is illustrated in Figure 1, which shows the increase in support for the WP as the percentage of squatters increase. There are almost two separate lines that demonstrate the urban squatter and non-squatter vote. Moving from squatter to non-

FIGURE 1
VOTE FOR WELFARE PARTY



squatter, the slope on the plane decreases controlling for the previous election. The distribution of squatters is many at the zero level and many at the 100 percent level with little in the middle, and as the number of the squatters increases, the slope for the vote for the WP shifts to a higher level. This figure is a visual illustration of what the above reported regression explains.

While the WP gained strength, mainstream political parties were losing votes in urban squatter neighborhoods (see Table 5). In the 1995 election, as the percentage of urban squatter voters increased by one percent in a neighborhood, the votes for DLP and the MP both decreased by 0.03 percentage points; the votes for the TPP decreased by 0.05 percentage points controlling for the votes from the previous elections. The True Path Party, which was the leader in the parliamentary coalition prior to the 1995 elections, lost the most votes among the urban squatters. The increase in votes for the RPP, controlling for the votes for the Social Democratic Populist Party in 1991, is puzzling. Even though votes for the RPP increase by 0.0035 percentage points in the squatter neighborhoods, the comparability of the two political parties is questionable. As is evident from Table 5, some

of the votes from the SDPP may have been transferred to the DLP, which makes interpreting both the RPP and DLP votes in 1995 difficult.

Overall, the results from the data analysis reveal a positive relationship between urban squatters and voting for the pro-Islamist party. Support for the WP increased in urban squatter areas in contrast to the decline in votes for the political parties that traditionally were considered to represent the periphery, namely the TPP and MP.

Explaining the Welfare Party's Success

From 1973 through the 1990s, the pro-Islamist political parties in Turkey had a steady support base of seven to 12 percent of the total popular vote (see Table 6). Compared to those numbers, the WP's steady ascent throughout the 1990s (until the 1999 election) is noteworthy. In the 1993 local and municipal elections, the pro-Islamist party emerged with 19 percent of the vote, closely behind the two leading parties, the True Path Party (22 percent) and the Motherland Party (21 percent). During this period, WP candidates won the race for mayor in Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey's two largest cities with nearly 20 percent of the country's total population, as well as in smaller provinces and localities. In the 1995 national elections, WP candidates earned nearly 22 percent of the vote, which made them the largest political party in the parliament with 158 out of 550 seats.

TABLE 6
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTY ELECTIONS, PERCENTAGE OF SEATS WON IN
THE ASSEMBLY BY PRO-ISLAMIST PARTIES

Party	Year	Votes	Seats
National Salvation Party	1973	11.8	10.6
National Salvation Party	1977	8.4	5.3
Welfare Party	1987	7.0	0
Welfare Party	1991	16.7	13.1
Welfare Party	1995	21.4	24.5
Virtue Party	1999	15.5	20.1

Source: State Institute of Statistics.

What accounts for the triumph of the periphery throughout the last decade? Ersin Kalaycıoğlu argues that laicism and religiosity were the two key factors that divided the center from the periphery.⁴⁴ More important,

however, was the economic interest of the periphery. In the 1990s, many urban residents were frustrated by their lack of material comforts they felt they deserved. The WP was able to capitalize on this discontent of urban squatters by appealing to their economic needs. The party's religious appeal was less significant. As Kalaycıoğlu himself states, the center-right political parties, the TPP and MP, still attracted the "the support of various blocs of religiously motivated voters."⁴⁵

While mainstream parties argued in favor of liberal economic reforms, the WP addressed the immediate needs of the urban poor at the grassroots level. The party specifically spoke about greater government assistance to the poor. Its candidates talked of a "just order" that was "different from and superior to both capitalism and socialism," and denounced the current economic system as a "slave system," criticizing cooperation with international financial institutions.⁴⁶

The WP's efficiency at delivering services is evidenced by the results of an International Republican Institute survey of urban settlements throughout Turkey. Residents of these areas indicated higher voter dissatisfaction with the political parties in charge *before* the WP came to power. The survey reports that the "urban settlers are largely dissatisfied with the service delivery system by the municipalities and overwhelmingly express feelings of being left out of the political process."⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the survey also reveals that the "performance rating of the [WP] controlled local administrations were considerably higher than the others. For example, in a nationwide representative sample respondents indicated a higher level of trust for and satisfaction with the [WP] Istanbul Mayor Tayyip Erdoğan than any other metropolitan city mayor in the country."⁴⁸ This is an indicator of the success that the WP achieved at the local level before the 1995 elections.

An additional indicator that squatter support for the WP is not rooted in Islamic ideology occurred when the party was officially banned in 1998. The resurrected version of the WP, the Virtue Party, did not even approach the level of support that the WP had. The rational-actor squatters realized that the pro-Islamist party would not be able to deliver the desired goods and services in the face of such opposition from the justice system and other political parties. The WP's inability to maintain a coalition and continue enhancing the economic condition in poor neighborhoods was enough of a cue for the squatters to shift their support. There has been speculation that the Nationalist Action Party benefited from squatter

support in the April 1999 elections, but further study is necessary to explore these claims. If these claims are true, it could be argued that the squatters once again proved their power as swing voters. In this environment, it would have been surprising to see the newly formed pro-Islamist Virtue Party come out ahead in the latest elections. The fact that the Virtue Party received only 15.5 percent of the votes in the 1999 election suggests that a permanent increase in the commitment to Islamic ideology or an Iran-like Islamic proliferation has not occurred in Turkey. This outcome suggests instead that the ability of the Virtue Party to control votes depends on their ability to provide favors to their clients — the urban poor — as opposed to the Islamic ideology of these voters.

While the history of the urban squatter voter realignment suggests the pursuit of material interest as opposed to ideology, there is no definitive evidence to show that the latest realignment is not ideologically driven. However, the rational interest approach offers a theoretically consistent pattern, which at least offers a counterpoint to claims of an emergent Islamist ideology.

Conclusion

The influx of migrants into cities post-1950s has created a situation where today, as much as sixty percent of Turkey's total population lives in urban areas. Of these, a great number dwell in urban squatter housing. Urban squatters have successfully integrated into the political mainstream while insuring the survival of their neighborhoods as legitimate and integrated parts of the city.

Urban squatters have long been, and still are, a significant electoral group. Their voting strength was captured by the dominant center-right Justice Party in the 1960s and the left-of-center Republican People's Party in the 1970s, both of which addressed the material and political needs of the *gecekondu* neighborhoods. By the 1990s, the urban squatters had lost their faith in the political parties that traditionally represented the periphery and shifted their support to the Islamist Welfare Party, helping it to become a major party after hovering on the margin of Turkish politics since the 1970s. However, the urban squatters' rising support for the WP is not necessarily indicative of an increase in support for Islam. Rather, it is the latest in a series of rational realignments on the part of urban squatters in an attempt to best serve their needs.

NOTES

The author would like to thank the following people for their helpful comments and suggestions during various stages of this project: the anonymous reviewer at Turkish Studies, Barbara Geddes, John Londregan, Brian Obach and Elin Skaar. The author also thanks Birsen Gökçe and Hamza Uygun for sharing their data on squatters in Turkey.

1. See Vivienne Bennet, "The Evolution of Urban Popular Movements in Mexico Between 1968 and 1988," in Arturo Escobar and Sonia Alvarez (eds.), *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992); Diane E. Davis, "Failed Democratic Reform in Contemporary Mexico: from Social Movements to the State and Back Again," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol.26, No.2 (1994), pp.375–408.
2. See Willem Assies, "Urban Social Movements in Brazil: A Debate and Its Dynamics," *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol.21, No.2 (1994), pp.81–105.
3. See Cathy Schneider, "Radical Opposition Parties and Squatter Movements in Pinochet's Chile," in Escobar and Alvarez (1992).
4. The Welfare Party was closed in 1998 by the Constitutional Court of Turkey based on the constitutional law that bars political parties that threaten the secular nature of the Republic. But some of the remaining politicians have started the Virtue Party, which is an extension of the same party.
5. See Levent Köker, "Local Politics and Democracy in Turkey: An Appraisal," *Annals of the American Academy of Politics and Social Science*, Vol.540 (July 1995), pp.51–62; Ergun Özbudun, "Turkey: How Far from Consolidation?" *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.7, No.3 (1996), pp.123–38; Ali Çarkoğlu, "The Turkish General Election of 24 December 1995," *Electoral Studies*, Vol.16, No.1 (1997), pp.86–95.
6. The center and periphery are used in reference to the work of Şerif Mardin, "Center Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" *Deadalus*, Vol.102 (Winter 1973), pp.169–90, which are further explained in body of the article.
7. Throughout this article the interest of the urban squatters are shown to lie in their material needs. However, this does not imply that all squatters have their interests prioritized as material needs. It is possible and probably true that some urban squatters see Islamic ideology as their rational interest in voting.
8. See Bülent Tokman, "Ankara: Procedures for Upgrading and Urban Management," in Geoffrey K. Payne (ed.), *Low-Income Housing in the Developing World: Role of Sites and Services and Settlement Upgrading* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1984); Metin Heper, *Türkiye'de Kent-Göçmeni ve Bürokratik Örgütler* (Istanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1983); Yurdanur Aksoyly, *Challenge to Bureaucracy: The Informal Networks of Urban Squatters and Communication with the Local Authorities in Istanbul* (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1982).
9. See Sabri Sayarı, "Political Patronage in Turkey," in E. Gellner and J. Waterbury (eds.), *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Society* (London: Duckworth, 1977); İlkey Sunar, "State, Society, and Democracy in Turkey," in V. Mastny and R.C. Nation (eds.), *Turkey Between East and West, New Challenges for a Rising Regional Power* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Tokman in Payne (1984), p.98.
10. Quoted in Kemal Karpat, *The Gecekondu* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.16.
11. Birsen Gökçe, Feride Acar, Ayşe Ayata, Aytül Kasapoğlu, İnan Özer, and Hamza Uygun, *Gecekondularda Ailelerarası Geleneksel Dayanışmanın Çağdaş Organizasyonlara Dönüşümü*. (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Kadın ve Sosyal Hizmetler Müsteşarlığı, 1993).
12. There were 1.6 million households with an average of 5.4 persons per household. An estimated 59.5 percent of the people in households were over the 20 years of age. This makes the voting population of urban squatters about 5.14 million (Calculated from Gökçe, et al. 1993, Table 3.9, 65).

13. Ruşen Keleş and Michael Danielson, *The Politics of Rapid Urbanization: Government and Growth in Modern Turkey* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985), p.31.
14. Erhard Franz, *Population Policy in Turkey: Family Planning and Migration between 1960 and 1992* (Hamburg: Deutsches Orient-Institut, 1994), p.175.
15. Gökçe, et al. (1993), p.139.
16. Keleş and Danielson (1995), p.41.
17. Franz (1994), p.180.
18. Keleş and Danielson (1995), p.38.
19. Karpat (1976), p.43.
20. Ibid., p.198.
21. John Duncan Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics," *American Political Science Review*, Vol.64, No.2 (1970), p.412.
22. Mardin (1973), p.186.
23. Ergun Özbudun, "Turkey: The Politics Of Political Clientelism," in S.N. Eisenstadt and Rene Lemarchand (eds.), *Political Clientelism, Patronage, and Development* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1981).
24. Sayarı in Gellner and Waterbury (1977), p.105.
25. Mardin (1973), p.185.
26. Sayarı in Gellner and Waterbury (1977), p.109.
27. Özbudun in Eisenstadt and Lemarchand (1981), p.261.
28. Sunar in Mastny and Nation (1996), pp.144-5.
29. Ibid., p.146.
30. The Justice Party formed after the Democrat Party was outlawed at the time of the 1960 coup.
31. Ergun Özbudun, *Social Change and Political Participation in Turkey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp.204-5.
32. Karpat, *The Gecekondu*, p.211.
33. Ergun Özbudun, "Turkey", in Myron Weiner and Ergun Özbudun (eds.), *Competitive Elections in Developing Countries*, (NC, Duke University Press, 1987), p.347; Joan M. Nelson, *Access to Power: Politics and the Urban Poor in Developing Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p.374.
34. Karpat (1976), p.65.
35. See Gökçe, et al. (1993).
36. The independent variable is calculated as an estimate of the number of *gecekondu* houses in different neighborhoods. The data used in this article were originally collected for a nationwide survey of the squatter population by Gökçe et al. This article utilizes the portion of the data that is relevant to Ankara.
37. The study was conducted in 1990 and the changing nature of the urban squatter housing should be taken into consideration as creating some errors, since this study considers voting in 1995 national elections. However, five years is a short time for complete transition and drastic change in the nature of a neighborhood, thus, the 1990 figures will be accepted as accurately depicting the demographic make up of the neighborhoods. At worst, the article would be undercounting the squatters, which should work against the main argument, undermining the significance of the outcome.
38. Gökçe, et al. (1993).
39. The rest of the data in this study was obtained from the State Institute of Statistics. The estimated number of squatter voters in some neighborhoods were at times more than the overall number of the registered voters which can be a result of new squatters moving in or unregistered voters based on a biased neighborhood leader (*muhtar*). In these neighborhoods, the percentage urban squatter voter was counted at 100 percent. Generally, this type of discrepancy is unexpected because prior to each election the elected neighborhood leader is supposed to count each household regardless of type of house they live in. Those who are over the age of 20 are supposed to be automatically registered to vote.

40. Election results on the *sandık* (ward) level come from the State Institute of Statistics. The SIS keeps a record of each ward in each neighborhood based on the number of registered voters as well as the outcome of the elections from these districts and publishes them in the "Results of the General Elections" regularly after each election. The votes for each party are given at the ward level. There are several wards in each *mahalle* (neighborhood). The ward results have been added to reflect each neighborhood. The wards are created within the borders of neighborhoods, and they do not overlap between two neighborhoods. Because, the independent variable, the percentage of squatter households, is at the neighborhood level, this operation makes the data compatible.
41. SDPP dissolved to join the Republican People's Party (RPP), which was created after a major reconstruction of the left parties in 1993.
42. In this research, assumptions are made about the squatter residents' individual voting behavior based on macro level voting data. "Researchers ... need to specify the units of analysis for methodological reasons. When attributes are examined at one unit or level of analysis (e.g., groups) and then used at another level (e.g., individuals), distortions are likely to result either in their observation or, just as important, in the interpretation or meaning. As a result, generalizing directly from a complex to a simpler unit of analysis, or vice versa, is inappropriate. The consequent distortions are the results of committing the ecological fallacy." See C.F. Frankfort-Nachmias and D. Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (New York: Worth, 1999), p.48. However, the following use of macro level data through the ordinary least squares (OLS) technique can be justified in this case based on the bimodal distribution of the independent variable. Figure 1 illustrates that many of the neighborhoods have 0 or 100 percent squatters. Among the 327 neighborhoods, only 71 fall in between, and the distribution of these 71 tends to be closer to the higher or lower ends of the range. This means that OLS coefficients should be mostly unbiased for interpretation at the individual level, because the bounds that are around the independent variable are very small. See Figure 2 on page 58.
43. Even though there is detectable (through a White's test) heteroskedasticity problem in the data resulting from the control variable (vote 1991 for the Welfare Party), WLS estimates did not produce results different from the OLS estimates. Also, the sizes of the neighborhoods are different from each other. Thus, a WLS estimate with the neighborhoods as the weight produced almost identical results to the ones with OLS. OLS in this case seem to be an unbiased and efficient choice of method. The outliers have been individually assessed in each regression and they did not affect the coefficients.
44. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "Elections and Party Preferences in Turkey Changes Continuities in the 1990s," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.27, No.3 (1994), pp.402-24.
45. Kalaycıoğlu (1994), p.420.
46. Özbudun (1996), p.134.
47. Çarkoğlu (1997), p.89.
48. Ibid.

FIGURE 2
PERCENTAGE URBAN SQUATTER VOTER

