

NICHE PARTY SUCCESS IN TURKEY: DO POLICY DIMENSIONS MATTER?

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Abstract

This paper examines niche party success in Turkey by clustering issue emphases by political parties. Lack of a comprehensive analysis on niche parties in developing world, lack of a consensus on the measurement of niche parties, and even lack of a shared definition on the issue makes the related literature vaporous. In this article, I argue that the ideological position (center vs radical) of a party is much more important than policy emphases for electoral success. Drawing on data collected by the Comparative Manifesto Project, and election outcomes in Turkey from 1961 to 2011, our study revealed that even though political parties' emphases on democracy, economy, political culture, society and justice, extreme issues such as nationalism influence niche party success to a certain degree, it is the center-party position that effects electoral outcomes primarily.

Key Words: *Niche parties, Political issue dimensions, Electoral success, Party behavior*

TÜRKİYE'DE NİŞ PARTİ BAŞARISI: SİYASİ KONULARIN TÜRÜ ÖNEMLİ Mİ?

Özet

Bu çalışmada, siyasi partilerin politik konulara vurguları kümelenecek, Türkiye'deki niş (hücre) partilerin başarısı incelenmektedir. Gelişmekte olan ülkelerdeki niş partilerin başarısı ile ilgili kapsamlı çalışmaların yetersizliği, niş partilerin ölçümü ile ilgili bir uzlaşımın olmaması, ve hatta niş partilerin tanımı konusunda bile ortak bir tutumun olmaması, bu alandaki literatürü muğlak ve yetersiz kılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, partilerin ideolojik duruşlarının, politika vurgularından çok daha önemli olduğu tartışılmaktadır. Karşılaştırmalı Manifesto Projesi'nin (CMP) verilerinden ve Türkiye'deki 1961 ve 2011 yılları arasındaki ulusal seçim sonuçlarından faydalanılarak, bu çalışmada, siyasi partilerin, manifestolarındaki demokrasi, ekonomi, siyasi kültür, toplum ve adalet, ve ekstrem meselelere (milliyetçilik gibi) yaptıkları vurguların seçim sonuçlarına etkisinin olduğu, ancak seçim başarısını asıl belirleyen faktörün, partilerin merkez-radikal parti konumunda bulunmalarının olduğu ortaya konulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Niş partiler, Siyasi konu türü, Seçim başarısı, Parti davranışı*

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1. INTRODUCTION

What accounts for the variation in the electoral success of niche parties in developing world? Clustering issue emphases by political parties from 1961 to 2011, this study aims to answer this question by examining niche party success in Turkey. During and after the Cold War period, fluctuating atmosphere in terms of the political institutions and systems both in developed and developing countries has led to multidimensional political parties and party systems. As Meguid (2005, 437) emphasizes in her prominent study in niche party success, political systems around the world have undergone a revolution since the 1960s. As political systems and ideological manners have evolved, new political parties have thereupon emerged in many parts of the world.

From communism, to regional autonomy, to environmental issues, varying degree of new political issue dimensions have become increasingly popular among the field's scholars. Since Meguid's (2005, 2008) pioneering work on niche parties, a growing literature has focused on niche parties and party competition, by addressing its measurement and/or definition (see, e.g., Adams et al., 2006; Ezrow, 2008; Jensen and Spoon, 2010; Lynch et al., 2011; Meyer and Miller, 2013).

In literature, scholars tend to conduct cross-national analysis in examining niche party success, thereby taking, in general, one niche party for each country into consideration. Even though they employ country-fixed effects to see within and between variations for each country over time, such an analysis may lead to biased and inefficient estimation, since the parties they analysis may differ from one country to another. Also, selected parties' role on party

behavior in a given country may not explain the great deal of variation of party success. On the other hand, such an analysis cannot explain party behavior over time unless the scholars utilize an accurate data and employ a precise measurement of niche parties and policy dimensions. Imprecise measurement in such analyses obstructs the analytical leverage of the niche party concept because it may lead to biased estimates (Meyer and Miller, 2013, 2).

Previous work on niche parties has focused mostly on the political parties in established democracies. Utilizing and clustering a limited set of political issues that emphasized in parties manifestos, scholars attempt to define and measure niche parties, and niche party success accordingly. These policy dimensions are either classified based on a left-right division, or issue emphases by Communist, Green, and nationalist parties (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Meguid, 2005; Adams et al., 2006; Ezrow, 2010).

Lack of an inclusive analysis on niche parties in developing world, lack of a consensus on the measurement of niche parties, and even lack of a shared definition on the issue makes the related literature vaporous. In this article, we argue that the ideological position (center vs. radical) of a party is much more important than niche party policy emphases for electoral success. Drawing on data collected by the Comparative Manifesto Project, and election outcomes in Turkey from 1961 to 2011, our study showed that even though political parties' emphases on democracy, economy, political culture, and justice may have an influence on niche party success to a certain degree, it is the center-party position that effects electoral outcomes primarily.

2. DEBATE ON ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR AND NICHE PARTIES

The determinants of electoral success has widely been discussed by this field's scholar (see, Erikson and Romero 1990; Budge 1994; Enelow and Hinich 1984, 1994; Lin, Chu, and Hinich 1996; Adams and Merrill 1999, 2000, 2005; Alvarez, Nagler, and Bowler 2000; Dow 2001; Quinn and Martin 2002; Schofield and Sened 2005, 2006). Among several theories, spatial theory is of particular interest. As highlighted by prominent scholars (Down 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984; Shepsle 1991) in this field, during campaign, political parties and candidates gain electoral benefits when they moderate their policy positions (Ezrow, 2008, 206). As new substantial dataset on this type of analysis has been used, traditional spatial theory has been reevaluated and challenged by some scholars such as Meguid (2005) and Adams et al., (2006). For these scholars, presenting moderate policy programs is not a *sine qua non* to gain electoral benefits for niche parties. By niche parties, they mean the parties that occupy the extreme left, the extreme right, or a distinctly non-centrist ones (Ezrow, 2008, 206).

In her work on niche parties, Meguid (2005) seeks to understand what can account for the variation in the electoral success of niche parties. Contrary to the literature that traditionally approaches this question from an institutional (static) perspective (e.g., Duverger 1963; Harmel and Robertson 1985; Rommel M. 1996), which cannot account for variation in a party's vote share over time, the author focuses on the factor of party behavior, particularly that of the powerful mainstream parties of the center-

left and the center-right. (Meguid 2005, 347). In emphasizing the concept of niche parties, Meguid indicates three characteristics: (1) niche parties reject the traditional class-based orientation of politics, (2) the issues raised by niche parties are not only novel, but often do not coincide with the existing left-right lines of political division, and (3) niche parties further differentiate themselves by limiting their issue appeals, and they have been perceived largely as single-issue parties by the voters (Meguid 2005, 347-348). Meguid mentions the political atmosphere in Western Europe, and states that approximately 110 niche parties have joined the national elections in 18 countries over the past 30 years (Meguid 2005, 348). Categorizing issue emphases in niche party manifestos, the author concludes that when the actions of the mainstream parties on the niche party's new issue dimension are taken into account, the traditional, institutional, and sociological factors fail to show a consistently significant effect on green and radical right party vote levels (Meguid 2005, 357).

While Wagner (2011, 3) defines niche parties as the parties that compete primarily on a small number of non-economic issues, Meyer and Miller (2013, 3) on the other hand posit that a niche party emphasizes policy areas neglected by its competitors. Based on this definition, the authors theorize three implications: that a party's status as niche party depends on the issue emphasis of rival parties; that the niche party concept cannot be used for two party systems, and is only relevant if there are three or more parties; that their definition focuses on parties and their behavior rather than on voter perceptions of the parties' policy profiles (Meyer and Miller, 2013, 3)

In addition to definitional disputes, there has also been an ongoing controversy among scholars on how to measure niche parties. While Meguid (2005) and Adams et al., (2006) highlight the importance of party ideology (e.g., Greens, Communists, radical rights, and ethno-territorial) in classifying niche parties, Wagner (2011) underlines the parties' relative issue emphasis. Besides these, the measurement produced by Meyer and Miller (2013, 4-5) is of particular interest. Utilizing manifestos of the CMP dataset in 24 countries between 1944 and 2003, the authors present a measurement that adds up the deviations on all relevant policy dimensions and divides by the total number of policy dimensions. By so doing, they calculate the nicheness scores of different party families. Because a measure based on party ideology does not allow for temporal variance within party families (p. 3), their measure allows us to differentiate parties' nicheness within and across party families, by capturing variance over time as well (Meyer and Miller, 2013, 9).

Adams and his friends (2006) suggest that, contrary to conventional wisdom, niche parties do not face a trade-off between articulating their sincere policy beliefs versus moderating their policy pronouncements in order to increase their electoral support. They further claim that niche parties do not necessarily moderate their policy preferences to gain electoral support; instead, their optimal vote-seeking strategy is to stay put and maintain their policy position (Adams et al., 2006: 514). Conducting data from eight Western European democracies, and basing their computations on the Comparative Manifesto Project and the Eurobarometer surveys of citizens' left-right self-placements, they find that niche parties' policy programs are less

responsive to shifts in public opinion than are mainstream parties' programs, and that niche parties are penalized for moderating their policy programs to a greater extent than are mainstream parties (Adams et al., 2006: 525).

3. NICHE PARTIES IN TURKEY: HYPOTHESES ON THEIR SUCCESS

Much of the literature on niche party success focuses on established democracies (see, e.g., Adams et al., 2006; Ezrow, 2008; Jensen and Spoon, 2010; Lynch et al., 2011; Wagner, 2011; Meyer and Miller, 2013). Even a few single-country research focuses on advanced democracies (e.g., Lynch et al., 2011). Research on niche parties should go beyond this scope to see whether the results in literature can be generalized for developing countries. As a first step towards this aim, this study seeks to understand the factors that determine niche party success in Turkey. Turkey is an ethnically and politically segmented and polarized country, which provides a fruitful source to niche party characteristics ranging from radical right parties to extreme left parties. The ultimate aim here is to bring perspective for researcher seeking to analyze niche party success in other developing countries.

Scholars tend to consider niche and mainstream parties based on left-right political dimensions (e.g., Meguid, 2005; Adams et al., 2006; Meyer and Miller, 2013).

While mainstream parties are defined as the electorally dominant actors in the center-left, center, and center-right blocs on the left-right political spectrum (Meguid 2005, 348), niche parties on the other hand are mainly considered as greens, communists (radical-left), and radical nationalist (radical-right) parties. Therefore ideological orientation is at the core of defining parties' relative political position.

Research on Turkish politics, however, seem to avoid measuring of ideology due to the country's unique political culture, which precludes us to consider political parties as conventional left-right spectrum. For instance, Aydoğan and Slapin (2002, p. 1) assert that "ideology in Turkish politics is reversed, with the nominally center-left CHP -- known also as secular party -- employing more populist rhetoric typically associated with right wing parties in the West, and vice versa".¹ However, rather than a radical secularist acts, the CHP has positioned itself as a center-left democratic party since the national election in 2011. In contrast, even though the ruling AKP has been considered as a center-right democratic party from 2002 to 2011, it has been seen as a radical right party for about past four years.

For these reasons, we do not take parties here on the basis of left-right political spectrum. Nor do we cluster them as niche parties or mainstream parties, due to unique characteristics of Turkish political parties. We think that all parties in Turkey show some nicheness feature in their manifestos. Based on their primary policy orientation, we categorize the parties -- joining the national elections from 1961 to 2011 and having a seat in the parliament and/or having an influence on Turkish politics to a certain degree -- as radical-left parties, center-left parties, center-right parties, and radical-right parties.

¹ For a detailed information about policy positions and left-right ideology segment in Turkey, see, Küçükömer (2002), Ayata and Ayata (2007), Klemmensen et al. (2007).

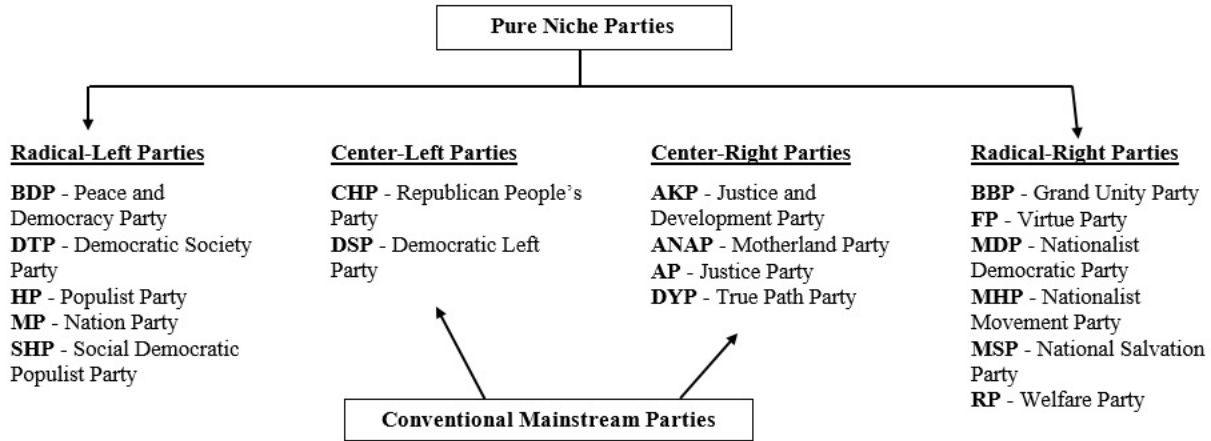


Figure 1: Niche and Mainstream Parties

As illustrated in Figure 1, radical-left and radical-right parties are clustered as *pure-niche parties*, and center-left and center-right parties are taken as *conventional mainstream parties*. The coding procedure of this categorization is explained in the data and measurement section. As indicated, “niche parties behave differently to their counterparts”, and “Green, ethno-regionalist and radical-right parties are typically identified as niche parties” (Lynch et al., 2011, 2). Regardless of their left-right position, we take ethno-nationalist parties (e.g., HDP, and MHP) as niche party. In addition, unlike literature, we take pro-Islamist parties such as the MSP and the RP as niche party too, because they prioritize the issues, such as Islamic way of life, that are not mainly considered by mainstream parties. Lastly, we also take radical-left and pro-Kurdish parties as niche party.

If we look at the results of the thirteen national elections from 1961 to 2011, most of the single-party or coalition governments were formed by the mainstream parties, with only a few exceptions in which niche parties such as the pro-Islamist MSP and RP, or the ultra-nationalist MHP become part of the given coalition governments. These results lead us to expectation that no matter which issues the niche parties prioritize, being perceived or seen as a center-left or center-right party positively affect the electoral success, rather than emphasizing some extreme issues -- e.g., Islamist or ethno-nationalist -- in party manifestos. Specifically, as Ezrow (2008, 207) hypothesizes, parties gain more vote share when they are positioned closer to the center of public opinion. Even though Ezrow analyzes parties' vote share in twelve Western European democracies, we also expect similar outcome for Turkish case.

4. TESTING THE NICHE PARTY SUCCESS: DATA, MODEL SPECIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Data

To test to determinants of niche party success in Turkey, we look at the vote share of parties contested and gained seats in national legislative elections from 1961 to 2011. As illustrated in Figure 1 in the previous section, we categorize the parties as pure niche parties, which refer to radical-left and radical-right parties; and conventional mainstream parties, which refer to center-left and center-right parties. Hence the dependent variable is operationalized as the percentage of votes gained by the parties.

Longitudinal measurements of the parties' policy orientations is commonly used in analyzing party success (see, Meguid 2005; Adams et al., 2006). We utilize data from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) to investigate niche party success. This dataset records a party's support for and prioritization of a set of issue positions (Meguid, 2005, 352), and all of the policy issues (variables) show the share of quasi-sentences in the relevant category calculated as a fraction of the overall number of allocated codes per document (Volkens et al., 2015).

The Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) contains vote shares, parties' political positions, and policy programs that

indicated in parties' manifestos of more than 30 democracies in the postwar period. "Aside from being the only available longitudinal and cross-national estimates of parties' policies, these estimates of parties' policy priorities are plausibly reliable because policy programs provide comprehensive and authoritative statements about the parties' policy priorities at the time of elections" (Adams et al., 2005, 516).

With respect to dependent variable, *vote share*, we pooled our data by categorizing parties in a given election. If there is more than one party grouping in the same category in a given election, then the vote share is sum of the percentage of votes received by the same group. For instance, in 1991 election, there is one radical-left party, one center-left party, two center-right parties, and one radical-right party in the dataset, we therefore took the direct percentage of votes received by the parties in each single category. However, since there is two center-right parties in this election, we took sum of the percentages of votes received by these two parties. This coding procedure was implemented for each party panel for each national election from 1961 to 2011.

In analyzing whether and to what extend niche party success is shaped by the policy emphasis of the parties contested in the national elections, we created five categorization -- democracy, political culture, economy, society and justice, and extreme issues -- to calculate the policy dimensions of parties.

Table 1: Policy Dimensions of Parties

Democracy	Political Culture	Economy	Society and Justice	Extreme Issues
- Democracy - Constitutionalism	- Decentralization - Governmental and Administrative Efficiency - Political Corruption	- Free Market Economy - Economic Growth - Technology and Infrastructure	- Environmental Protection - Equality - Education Expansion - Law and Order - Multiculturalism	- Internationalism (negative) - National Way of Life - Traditional Morality (positive)

As shown in Table 1, considering the unique political culture in Turkey, positive inclination towards democracy and constitutionalism were deemed indicative of *democracy*, while positive approach towards decentralization, governmental and administrative efficiency, and negative approach towards political corruption were labelled as *political culture*. Supportive signals for free market economy, economic growth, and technology and infrastructure were taken as *economy*. Positive thoughts on environmental protection, equality, education expansion, law and order, and multiculturalism were categorized as *society and justice*. Lastly, negative inclination towards internationalism, supportive approach towards national way of life and traditional morality were deemed indicative of *extreme issues*.² In addition to these key explanatory variables, we include a control variable called GDP per capita to see whether the economic atmosphere of the country in a given election has any effect on niche party success.³ We did not include

² Based on the categorization illustrated in Figure 1, radical-left and radical-right parties were clustered as *pure-niche parties*, and center-left and center-right parties were taken as *conventional mainstream parties*. We calculated each party’s relative issue emphasis in their manifestos by taking sum of percentages of a given issue dimension.

³ GDP per capita in each election year, reported at current prices and current purchasing power parity

unemployment rate to our model as a control variable due to severe data restrictions.

4.2. Model Specification and Analysis

To estimate the effect of above-mentioned factors on niche party success, we employ pooled cross-sectional time-series analysis. In harmony with the estimation of Meguid (2005), we specifically employ ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression with a lagged dependent variable and panel-corrected standard errors which allows us to eliminate election-level heteroscedasticity and autocorrelation.⁴

The models considered here explore how and to what extent the niche party success is determined by the values of the each explanatory variable (e.g. estimate value of democracy or

(PPP) in thousands of U.S. dollars, were taken from the OECD September 2015 dataset.

⁴ We also employ Hausman test to see whether the fixed effect or random effect is more appropriate for our model, and find out that fixed effect is more appropriate for our model. We therefore run a fixed effect regression with election dummies, and see that both the direction of the coefficients and the significance level were identical with the OLS regression with panel-corrected standard errors. We also checked for the party-specific effects (Adams et al., 2006).

economy). Our model captures the relationship between the actual vote share and policy dimensions. The equation for our estimation is as follows:

$$(society\ and\ justice) + \beta_6 (GDP\ per\ capita) + \beta_7 (change\ in\ vote) + \beta_8 (niche\ parties) + \beta_9 (panel\text{-}clustered\ parties) + e$$

(1)

$$Absolute\ vote\ share = \beta_1 + \beta_2 (democracy) + \beta_3 (political\ culture) + \beta_4 (economy) + \beta_5$$

Table 2: Analysis of Panel-Clustered Parties' Vote Support

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Democracy	0.55 (0.50)	0.49 (0.44)	0.34 (0.35)	0.10 (0.37)
Political Culture	-0.50 *** (0.21)	-0.50 *** (0.19)	-0.36 * (0.20)	-0.70 *** (0.24)
Economy	0.99 *** (0.32)	0.91 *** (0.29)	0.40 (0.29)	0.17 (0.27)
Society and Justice	0.82 * (0.47)	0.69 (0.43)	0.90 ** (0.44)	1.33 *** (0.42)
GDP per capita	0.01 *** (0.00)	0.00 ** (0.00)	0.00 *** (0.00)	0.00 *** (0.00)
Change in Vote		0.71 *** (0.22)		
Niche Parties			-16.67 *** (3.82)	
Center-left Parties [§]				11.70 ** (5.01)
Center-right Parties				32.32 *** (4.13)
Radical-right Niche Parties				7.11 ** (3.19)
Election Dummies ^{§§}				Included
R ²	0.36	0.47	0.55	0.75
N	52	52	52	52

NOTE: * Indicates a coefficient that is significant at p< .1; ** Indicates a coefficient that is significant at p< .01; *** Indicates a coefficient that is significant at p< .001. Estimates are based on panel-corrected standard errors. Standard errors are in parentheses. The dependent variable is vote share. Coding procedure of the DV is presented in the text. § The reference category for panel-clustered parties was radical-left niche parties. §§ Indicates election dummies. The related coefficients with (standard errors) for election-specific intercepts were: 1965, -4.34(1.54); 1969, -5.64(1.10); 1973, -3.54(1.07); 1977, -2.71(1.21); 1983, 2.43(1.52); 1987, -0.39(0.77); 1991, 0.63(1.36); 1995, 1.60(2.66); 1999, 4.68(5.30); 2002, -5.93(1.07); 2007, -0.59(1.39). The 2011 election was omitted.

Table 2 shows the results of the multivariate modeling for vote share. The first model examines the direct effects of democracy, political culture, economy, society and justice, and GDP per capita upon electoral support without any controls. The regression results reveal that vote support is not determined by economy. Other issue dimensions have significant effect on vote share, though political culture has a negative impact. In the second model where we add *change in vote* as an independent variable, which is originally the dependent variable, *vote share*, electoral support increases as change in vote share increases. Change in vote here refers to the difference in vote share in election t , and vote share in election $t-1$.

As seen in the third model, niche parties have negative and statistically significant effect on electoral support, suggesting that being a niche party has

negative impact on votes. In the fourth model, we include a new categorical variable called panel-clustered parties. The reference category for panel-clustered parties was radical-left parties. The result show that all of the clustered-parties in the model have a statistically significant and positive effect, suggesting that radical-right, center-left, and center-right parties gain more electoral support compared to radical left-parties. This result has an important policy implication. Communist parties or radical left parties in Turkey are less likely to gain electoral support than its rivals in the political arena. Even though previous election results do or may not influence party policy shift (Adams et al., 2004, 2006), it is more rational for radical-left parties to shift their policy emphasis towards center-left position, to gain more electoral support, considering Turkey's political stance .

Table 3: Analysis of Niche Party Success and Its Interaction with Policy Issues

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Niche Parties	-10.15 ** (5.10)	-14.26 *** (5.25)	-10.78 * (5.97)	-7.47 (7.59)
Democracy	1.60 ** (0.72)	0.29 (0.36)	0.26 (0.34)	0.32 (0.34)
Political Culture	-0.40 ** (0.20)	-0.26 (0.24)	-0.35 * (0.19)	-0.37 ** (0.19)
Economy	0.21 (0.28)	0.38 (0.28)	0.61 ** (0.32)	0.30 (0.29)
Society and Justice	0.98 *** (0.42)	0.99 ** (0.46)	1.00 ** (0.44)	1.56 ** (0.70)
<i>Niche Parties X Democracy</i>	-1.79 ** (0.84)			
<i>Niche Parties X Political Culture</i>		-0.23 (0.32)		
<i>Niche Parties X Economy</i>			-0.58 (0.41)	
<i>Niche Parties X Society & Justice</i>				-0.86 (0.61)
R ²	0.59	0.55	0.56	0.57
N	52	52	52	52

NOTE: * Indicates a coefficient that is significant at $p < .1$; ** Indicates a coefficient that is significant at $p < .01$; *** Indicates a coefficient that is significant at $p < .001$. Estimates are based on panel-corrected standard errors. Standard errors are in parentheses. The dependent variable is vote share.

We also ran several tests to understand the relationship between niche party success and its interactions⁵ with

policy dimensions, namely, democracy, political culture, economy, and society and justice. Here, we coded parties as 1 if the party is classified as a niche party (radical-left and radical-right parties), and 0 otherwise (center-left and center-right parties). As reported in Table 3, there is a negative and statistically significant relationship between niche party and electoral support in all models.

⁵ Although it is not that complicated in our models, interpreting interaction models is not an easy phenomenon, because it depends on variety of factors ranging from the type of your variables to how you want to explain your theories. For further information on regressions with interaction terms, see; (Aiken et al., 1991; Cox, 1984; Gill, 2001; Brambor et al., 2006; Adams et al., 2006; Balli and Sørensen, 2012; Berry et al., 2012).

When niche parties are interacted with policy dimensions, only the estimated coefficient of *niche party X democracy* is statistically significant and negative, revealing that niche parties are less likely than mainstream parties to gain electoral support, as democracy emphasis increases. Also note that the coefficients for the other interactions are not statistically significant, showing that there is no evidence that the electoral support of niche parties differs from those of mainstream parties when they emphasize the issues categorizing under political culture, economy, and society and justice.

It is expected that niche parties, due to their definitional characteristics, attribute

$$\text{Vote share} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{niche parties}) + \beta_2 (\text{democracy}) + \beta_3 (\text{extreme issues}) + \beta_4 (\text{niche parties X democracy}) + \beta_5 (\text{niche parties X extreme issues}) + e \quad (2)$$

The estimation results on whether the niche party success depends on democracy or extreme issues are reported in Table 4. As denoted in the Model 1, extreme issue have positive and statistically significant effect on electoral support. However, the interaction between niche parties and extreme issues is negative and statistically significant, revealing that the electoral support of niche parties differs from those of mainstream parties when they emphasize extreme issues.

Put simply, niche parties are less likely than mainstream parties to gain

more importance on some extreme issues, such as negative references to international co-operation, favorable mentions to nationalistic way of life, and traditional/religious way of life -- pertaining to their policy dimension on the political spectrum. Understanding whether these unique policy emphases influence niche parties' electoral support is also of interest. We therefore created a new variable called *extreme issues*, to analyze the relationship between the niche party and extreme issues, and then to compare this outcome with niche party and democracy relation. The equation for this estimation is as follows:

electoral support, as their emphasis on extreme issues increases. As can be seen in Model 2 in Table 4, this result is surprisingly identical with the result of the interaction between niche party and democracy, in terms of the direction of the coefficients. Specifically, niche parties are less likely than mainstream parties to get more vote share, as their emphasis on democracy increases. In both cases, mainstream parties, in other words, the center-right or center-left parties are more likely than niche parties to gain electoral support in Turkey, regardless of the focus on democracy or extreme issues.

Table 4: Niche Party Success: Extreme Issues or Democracy?

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Niche Parties	-16.59 *** (5.10)	-4.23 (6.61)
Extreme Issues	1.22 ** (0.63)	1.53 ** (0.70)
<i>Niche Parties X Extreme Issues</i>	-1.16 * (0.67)	-1.46 ** (0.77)
Democracy		2.32 *** (0.82)
<i>Niche Parties X Democracy</i>		-2.32 *** (0.94)
Election Dummies [§]		Included
R ²	0.47	0.62
N	52	52

NOTE: * Indicates a coefficient that is significant at $p < .1$; ** Indicates a coefficient that is significant at $p < .01$; *** Indicates a coefficient that is significant at $p < .001$. Estimates are based on panel-corrected standard errors. Standard errors are in parentheses. The dependent variable is vote share. §§ Indicates election dummies.

To present our claim that niche parties' vote share fluctuates over time independently of the emphasis on democracy and extreme issues, we first plot the percentage of votes of panel-clustered

parties relative to democracy in Figure 2. As the Figure shows, radical-left niche parties do not stress democracy until the military coup in 1980.

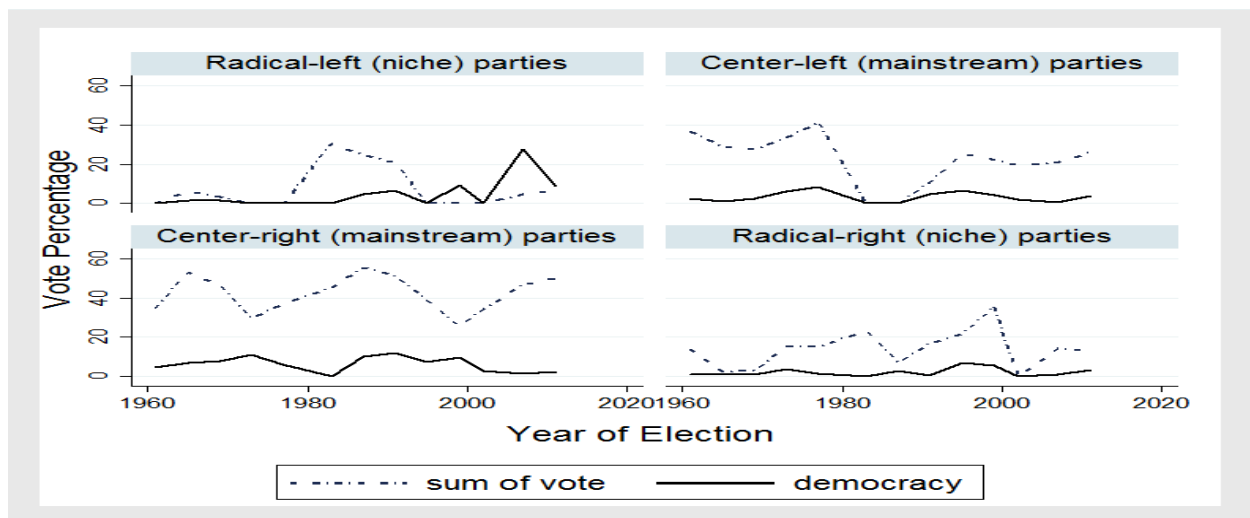


Figure 2: Parties' Vote Share Relative to Democracy Emphasis

Even though these parties did not campaign on democracy in the 1983 election primarily, they reached their peak vote share at the first national election after the military coup. On the other hand, this party family contains the pro-Kurdish party called HDP (known as BDP previously), and with the effect of the European Union membership process of Turkey, this party prioritized democracy in the 2007 election; however, the electoral support of this party did not increase considerably.

With respect to radical-right niche parties as depicted in the bottom right plot, despite a fluctuating trend in vote share, the amount of democracy emphasis in these parties' manifestos seems very low, and does not vary much over time. Both of these results support our claim that vote support of niche parties is not determined by democracy.

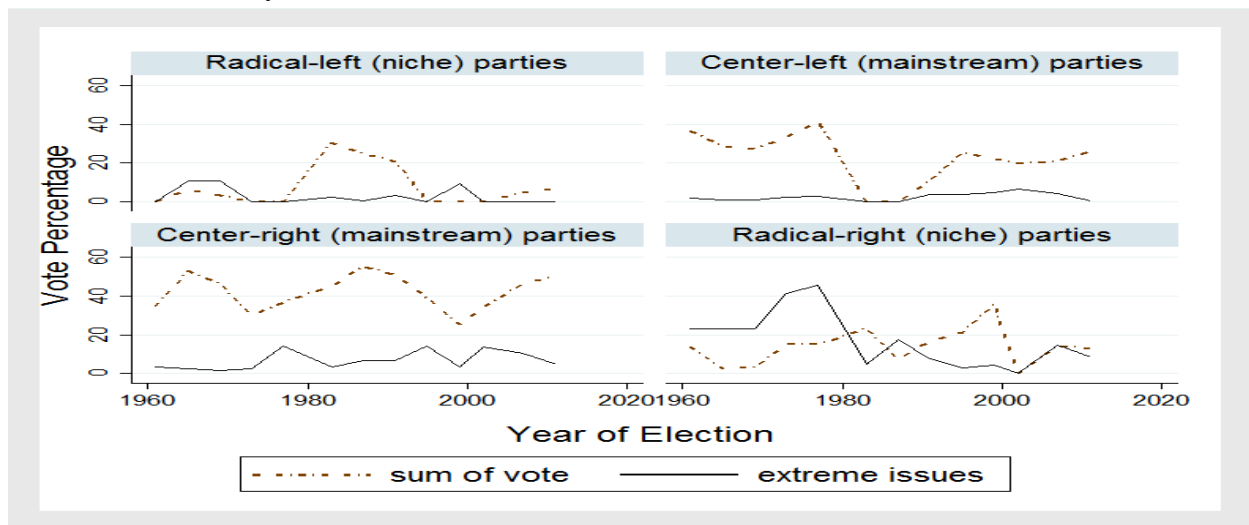


Figure 3: Parties' Vote Share Relative to Extreme Issues Emphasis

The percentage of votes of panel-clustered parties relative to extreme issues such as favorable mentions towards nationalistic way of life is depicted in Figure 3. As the line of vote share shows, electoral support is not determined by the extreme issues in all cases. In most of the cases, electoral support and emphasis on extreme issues goes opposite direction for each party family.

There are of course some exceptions for this claim. For instance, in 1999 election, both center-left and radical-right niche parties campaigned on some extreme issues

(nationalism in this case), and gained substantial electoral support as well. This may be because the ethnic conflict reached at its peak level by the late 1990s, and as well as Ocalan, who was the leader of the PKK, was captured right before the national election. For these reason, the Democratic Leftist Party and Nationalist Movement Party won the 1999 national election, and formed the coalition government, called Ecevit Government. Lastly, it is expected that niche parties tend to do better in elections when they campaign on extreme issues, our analysis shows however that this is not the case.

5. CONCLUSION

In this article, we examined niche party success in Turkey by drawing on data collected by the Comparative Manifesto Project and election outcomes in Turkey from 1961 to 2011, and argued that the ideological position (center vs. radical) of a party in the political spectrum is much more important than policy emphases for electoral success. Our study revealed that democracy and extreme issues influence niche party success, though in the opposite direction. This result is robust across several model specifications, using numerous measures of the variables together with estimation of interactions.

The niche party concept may help us understand and explain differences in party behavior (Meyer and Miller, 2013, 10). In literature, scholars tend to measure one niche party for each country, employing the country-fixed effects. This type of research may lead inaccurate results, since the parties may differ substantively from one country to another. Besides, the effects of these so-called identical niche parties on the electoral outcomes for each countries may vary substantively, which ultimately leads to biased and inconsistent results, even if they employ country-fixed effects to see within and between variations for each country over time. In this study, we take all the parties contesting national elections, which allows us to see if research on niche party success can be taken to a single country.

Taking an ethnically-divided developing country, Turkey, into account, it can be said that it is the center-party position that effects electoral outcomes primarily, rather than emphasizing certain issues such

as constitutionalism, democracy, nationalism. Specifically, radical-right, center-left, and center-right parties gain more electoral support compared to radical left-parties. For this reason, the communist or radical-left parties in Turkey are less likely to gain electoral support than its rivals in the political spectrum.

This result has an important policy implication. Even though previous election results do or may not influence party policy shift (Adams et al., 2004, 2006), it is more rational for radical-left parties to shift their policy emphasis towards center-left position, to gain more electoral support, considering Turkey's political stance. Considering also the 10 percent electoral threshold in Turkish legislative elections, radical-left niche parties do not have a chance to get in the parliament, since it is highly unlikely that they can surpass this threshold. Therefore, it may be more rational for them to moderate their policy emphasis, since the Turkish voters seem prone to center-left and center-right parties under normal circumstances. This result is consistent with the theories of some prominent scholars such as Downs 1957, Enelow and Hinich 1984, Shepsle 1991, who assert that during campaign, political parties and candidates gain electoral benefits when they moderate their policy positions. In our case, this claim is valid for the radical-left parties.

Our results also show that niche parties, but not mainstream parties, gain lower electoral support when they stress democratic and extreme issues. But, there are only a few exceptions to this trend.

In particular, in elections taking place right before and after military coups (e.g., 1980) and national economic crisis (e.g., 2001), it is normal that the vote share of parties is effected by these extraordinary national determinants.

In addition, we find no evidence that the electoral support of niche parties differs

from those of mainstream parties when they emphasize the issues categorizing under political culture, economy, and society and justice. In sum, such an analysis allows us to see if research on niche party success in developed world is the case for a developing country, though further investigation in several developing countries is needed for achieving generalizable outcomes.

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