

SOCIAL DISTANCE IN TODAY'S TURKEY

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Introduction

The goal of this study is to determine if there are distinct patterns of social distance among ethnic groups, religious and sexual minorities in seven cities throughout Turkey (Istanbul, Edirne, Ankara, Konya, İzmir, Van, Diyarbakır, and Mardin). This questions whether the mean social distance towards selected “others” in Turkey differs significantly among selected groups (schooling, ethnic, political party preference)? Further, do several independent variables (age, the level of education, the level of religiosity, and political party preferences) also impact levels of social distance and intolerance?

In the shade of rising authoritarianism, growing polarization and silencing of dissent in today’s Turkey, the study of tolerance and intolerance among various groups in the country is a critical issue. During the first decade of the rule of the Justice and Development Party [AKP], Turkey projected a hopeful message to the world as a model of consonant relationships between Islam and democracy. However, after the 2011 elections, it started to show indications of decline from democratic principles, and the government became increasingly authoritarian. In this paper, we will study the patterns of intolerance among ethnic, religious and sexual identities. Turkey’s turn towards authoritarianism seems an expression of distrust and intolerance of others.

The Turkish Republic was built on Kemalist rhetoric as a new way of imagining the nation. In this view, “Turkishness” meant to be a citizen of the Turkish Republic. Every person living in the region of the sovereign country of the Turkish Republic was considered to be a Turk. The new republic was founded in 1923 on the remnants of the multicultural, multi-religious, multilingual and multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire. In the empire, people were not considered citizens of a body politic, but rather were conceptualized individually as

subjects of “Empire.” While people were grouped into somewhat homogeneous ethnic and religious groupings [the *millet* system], the millets did not see themselves as national groups; rather, they perceived the millet as a system which administered each person’s relationship to the Ottoman sultan. Post-1923 “Turkishness” in the republic meant persons shifted from subjects to citizens, with each citizen an equal member of the nation with equal rights and responsibilities. Nationality and citizenship, along with the introduction of the Kemalist alphabet and dress code changes, the abolition of the caliphate, and the creation of a new kind of school independent of religious control (similar to French *laicism*) were all part of the modernization process aimed at state-building and a new imagining of the citizens of that state.

However, an immediate ambiguity arose: ‘Turkishness’ was conceptualized not only as citizenship but, drawing on current notions of ‘nation,’ ‘Turkishness’ was also seen as an ethnic identity or race. Citizenship and ethnicity became inextricably intertwined.

Many people in the collapse of the millet system found themselves in a quandary. In order to adopt self-identification as “Turkish,” they were forced to relinquish older, other identities such as Christian, Jewish, Alevi, Arab, Kurdish, and other self-markers. Communities distinguished by religion (anything other than Sunni Islam), native language (other than a newly standardized ‘Turkish’), as well as ethnic ties (such as Kurdish clan membership and loyalty) faced a dilemma of whether to accept the new state-sanctioned identity (which meant assimilating) or preserve their own ethnic identities in resistance to the Turkification project. This choice resulted in a set of social problems and weak ties and relationships between the state and ethnic, religious and other minority groups.

The change of rule from a ‘Kemalist’ to an ‘Islamist’ AKP, did not change social patterns of intolerance; in fact, they may have exacerbated it. The AKP presents a narrative of Turkishness that differs from that of the Kemalists, but they have encouraged the re-emergence of older, suppressed fears, producing isolations in new constellations. The AKP narrative promised a new vehicle for the Turkification project, a vehicle with an explicit Muslim motor. Nevertheless, this narrative still threatened “others.” Consequently, minority groups in Turkey remain isolated, constantly feeling the threat of assimilation by their own

government. Under the AKP government, secular groups (i.e., ethnically non-Turkish, non-Muslim groups) felt anxious that the Islamicist AKP had dealt all other players out of the game. Simultaneously, ethnic Turkish people also felt insecure. A powerful nostalgia for the imagined “Lost Empire” and its role as a strong protector, combined with a sense of having been being “betrayed” by their neighbors, resulted in many people in Turkey always feeling orphaned, abandoned and alone.¹ Hence the infamous aphorism, “Turks have no friends other than Turks.” Contemporary Turkishness is both a construction and imagined narrative of these historical and social conditions, which have emerged as tensions over identity. This study is an attempt to understand the relationship between different identities and the process of “othering” in the Turkish context.

Our hypothesis is: the more a respondent is involved in the Turkification project, the greater the social distance s/he will express towards other ethnic, religious, sexual minorities.

Data-Analysis

We analyzed data from 1725 respondents recruited from 7 cities across Turkey to explore levels of tolerance and intolerance towards “others,” i.e., selected national, ethnic, sexual, and religious minorities. In the research, we measured the level of tolerance and intolerance using the Social Distance Scale developed by Emory S. Bogardus (1933).

Bogardus’s original instrument was designed to provide a reliable method to locate respondents on a Guttman scale of tolerance, ranging from very high tolerance (the respondent indicates a willingness to accept a ‘typical’ member of an ethnic or racial group as a member of the respondent’s family through intermarriage), to very low tolerance (the respondent indicates a preference that typical members of an ethnic or racial group should be excluded from the respondent’s nation, even denied entry as a tourist).² A Google Scholar search locates more than 7000 scholarly studies using the Bogardus scale or a close adaptation of scale.

¹ See Ece Temelkuran’s, analysis of the role of orphanhood and the love of children in republican Turkey. *Turkey: The Insane and the Melancholy*, trans. Zeynep Beler (London: Zed Books), 2016,

² Emory Stephen Bogardus, “A Social Distance Scale,” *Sociology & Social Research*, 1933, 265–71.

We adapted the scale in several ways. We selected national, ethnic, religious and sexual identities that are of interest, particularly in a Turkish context. For example, we included national groups (Russians, Iranians, etc.) who frequent Turkey as tourists. We selected ethnic groups prevalent in Turkey (e.g., Kurds). We selected religious groups present in Turkey (e.g., Alevi) and religious identities common in Turkish discourse (e.g., Dindar - religious). We translated the scale into Turkish and pretested our interpretation on a group of native Turkish speakers, then revised the translated scale for clarity and comprehension.

The scale was then included in a larger instrument that included items asking respondents to indicate their ethnic identity, their level of education, their social class, their level of religiosity, and other variables described below. The completed instrument was administered face-to-face to respondents, and responses were recorded by members of the research team and student assistants. Data was gathered over a six-month period in 2013. We used SPSS to store, clean, code, analyze and report our data.

The cities included in our study are located throughout Turkey, ranging from Edirne in the far west of Turkey to Mardin in the far southeast and Van in the far east. The cities vary in their demographic profiles. Table 1 below compares these cities by income, population, and education. For example, higher incomes (measured by GDP) are found in İzmir, İstanbul, Ankara, Edirne, and Konya, while Diyarbakır, Mardin, and Van are characterized by lower mean incomes. Diyarbakır, Mardin, and Van are cities in southeastern Anatolia where Kurdish and Arab ethnic minorities are a larger share of the population, in contrast to İzmir, İstanbul, Ankara, and Edirne. The level of education in Ankara, İzmir, and Edirne are much higher than the level of education in Van, Diyarbakır, and Mardin. Our selected cities thus represent a wide range of education, income, and ethnic composition.

City	Population	GDP	Unemployment rate (%)	Total	Male	Female
Istanbul	14160467	\$18.101	11,2	6,8	7,2	6,4
Ankara	5045083	\$18.009	10,2	7,6	8,1	7,1
Izmir	4061074	\$21.479	15,4	7,1	7,5	6,7
Konya	2079225	\$11.637	4,7	6	6,7	5,3

Edirne	398582	\$17.150	7,8	6,6	7,1	6,1
Van	1070113	\$4.311	10,3	3,9	5	2,9
Diyarbakir	1607437	\$8.029	18,7	4,5	5,5	3,4
Mardin	779738	\$7.494	20,6	4,3	5,3	3,3
TURKEY	76667864	\$15.340	9,7	6,2	6,8	5,6

Table 1: Population, average income, unemployment and education for selected Turkish cities. (source, year?)

The survey included several independent variables: age, level of schooling, gender, region of origin in Turkey, political party preference, support for Turkish exceptionalism, and ethnic identity. Some of these variables need little explanation while others call for clarification. Age, level of schooling, gender, political party preference, and ethnic identity are common variables found useful in sociological research.

The 1725 respondents were divided nearly equally between women (51%) and men (49%). The respondents' ages were concentrated in the age category 19-35 (45%), followed by 33.7% in the category 36-60 and 15.5% over the age of 60 with the remaining 5.7% under the age of 19. Nearly half the respondents reported more than 12 years (high school) of schooling (46.1%), with nearly a third (31.6%) reported between nine and twelve years of schooling; the remaining 22.2% report fewer than nine years of schooling.

An appropriate method for analyzing our data is ANOVA (Analysis of Variance – to test whether groups differ significantly from each other) which is useful to investigate variance between variables and we set our alpha as 0.05.

Education

Schuman, et. al (1997) note that “education is often found to be the strongest determinant of ethnic prejudice,” and the educational effect remains strong even when controlling for other individual characteristics such as social class, age, et cetera.³ Pettigrew and Tropp (2011) demonstrate that highly educated individuals are less ethnocentric than lower-educated

³ Howard Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations* (London: Harvard University Press, 1997).

individuals.⁴ Socialization theory also describes education's effects among adolescents to "civic norms and values like tolerance."⁵ Also, the role of education is interpreted as a transmitter of liberal values which leads to ethnic intolerance and prejudice reducing, the influence of parents was found to be less than of education.⁶ Thus, schooling levels are examined to explore the liberalizing effect of the education system in Turkey.

We measured schooling levels of respondents within four groups; no schooling, up to 9 years, between 9 and 12 years, and more than 12 years of formal education. We asked if political party preferences, Turkish exceptionalism level, social distance level towards - national groups, foreigners, towards ethnic groups and specifically Jews, atheists, homosexuals, and religious people vary by level of schooling.

⁴ Thomas F Pettigrew et al., "Recent Advances in Intergroup Contact Theory," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 35, no. 3 (2011): 271–80; Marc Hooghe, Cecil Meeusen, and Ellen Quintelier, "The Impact of Education and Intergroup Friendship on the Development of Ethnocentrism. A Latent Growth Curve Model Analysis of a Five-Year Panel Study among Belgian Late Adolescents," *European Sociological Review* 29, no. 6 (2013): 1109–21.

⁵ Marcel Coenders and Peer Scheepers, "The Effect of Education on Nationalism and Ethnic Exclusionism: An International Comparison," *Political Psychology* 24, no. 2 (2003): 313–43; Evelyn Hello et al., "Association between Educational Attainment and Ethnic Distance in Young Adults Socialization by Schools or Parents?," *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 3 (2004): 253–75; Hooghe, Meeusen, and Quintelier, "The Impact of Education and Intergroup Friendship on the Development of Ethnocentrism. A Latent Growth Curve Model Analysis of a Five-Year Panel Study among Belgian Late Adolescents."

⁶ Hello et al., "Association between Educational Attainment and Ethnic Distance in Young Adults Socialization by Schools or Parents?"

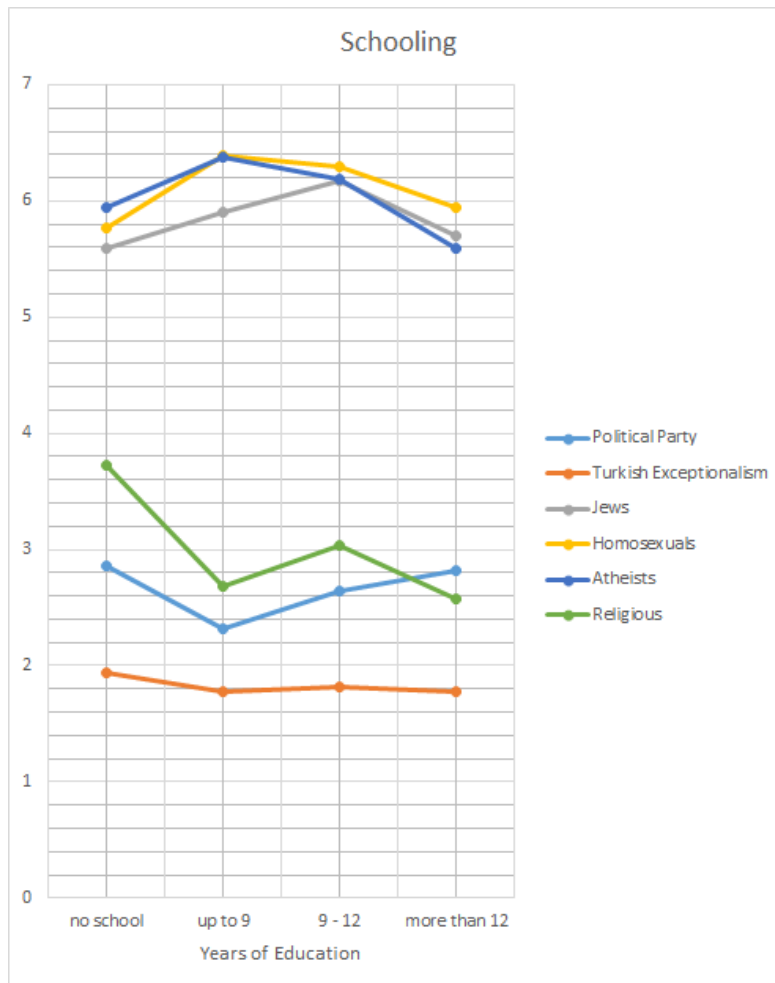


Figure 1: Combined mean plot between schooling and social distance towards all selected groups

For the sports support level, we find that the average is between supporters and non-supporters, educated people are more likely to be a sports fan ($p=0.00$). The lower the mean, the greater the level of support. Interestingly, it means that people who are less or not educated are less likely to support a sports group (mean 3.0), people who are more educated (9 or more years) are more likely to support a football team (mean 2.0). That is to say, there is a positive relationship between schooling level and fanaticism level. We need to mention this rate; the mean is between 2 to 3, the general scale is between 1 to 4. Still, this may show the effect of education on our respondents that leads them to support sports.

When we look at age influence on sports support, age, however, decreases the level of support. ($p=0.00$) As age increases people tend to support less, since mean is here between 1.8 and 2.4 (2=interested, 3=not interested) (Editor said that we should remove sport)

Turkish exceptionalism

We also examined the contribution of “Turkish exceptionalism” to intolerance. Turkish exceptionalism is expressed in the notion that “Turkey is different from other nations in terms of its moral worth and status as an example to other people compared to its neighbor countries and nations.”⁷ Here we find that people who have a high level of schooling offer greater support to the idea of Turkish exceptionalism (mean 1.75) than do the people with less schooling. We need to mention that in this scale the average respondent is between definitely believing and believing in Turkish exceptionalism; here the mean is between 1.75 to 1.95. So, we may say that schooling leads people to have an idea of Turkish exceptionalism more ($p=0.05$). So, we may say as people are educated in Turkey the notion of exceptionalism develops within the ideological agenda of the system, getting to believe the exclusiveness of their nation more in Turkey.

Age also varies with support for exceptionalism: support for exceptionalism decreases while peoples’ age increases. ($p=0.00$) We need to mention here, the belief of Turkey’s difference from other nations is quite intense.

Social Distance towards Jews

The mean plot for our respondents for a social distance towards Jews is between 5.6 and 6.2. ($p=0.00$) Therefore, the average respondent is socially distant to Jews, only accepting Jews as citizens or tourists in Turkey. Schooling diminishes social distance towards Jews more, however, there is little difference between no schooled people and people schooled more than 12 years. So, in this plot, we can say that education does not have a significant influence on people’s level of social distance towards Jews. Average respondent is not likely to accept Jews, just accept them as citizens or tourists. If we correlate this level of social distance and age of the respondents, again there is no significant difference ($p=0.26$) and all age groups are socially distant to Jews (means 5.8 and 6.2).

⁷ R.N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, Perennial Library (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985); Zan Strabac, Ola Listhaug, and Tor Georg Jakobsen, “Patterns of Ethnic Intolerance in Europe,” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 13, no. 4 (2011): 459–79, doi:10.1007/s12134-011-0222-4; İ. Dağı, “Can Turkey Pursue an Imperial Foreign Policy?,” *Today’s Zaman*, September 3, 2012.

Social distance towards Kurds

The plot of the mean social distance towards Kurds vs level of schooling shows that respondents' mean level of acceptance of Kurds lies between 3.6 and 4.2; that is, respondents are likely to accept Kurds as their neighbor or colleague but are less willing to get closer to Kurds, such as having as a close friend or marrying them. Schooling level ($p=0.00$) and age (0.03) are both significant in the social distance towards Kurdish people. Even though distance level increases little with education, the plot shows that there is no difference between a person who schooled more than 12 years and who is not schooled. Therefore, people's perception of Kurdish people and social distance towards them do not really change with education. Those respondents aged between 20 and 35 have the least distance (mean 3.8) while those younger than 19 have the greatest social distance (mean 4.4). Again, any age group does not feel to be more than a neighbor or a colleague with a Kurd, these statistics show great social distance towards the second biggest ethnicity living in Turkey.

The mean plot of social distance towards homosexuals is the highest of all the categories we measured: the means fall between 5.8 and 6.2. A typical respondent would only accept homosexuals as tourists, but not as citizens of Turkey or any other closer relationships. High schooling level decreases the level of distance towards them; however, that does not cause a clear change ($p=0.00$). Attitudes towards homosexuals stay strict and age is not significant with correlation to distance level ($p=0.12$).

Social distance towards Atheists

Schooling has an effect on the level of social distance towards atheists, as education level increases intolerance towards atheists decreases ($p=0.00$). However, the means of the plot again show a big distance here, between 5.4 and 6.4 which means people accept atheists just as their colleagues or citizens in Turkey. A typical respondent refuses to get married, be a close friend or even be a neighbor to an atheist.

Social distance towards religious people

The level of schooling ($p=0.00$) and age ($p=0.00$) are influential in the social distance towards religious people. People who have no education have more intolerance to religious

people compared to people who have more schooling. According to mean plots between 2.6 and 3.8, we may say that a typical respondent accepts religious people as colleagues, neighbors or maybe as a best friend. Also, a decrease in the level of social distance is observed as people get older. A respondent aged 18 could accept a religious person as a neighbor (mean 3.6), but a respondent aged 34 or 50 could accept a religious person as the closest friend (mean 2.6)

Ethnicity

In our research, we used the ANOVA statistic to test whether the groups are different between each other. So, if there are differences between groups it means greater variance between groups than within groups. It is useful to work with ANOVA to see how these groups help us to understand differences in the levels of tolerance in Turkey. We have the independent variable that is recoded ethnic (Turks, Kurds, and others) and the dependent variables such; Political party, religiosity, homosexuals, atheists, foreigners and so on. We have three groups in the independent variable; we recoded them as Turks, Kurds, and others.

Social Distance towards Religious Groups

There is a correlation between recoded ethnicity and religious groups since the relation is significant (0.009). In a survey, we had 7 social distances which measure the distance from highest to lowest. The first level is marriage, so it is the nearest social distance and 7 levels are a rejection of any definite independent identity that shows the highest social distance. The respondents by leveling different categories such as different ethnic, religiosity, and homosexual identity show how they are socially distant. So, when we measure how Turks, Kurds, and others (Azeri, Laz, Pomak, and etc. minor ethnic groups)

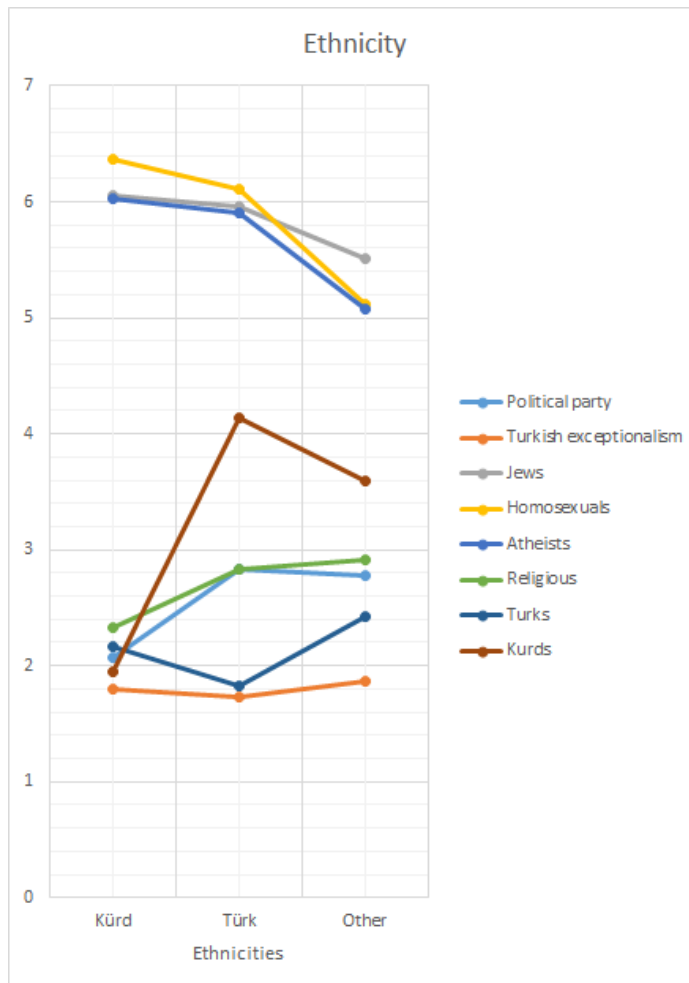


Figure 2: Combined mean plot between ethnicities and social distance towards all selected groups

Looking at the social distance levels toward religious identities, we used the mean plot of the religious category where the mean of Kurds is likely to be the least distant to religious people. So, it means that Kurds are likely to marry or to be friends with Religious people (mean 2.4), after Turks who are likely to marry and to be friends with religious people (mean 2.6). Finally, others have also a close distance to religious people but much more as close neighbors (mean 3). We need to mention that in this scale social distance is not so high; the mean is between 2.4 to 3. But still, the closest is Kurds, then Turks and finally others. So, we can say that religious people in Turkey are likely to accept as a family member, as close friends, and as close neighbors.

Social Distance towards Turks:

There is significance between recode ethnic and Turks because alpha is 0.034, so there is a correlation between them. When we analyze how the respondents level Turks in Social Distance scale, we found out that the closest social distance is Turks that is 1.8 mean. So, it means that Turks are likely to marry and be close friends with Turks. Then we can see how Kurds are accepting Turks, the mean is 2.2, so it means that Kurds are likely to be friends with Turks. Finally, we have others who are most distant to Turks on the contrary to Turks and Kurds. The mean is 2.4, and it still means accept Turks as close friends. In this analysis we can see how respondents have social distance with Turks, Turks are the main nation in Turkey, so people are likely to marry or be friends with Turks.

Social Distance towards Kurds

There is a significant difference between groups in their acceptance of Kurdish people: the alpha is .000, so it means there is a correlation between recoded ethnic and Kurds. When we analyze the plot, we can see how the respondents are socially distant to Kurds. The closest to Kurds are Kurds, the mean plot is between 1.5 -2.0, it means that Kurds are likely to have closer social distance than Turks and others. Kurds are likely to marry or be friends with Kurds. The social distance towards Kurds by Turks in the mean plot is between 4.0-4.5, it means Turks are more likely to see Kurds as citizens of Turkey. By comparing we can say that Kurds are more likely to accept Turks rather than Turks accept Kurds. Since, when Kurds are accepting Turks as family members and friends, then Turks are accepting Kurds just as citizens of Turkey. Here we can see that Turks are socially distant to Kurds. Finally, others are more likely to accept Kurds as neighbors, the mean plot is between 3.5-4.0.

Social Distance towards Jews

The mean plot is between 5.5-6.1. So, all ethnic groups are socially distant to Jews since they accept Jews as citizens or tourists in Turkey. While observing the plot, we can see that the socially closest to Jews are others, the mean is 5.5. After Turks whose mean is between 5.9 - 6.0, then Turks are accepting Jews as tourists in Turkey. Kurds in the mean plot are between 6.0 - 6.1, so Kurds accept Jews just as tourists as Turks do. So, in this plot, we can say that others are more likely to accept Jews than Turks and Kurds, but still, others are

not accepting Jews as a member of family, friends, and neighbors. So, three groups are socially distant to Jews.

Social Distance towards Homosexuals

The significance is .000, so it means there is a difference between the groups, although all show high intolerance of homosexuals. The mean is between 5.0 - 6.2, all three groups are socially distant to Homosexuals because they accept them just as citizens and tourists in Turkey. The social distance analysis is tolerance analysis, so there is an intolerance to Homosexuals in Turkey. The most distant to Homosexuals is Kurds, Turks, and then others.

Social distance towards Atheist

There is the same mean plot as with homosexuals. People are intolerant to Jews, Homosexuals, and Atheists. Since all plots are between 5.0-6.0, then it means Jew, homosexuals, and Atheists are accepted just as citizens or as tourists.

The closest group is Turks who are accepted as a family member and close friends. Since Turks are the main nation in Turkey. In this analysis, we wanted to see how people in Turkey are socially distant to minorities and ethnic groups. We found out that the least accepted groups in Turkey are Jews, Homosexuals, and Atheists. All these groups are a minority and least accepted. We can say that it is the least tolerated group in Turkey. All three groups accept them as citizens or tourists in Turkey, whereas any group does not accept them closer as a family member, close friends, neighbors.

Political Party

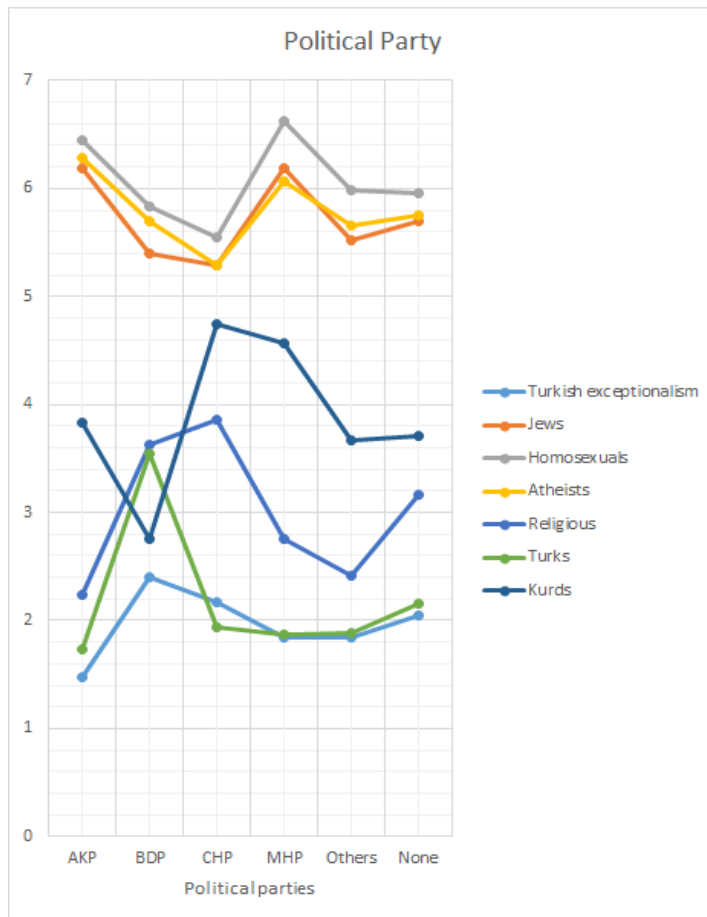


Figure 3: Combined mean plot between political party preference and social distance towards all selected groups

In this section, we are going to take the political party preferences (AKP, BDP, CHP, MHP, Others) as an independent variable. By using ANOVA, we tested whether political party preferences in Turkey varied social distance levels towards several categories of “others” people of different levels of self-reported religiosity, ethnicity (Turks and Kurds), Jews, homosexuals, and atheists.

Social Distance towards Religious Groups

There is a relationship between political parties and social distance towards people with different levels of religiosity ($p=0.000$). For the social distance toward levels of religiosity, we find that the mean for supporters of AKP is likely to be the least distant to religious people. So, it means that AKP supporters are likely to marry or to be friends with religious people (mean 2.2), after MHP, Others, who are likely to marry and to be friends with religious people (mean 2.5). Finally, BDP and CHP have a higher distance to religious people

(mean 3.6-3.8 which means they accept religious people as a neighbor). We need to mention that in this scale social distance is not so high; the mean is between 2.2 to 3.8. But still, the closest is AKP, then MHP, Others and finally BDP, CHP. So, we can say that people with different political party involvement in Turkey differ in their willingness to establish close social relations with people of different levels of religiosity. Except for BDP and CHP who are more likely to accept religious people only as a neighbor.

Social Distance towards Turks:

People with different political party preferences differ in their social distance towards Turks ($p=0.000$). When we analyze how the respondents differ in their acceptance of relationships with Turks, we found that people who voted for AKP, CHP, MHP and Other parties have the lowest social distance with Turks, at a mean= 1.8. So, it means that people who voted for AKP, CHP, MHP and Other parties are likely to marry and be close friends with Turks. Then we can see how people who answered none are accepting Turks, the mean is 2.2, so it means that these people are likely only to be friends with Turks. Finally, we have BDP who are the most distant towards Turks (mean=3.5); nevertheless, they still accept Turks as neighbors. In this analysis, we can see how respondents differ in their social distance with Turks, Turks are the largest and most powerful ethnic groups in Turkey so people are likely to marry or to be friends with Turks, except the BDP.

Social Distance towards Kurds

Members of self-identified ethnic groups differ in their expressed social distance towards Kurds ($p=0.000$), the plot of the mean social distance shows that except for BDP, respondents chose a great social distance to Kurds. The closest social distance to Kurds is shown by BDP. With a mean social distance between 2.5, BDP is likely to have a closer social distance to Kurds. The mean social distance towards Kurds by CHP, MHP voters between 4.5-4.7; these groups of people are unlikely to prefer close social relations with Kurds and are more likely to accept Kurds only as citizens of Turkey. While most BDP is accepting Turks as family members and friends, CHP, MHP are accepting Kurds just as citizens of Turkey. Here we can see that CHP, MHP are socially distant to Kurds. Finally,

AKP, Other parties, and none are more likely to accept Kurds as neighbors, the mean plot is between 3.5 and 4.

Social Distance towards Jews

The mean plot for members of all political parties for a social distance towards Jews is between 5.3 and 6.2. So, all political parties are socially distant to Jews, only accepting Jews as citizens or tourists in Turkey. However, while all groups are distant towards Jews, significant differences among the groups remain: we can see that the socially closest to Jews are BDP, CHP (mean 5.3) followed by other parties and none (mean between 5.0 – 6.0) then by AKP, MHP (mean 6.2, so these group of people accept Jews only as tourists). So, in this plot, we can say that BDP, CHP are more likely to accept Jews than AKP, MHP, but still, even the groups with the lowest social distance do not accept Jews as a member of family, friends, and neighbors. So, all political parties are socially distant to Jews.

Social Distance towards Homosexuals

The mean social distance towards homosexuals differs, even though members of all political party groups express high intolerance towards homosexuals ($p = 0.000$). The means for all political parties fall between 5.5- 6.5, all groups are socially distant to homosexuals, accepting them only as citizens and tourists in Turkey. High social distance shows low tolerance: there is high intolerance of homosexuals in Turkey. However, AKP shows the higher social distance towards homosexuals (mean 6.5), followed by MHP (mean 6.25) and then BDP, Other parties (mean approximately 6). The group with the lowest social distance is CHP (mean 5.5).

Social distance towards Atheists

The expressed social distance by members of the political parties shows similarities of intolerance among members of the three groups: people of all political parties in Turkey are intolerant to Jews, homosexuals, and atheists. Since all plots are between 5 and 6, then it means Jew, homosexuals, and Atheists are accepted just as citizens or as tourists. Nevertheless, again the ANOVA analysis shows differences between the means of the political party groups towards atheists: AKP are the most intolerant (mean above 6.25),

followed again by MHP (mean approximately 6) and then by BDP and others (mean approximately 5.75). The lowest social distance is again in CHP (mean 5.25).

As we can see from this graph, there is a social distance among the social groups in Turkish society. Our aim in this paper is to try to explain why some elements (like political party preference in this case) can play a role in the isolation of groups from each other. For this purpose, we should look at the political history of Turkey.

There are key moments in the contemporary history of Turkey which formed current Turkish society. One of these moments was the 1980 military coup. Military state, with its authoritarian power silenced, repressed society, trying to establish a uniform society subordinated to the centralized power. According to Tuzunoglu, this violent military intervention on political life prevents the establishment of a common memory in Turkish society.⁸ Which eventually led to the isolation of groups from other groups. Because the coup had embodied in itself an ideological part. Pressure from the state was not just acted with its Repressive State apparatuses, but also by ideological apparatuses.

According to Simmel, there is a relationship between ideology and repression.⁹ He shows us how forms of repression can lead to the formation of silenced/ secretive groups, and consequently into the isolation of these groups from each other. Social groups were formed by different kinds of social bonds, like ethnicity, language, culture, religion, sexuality. Lawrence Hazelrigg argues that “Secret societies most frequently appear in larger societies that are characterized by political-religious oppression and totalitarian regimentation.”¹⁰ He points out that Simmel notes a dialectical theme focusing on conflict between contradictory tendencies: “One of the unifying threads in all of Simmel's work is the dialectical theme of genesis and development followed by a transformation that comes from within, the idea that a form contains the seeds of its own eventual alteration or destruction.”¹¹

⁸ Melida Tuzunoglu, “Anesthetic Memory Loss: Military Coup as a Visual Commodity” (PhD dissertation, Central European University, 2008), http://www.etd.ceu.hu/2008/tuzunoglu_melida.pdf.

⁹ Georg Simmel, “The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 4 (1906): 441–98.

¹⁰ L. E. Hazelrigg, “A Reexamination of Simmel's ‘The Secret and the Secret Society’: Nine Propositions,” *Social Forces* 47, no. 3 (March 1, 1969): 323–30, doi:10.2307/2575031.

¹¹ Ibid.

This point of view is important in understanding the impact of the 1980 coup d'état in the social, cultural life of Turkish society.¹² As Gürbilek noted, current cultural conditions in Turkey emerged after the 1980 military coup. Turkish society never experienced so much pressure from the central authoritative state, and at the same time, it never had the ability to express itself in public life. According to Gürbilek, Turkish society for the first time encountered all the diversities, different types of groups (like feminists, homosexuals, religious groups, ethnic groups) that were 'invisible' from public life before. The state did not want to 'see' those diversities, instead, it was trying to shape it and establish a uniform nation.¹³ If it is possible to make an analogy between psychoanalysis and social phenomenon, based on Freud's argument, we can say that the repressed ideas, tendencies, and activities returned in different forms.

Silenced memories of the past became the dynamic force of contemporary society. From a Simmelian approach, silenced memories shape the ideologies of the present. And, we can see these ideological codes in the discourses of political parties. As one of the most unwanted groups of Turkish society, conspiracy theories about the Jewish community in Turkey, is one of the codes in order to understand the political ideology of some groups.

The occurrences of coups not only isolated people from each other but also from their history, their ancestors. This situation leads to the formation of different modern types of thoughts. These Modern, Muslim, White, Turkish people were the elites of society. Which lead to resistance from and formation of religious groups. Non-Turkish communities as well.

Conclusion

In this paper we explore two questions; do the mean social distances towards selected "others" in Turkey differ significantly? Do several independent variables impact levels of social distance and intolerance? Our research identified a high intolerance level towards national, ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities in Turkey. We found that most likely

¹² Kemal H. Karpat, "Military Interventions: Army-Civilian Relations in Turkey before and after 1980," in *State, Democracy and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, ed. M. Heper and A. Evin (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 137–58.

¹³ Nurdan Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window*, trans. Victoria Holbrook (London: Zed Books, 2011).

accepted and tolerated groups are those with Turkish ethnic and ‘Dindar’ (religious) identities. Nevertheless, other groups, such as foreigners, Christians, Jews, Atheists, and Homosexuals are little tolerated, and people tend to have high social distance towards these groups. These groups are likely to be accepted only as tourists or even not welcomed to enter the country at all. We categorized the groups as; Turkish and religious as most accepted and likely to have as a member of family or close friends, whereas Kurdish, foreigners, and Christians as neighbors or citizens, and highest social distance towards Jews, Atheist, and Homosexuals, whom the respondents are likely to see as tourists or unacceptable even to enter Turkey.

We found a strong relation between Turkish and Kurdish ethnicities. The plots show that Kurdish ethnic groups are more likely to have a close relationship with Turks as a family member and close friends, whereas respondents with Turkish ethnicity are less likely to accept Kurds as family members. This demonstrates the high acceptance of Turkish ethnicity and high social distance towards Kurdish ethnicity. It shows political attitudes and construction of Turkish identity as the superior and Kurdish identity as problematic. So, people’s construction of truth is based on media where people see Kurdish as terrorists and it leads to the creation of social distance with them.

While analyzing plots of education and level of tolerance towards “others”, we found that with the increase of education people are less tolerant of minorities, in contrast to people who are not educated at all. It suggests that the educational system in Turkey has an ideological character that leads to intolerance and Turkish exceptionalism. The highest level of the social distance we could explore in secondary education, after secondary education level of intolerance is decreased in university education. It also shows that people in university education are separated from an ideological agenda if not completely, or university education has the character of creating and pushing people to be more tolerant. However, people who are not educated and people who are educated in the university have the same level of tolerance toward minorities. People with a secondary level of education have the highest social distance and the highest level of intolerance.

In our exploration of party preference, we found and divided parties into two categories; one is the category where people are preferred the definite party (AKP, CHP, MHP,

and BDP) have social distance to “others” and secondary category with the people who preferred other parties and none, have lower levels of intolerance towards “others”. We need to mention that people who preferred the definite parties (AKP, CHP, MHP, and BDP) have a higher level of social distance towards definite minorities. While people who preferred AKP, have a high level of intolerance towards Jews, Atheists, and Homosexuals, people who preferred CHP have high social distance towards “Dindar” (religious) identities.

Finally, we explore the social distance and intolerance towards “others” in general. In social distance scale, the most likely accepted groups are Turkish and “Dindar” identities, people start to have social distance towards Kurdish, foreigners, Christians and the highest level of intolerance they have towards Jews, Atheists, and Homosexuals. In the paper, we mention three reasons that lead to intolerance; ideological agenda in secondary school, political construction of truth, and party preference.

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