



Ethnicity and Elections in Turkey: Party Politics and the Mobilization of Swing Voters (Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics)

Gul Akdag

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Ethnicity and Elections in Turkey attempts to understand the mobilization strategies of incumbent parties to consolidate and increase their support among swing voters of an ethnic group. By analyzing the strategy of AKP on voters of Kurdish origin, it investigates the conditions under which it can mobilize them through the clientelistic network and its effectiveness in increasing support for the party.

This investigation is conducted through a district and neighborhood level case study conducted in the districts of Beyoğlu, Sancaktepe and Beykoz situated in Istanbul. The main hypotheses are tested through five different steps. Firstly, an examination of electoral results identifies a large number of voters of Kurdish origin as ideologically close to pro-Islamist and pro-Kurdish parties. Secondly, the book identifies the main organs responsible of mobilizing voters and defines the nature of the clientelistic network. Thirdly, the study suggests that the incorporation of these voters into the party's clientelistic network is a function of the number and time of entry of activists of Kurdish origin in the party's ranks and the intensity of their contacts with the voters. Fourthly, it reveals the effectiveness of clientelistic mobilization in consolidating and increasing support among swing voters of Kurdish origin. Lastly, the inner party organization and critical juncture experienced by the party are argued to be influential in its ability to increase its network through the incorporation of new activists.

Providing an alternative explanation of AKP's electoral success in Turkey, this book is essential reading for students and scholars with an interest in Middle East politics, political parties and political science.

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