



## **KDO PODPORUJE ERDOGANA? SOCIO-EKONOMICKÁ DIMENZE VOLEBNÍ PODPORY AKP**

### **WHO SUPPORTS ERDOGAN? SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF ELECTORAL SUPPORT OF AKP**

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Skoro celá akademická obec hovoří o Turecku jako o hybridním režimu (elektorální autoritarismu). Vládnoucí Strana spravedlnosti a rozvoje (AKP) vyhrála všechny volby od roku 2002 a je stále schopna pořádat relativně svobodné a soutěživé volby a získat v nich velkou část voličů. Tato skutečnost vyvolává otázky: Kdo jsou tito voliči? Jaké je socio-ekonomické prostředí podporovatelů AKP? Naše hypotéza, založená na klasické teorii vzájemného propojení ekonomického rozvoje a sociální struktury, říká, že provincie s nižším stupněm socio-ekonomických ukazatelů podporovaly v parlamentních volbách v letech 2002-2015 AKP. Abychom ověřili tuto hypotézu, použili jsme regresní analýzu na HDP v jednotlivých provinciích a volební podporu AKP. Jako doplňující metoda byla použita základní analýza dvou skupin provincií – s nejvyšší a nejnižší podporou AKP, kde byly stanoveny další indikátory: HDP na obyvatele, míra nezaměstnanosti a Giniho koeficient. Výsledkem práce bylo zamítnutí základní hypotézy.<sup>2</sup>  
Klíčová slova: Turecko, AKP, hybridní režim, elektorální autoritarismus

Almost all academic assessments of Turkey label it a hybrid regime (electoral authoritarianism). The ruling party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), won every elections since 2002 and is still able to organize relatively free and competitive elections and gain the support of significant part of the voters. This fact raises the questions: Who are these voters? What is the socio-economic environment of the supporters of AKP? Our hypothesis, based on classical theory of interconnection of economic development and social structure, says: The provinces with the lowest level of the socio-economic indicators supported AKP in parliamentary election 2002-2015. To verify the hypothesis we used regression analysis of

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provincial GDP and electoral support of AKP and as a complementary method we made basic analyses of two types of provinces – with the highest and the lowest support of AKP. The results of our findings reject the basic hypothesis.

Key words: Turkey, AKP, hybrid regime, electoral authoritarianism

JEL: C12, O11, O40

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Recently, the development in Turkey has been attracting much attention, stirred up not only by the accession negotiations with the EU, which are essentially terminated, but also by the changes in foreign policy orientation. Currently, Turkey plays an important role in migration crisis, and we probably witness the birth of new regional superpower. More, Turkey represents an interesting theoretical problem; the changing character of a political regime in Turkey becomes a question of sensitive debates in political science. Turkey has never formed full-fledged democracy, and analogically we cannot speak about “full-fledged authoritarianism”, nowadays. Most of the scholars characterize Turkish regime as a hybrid one (see i. e. Ekman 2009; Diamond 2002), more precisely as electoral authoritarianism.

As every type of a regime, hybrid regimes may have specific features and, most importantly, they are not static. And precisely Turkish regime, underwent long-term interesting evolution when the regime moved from hybrid regime with liberal face that was strengthening democratic features to the hybrid regime reinforcing authoritarian features. Nevertheless, the ruling party, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP), is still able to organize relatively free and competitive elections and gain the support of significant part of the voters. AKP has won every election since 2002. This fact raises the questions: Who are these voters? To be more concrete, the questions are about social-economic environment they live in.

The study is organised as follows: Starting with a theoretical background, that is based mainly on the relationship of the socio-economic environment and the character of the regime, then research questions, research design and data are introduced. To understand the political context of the changes the brief characteristics of the ideological metamorphosis of the ruling party is described. The core of the study is the analysis of socio-economic environment of AKP electoral support, followed by discussion and conclusion.

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

For any political analysis and prediction of its further development, it is crucial to understand the nature of the political regime of a particular country. Broader public got acquainted with the approach of *The Economist* which issues the *Democracy index* every year based on five criteria (electoral process and pluralism, functioning of

government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties). Using these criteria, it defines four regime types: full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime, and authoritarian regime (The Economist 2017). Turkey, according to The Economist, belongs to hybrid regimes.

However, such an approach is mostly useful for journalists, politicians or investors, as it provides the basic information about the shortcomings and/or challenges in individual countries.—Such approach has its limits, for regime classification more information about the deeper context is needed: i.e. how the regime was formed, what is the level of its institutionalization, what are the social and economic structures and support of the regime, how some of the democratic instruments (i.e. elections) are used. These are the topics of the mainstream of literature on hybrid regimes (Diamond 2002; Hloušek and Kopeček 2003; Karl 1995; Wigell 2008).

Nevertheless, this study is not aimed to prove or not to hybridity of the Turkish regime. The hybridity (electoral authoritarianism) is assumed and based on deep consensus among the scientists. The research focuses on the socio-economic environment of the electorate on which the concrete hybrid regime is based; in this case the electorate of ruling party in Turkey, the AKP. Such an approach is based on theory of Seymour Martin Lipset, which proved relationship between economic development and character of the political regime. Lipset (1959) argued: *“Perhaps the most widespread generalization linking political systems to other aspects of society has been that democracy is related to the state of economic development. Concretely, this means that the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy.”* In his seminal work where he analysed the Anglo-Saxon world, Europe and Latin America he concluded that *“the average wealth, degree of industrialization and urbanization, and level of education is much higher for the more democratic countries.”* (Lipset 1959).

The studies of the relationship between social economic development and political regime, respectively democracy became typical for the research mainstream in 1960s. Thus, Walt Whitman Rostow (1960, pp. 4-16) argued that the process of transformation from economic modernization to democracy is linear and inevitable. Barrington Moore Jr. (1966, pp. 418-430) concentrated on social structure, the role of bourgeoisie oriented on internal market (*“No bourgeoisie, no democracy”*), the role of conservative peasantry, etc. In his studies of social genesis of *“three roads to the modern world:”* the democratic, the fascist and the communist regime, he found five factors determining the road of a country: (1) the power distribution amongst the elites, (2) the economic basis of the agrarian upper-class, (3) the class constellation, (4) the distribution of power between classes, as well as (5) the states’ autonomy vis-à-vis the

dominant class. Moore, as well as Lipset (1959), emphasized the important role of middle class in the process of regime formation.

However, the research of that time concentrated mainly on the search of preconditions for democracy, and/or explanation of non-democratic situation. There has never been realized general research of interconnection of character of economic and social development and hybridity of the regimes. It is not surprising, high diversity of hybrid regimes cannot bring new general theory. Nonetheless, we may find literature exploring specific hybrid regimes from this point of view. More, some of such studies focused on Turkish case. Hakan Yavuz claims that the ruling party in Turkey, the AKP, attracts new Turkish middle class, as provincial nobility with conservative leanings, small and medium size businessmen and industrialists, shopkeepers and master craftsmen, semi-industrialist farmers, and owner of construction farms (Yavuz 2009, pp. 83-84). Ihsan Yilmaz and Galib Bashirov characterize today's Turkish political regime (Erdoganism) through four dimensions: electoral authoritarianism as the electoral system, neopatrimonialism as the economic system, populism as the political strategy, and Islamism as the political ideology. Speaking of neopatrimonialism as the economic system, according to Yilmaz and Bashirov, Turkish regime distributes economic benefits to its supporter in a discriminatory fashion (Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018). This may lead to manipulation of voters in elections. However, there are no direct data (i.e. exit polls) that would enable deeper analysis of the electorate during this period. This is the reason why we decided to use another approach.

### **3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA**

Based on the Lipset (1959) and Moore (1966) assumptions that democracy and developed socio-economic structure of the society are mutually interconnected and Yilmaz and Bashirov neopatrimonial characteristics of current Turkish economic system this study aims to find out whether there is such a mutual interconnection between the electoral support of Justice and Development Party in Turkey and low socio-economic environment of its electorate.

The hypothesis are stated as follows:

**H:** *The provinces with the lowest level of the socio-economic indicators supported AKP in parliamentary election 2002-2015.*

Our research was divided into two parts. First, and the main one, based on linear regression analysis of GDP and electoral support in all the provinces, aimed to verify this sub-hypothesis:

**SH1:** *The provinces with lower GDP per capita supported the AKP in parliamentary election from 2002 to 2015.*

Second part, using complementary method based on elemental analyses of two extreme groups – the group of provinces with the highest and the lowest support of AKP using GDP per capita, unemployment rate and Gini coefficient, aimed to verify this sub-hypothesis.

**SH2:** *The provinces with highest support of AKP will have lower level of GDP, higher unemployment rate and higher Gini coefficient.*

To obtain the answer a decision was made to analyse the electoral support of AKP across individual provinces from 2002 to 2015. The research is organized as follows. It starts with the analysis of the results of the parliamentary elections in Turkey, which were held in 2002, 2007, 2011 and 2015 (twice in that year) to calculate the proportion of voters supporting the AKP in general.

The main method used in this paper is linear regression analysis. We use the data showing results of the parliamentary election in every province in Turkey and GDP per capita in these provinces. Thanks to five regression analyses (for 2002, 2007, 2011 and twice in 2015 parliamentary election) we want to verify or not verify our hypothesis. It is important to mention that we work with a complete data sample which makes our research more precise. Therefore using tools of statistical inference (tests of statistical hypothesis, confidence intervals) is not necessary. Every regression analysis will be graphically explained. We have one dependent variable – the share of valid votes for AKP in every parliamentary election in every province; and on independent variable – GDP per capita in every province. For our research two values are crucial: R Square which shows how much of variability of support of the AKP in parliamentary elections is explained by the model of linear regression analysis; and a direction of regression line – if its value is close to zero, there is a linear independence. Both these values will be available in tables and explained in the paper.

For our research, we decided to use a complementary method based on elemental analyses of two extreme groups – the group of provinces with the highest and the lowest support. For this part of research, we set two criteria to be able to define these groups of provinces: Those provinces, which did not exceed 30% in the election results in at least 3 out of 5 parliamentary elections, belong to the group of provinces with the lowest support of the AKP. Likewise, those provinces which did not decline below 65% in the election results belong to the group of provinces with the highest support. Out of 81 provinces, 13 provinces were determined to be with the highest support and 6 provinces with the lowest support. To verify or not verify our

hypothesis, these provinces were analysed by economic and social indicators: GDP per capita, unemployment rate and Gini coefficient.

Choosing the indicators, I took into consideration whether the data are available both at the national and provincial level and may be adopted from the database of the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat 2017).

#### **4 POLITICAL CONTEXT: JUSTICE, AKP AND ITS DEVELOPMENT**

The AKP was founded in 2001 by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gül. In 2002, the party won the parliamentary elections and made it to the Parliament for the first time. The profile of the party was ambiguous from the very beginning. On the one hand, the program of the AKP before the parliamentary elections in 2002 was pro-European with high level of tolerance for otherness (Yavuz 2009, p. 79). The party emphasized its support of economic liberalism and free market, and democratic political reforms. The AKP claimed that it is in favour of secularism, but against the state interference in citizen's private lives. Thanks to the party's defence of negative freedoms (state power is limited) and social pluralism, the AKP attracted both pro-Islamist constituency and cosmopolitan liberal voters (Patton 2007). On the other hand, although AKP defined itself as a conservative party respecting Islam, it was able to appeal to radical voters of two previous Islamist parties (Rabasa and Larrabee 2008, pp. 44-45).

Anyway, in 2007, because of tensions between the AKP and Turkish secularist parties the candidate for president, Abdullah Gül, was not elected by the parliament as the president of the country. In 2007, the pre-term elections took place (in June instead of November), as a consequence of the inability of a parliament to elect the new president. The pre-term elections brought the increased votes for the AKP. After the parliamentary election, the AKP nominated Gül for president again, and he was finally elected – he was the last Turkish president elected by parliament. Moreover, the constitutional referendum was held, implementing, besides other things, the popular vote of the president, reduction of the presidential term from seven years to five, and parliamentary elections every four years instead of five. It follows that with respect to the changes next parliamentary elections took place newly after four years in 2011. (Kalaycıoğlu 2012). The growth of political support was mainly caused by the changes in economics, especially the drop in the rate of inflation, the doubling of per capita income and the growth of foreign investment (Migdalovitz 2007).

In 2014 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected president in 2014 and replaced Abdullah Gül who resigned from politics. Since that time there had been attempts to change the constitution, respectively to change the political system of Turkey from parliamentary to presidential (Henley, Shaheen and Letsch 2018). Although the president is supposed to be non-partial, Erdoğan supported the AKP by holding public

opening rallies during the electoral campaign in June 2015. Despite the victory of the AKP in parliamentary elections in June 2015, the results were the worst since 2002. Nevertheless, preterm elections in November 2015 brought victory after the campaign in which the AKP tried to attract the voters by promising higher minimum wage, more public jobs, or free internet for young people. There was also a clash between the Turkish army and militants from the PKK (Kurdistan Workers party) which might affect the voters in east Turkey (BBC News 2018). Surprisingly, in the short campaign between June and November, the AKP changed more than 40% of its parliamentary candidate list (238 out of 550 candidates). *“In the November elections, the AKP based its election campaign on the continuation of stability, maintaining that economic and political stability, as well as the resolution of the Kurdish issue, could be achieved only under a strong single-party AKP government”* (Bardakçi 2016).

The final change to presidentialism without the implementation of basic checks and balances brought the failed coup in 2016. In January 2017, Turkish parliament approved the constitutional referendum including 18 amendments, changing the Turkish political system from parliamentary to presidential (Reuters 2017) and these changes were approved by a referendum held in April 2017.

## 5 SUPPORT OF AKP IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN TIME PERIOD 2002-2015

Turkey has a unicameral parliament. In the monitored period, the Turkish parliament (The Grand National Assembly of Turkey) had 550 members who were elected for a four-year term (except for parliamentary election in 2002 when it was elected for a five-year term) using a proportional system with a 10% threshold on the national level. The elections were held in 85 electoral districts whose number of mandates varied according to its size from 2 to 31. To pass the law it needs absolute majority of MPs present with a quorum of 139 MPs. The adoption of the constitutional amendments requires three-fifths majority of all elected MPs by secret ballot (The Grand National Assembly of Turkey 2017).

Table 1: Electoral support of AKP in parliamentary elections 2002-2015

<i>Year</i>	<i>Electoral results</i>	<i>Seats</i>
2002	34.3%	363/550
2007	46.6%	341/550
2011	49.8%	327/550
2015 (June)	40.9%	258/550
2015 (November)	49.5%	317/550

Source: Election resources. 2017.

The AKP won every parliamentary election since 2002 (see Table 1). However, its position had been changing, partly also because of the electoral system,

i.e. the 10% threshold, that can bring very disproportional results. This happened in 2002, when the AKP gained the highest number of seats it has ever gained (363 seats or 66%), although it was supported by only 34.3% voters. The share of votes for the AKP increased in 2007, it gained 47%; however, the AKP was not represented as much after the parliamentary elections in 2002. Despite the increase in the share of votes for the AKP in 2007, the party had only 341 MPs. Nonetheless, the AKP had a majority in the Grand National Assembly, so it could form the government. In 2011, the AKP mandates reached almost 50% of votes which was historically the best electoral result for the party. However, the AKP only had the majority of 2 seats. In June 2015, the number of votes for the AKP decreased compared to 2011. The AKP reached only 41% of votes having 258 mandates in the parliament, which meant a loss of majority in the Grand National Assembly for the first time in the period. Due to the stalemate in the parliament and unstable political situation, pre-term elections in November were called. As a consequence, the AKP strengthened its position in parliament, it gained 49% of votes winning 317 mandates which represented a majority in the parliament.

## **6 ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT OF THE AKP ELECTORATE**

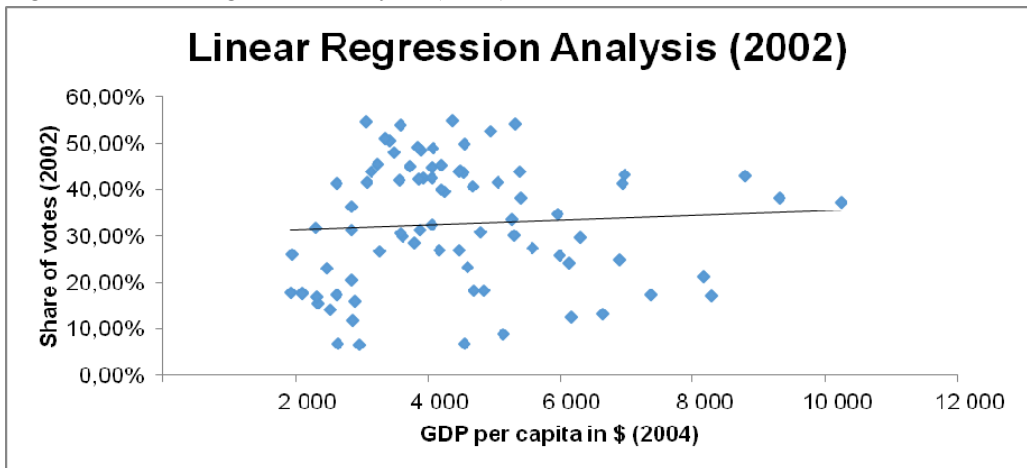
Now, let us focus on socio-economic environment of the AKP voters. Firstly, five regression analysis will be explained by verifying our hypothesis. Then, two group of provinces (with the highest and the lowest support of the AKP) will be from with respect to our criteria, so we will be able to observe which concrete provinces supported or not supported the AKP.

We will start with a regression analysis analysing parliamentary election in 2002. A dependent variable is a share of votes (by province) for AKP in parliamentary election in 2002 and independent variable is GDP per capita from 2004 in every province. Unfortunately, there was not data showing the GDP per capita (by province) in 2002. However, two years difference is not significant for us.

Focusing on the result of the regression analysis we must state, that there is linear independence. With respect to the R Square value, only 0.4% of variability of share of the votes for AKP in parliamentary election in 2002 might be explained with the model of regression line. The Direction of a regression line is positive and close to zero point which means that there is linear independence. Thus, the hypothesis is not verified by this model – the regression analysis did not prove that provinces with the lowest AKP per capita tend to vote for the AKP in 2002 parliamentary elections.



Figure 1: Linear regression analysis (2002)

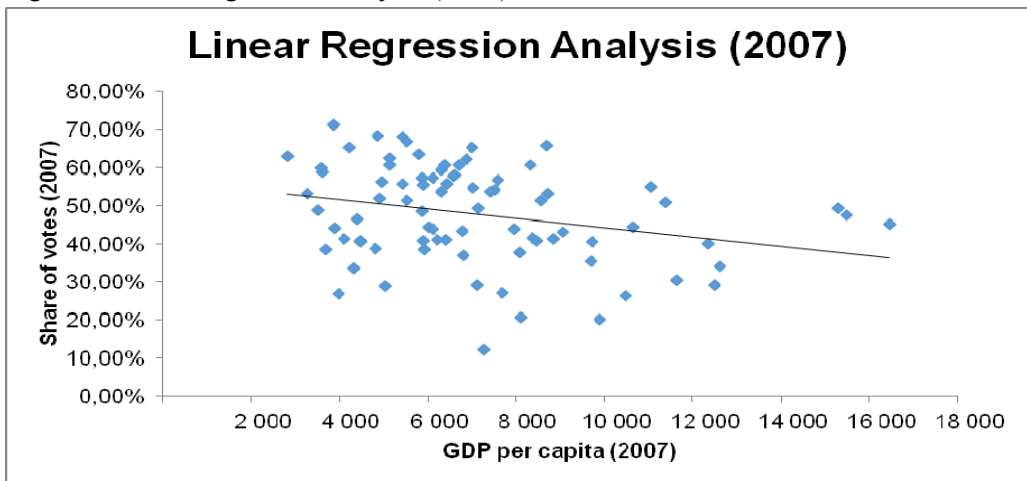


Note: R Square is 0,003999, Derection is 4,85E-06.

Source: Election resources. 2017.

Let us continue with a regression analysis of parliamentary election in 2007. Both data of dependent and independent variables are from 2007. According to the R Square value, by our model of regression line it is possible to explain 7% of variability of electoral support of the AKP in 2007. Direction of a regression line is negative and not directly close to the zero point which shows a weak linear dependence between variables. In other words, in parliamentary elections in 2007 the provinces with lower GDP tended to vote for the AKP. Therefore, our hypothesis is verified.

Figure 2: Linear regression analysis (2007)

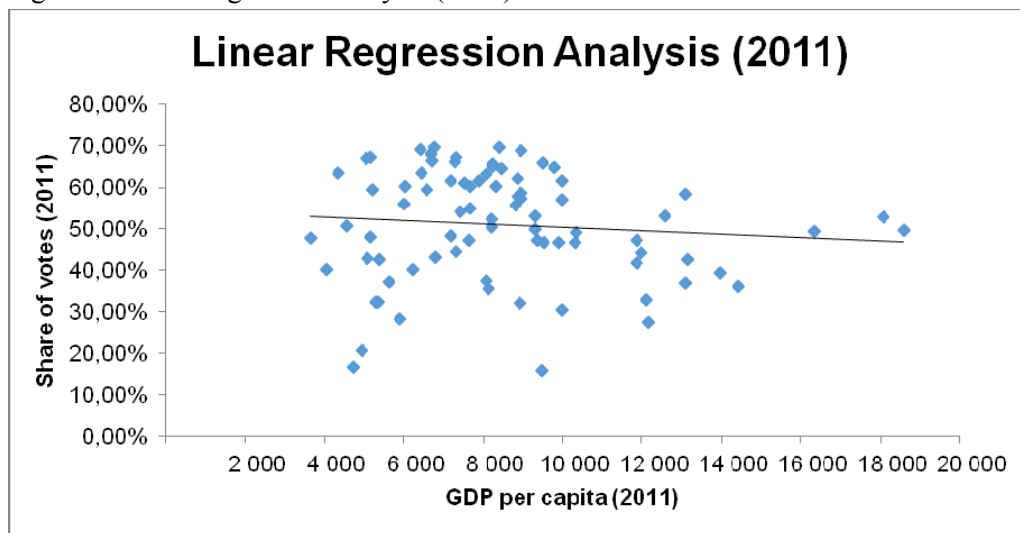


Note: R Square is 0,078109, Derection is -1,2E-05.

Source: Election resources. 2017.

The third regression analysis is based on data from 2011 for both independent and dependent variable. R Square value indicates linear independence; put differently, we can explain only 0.9% of variability of the electoral support of the AKP by regression analysis. Although the direction of regression line is negative, it is close to zero point. The line is almost horizontal. Because of the R Square value level, we must state that the hypothesis cannot be verified by our model.

Figure 3: Linear regression analysis (2011)

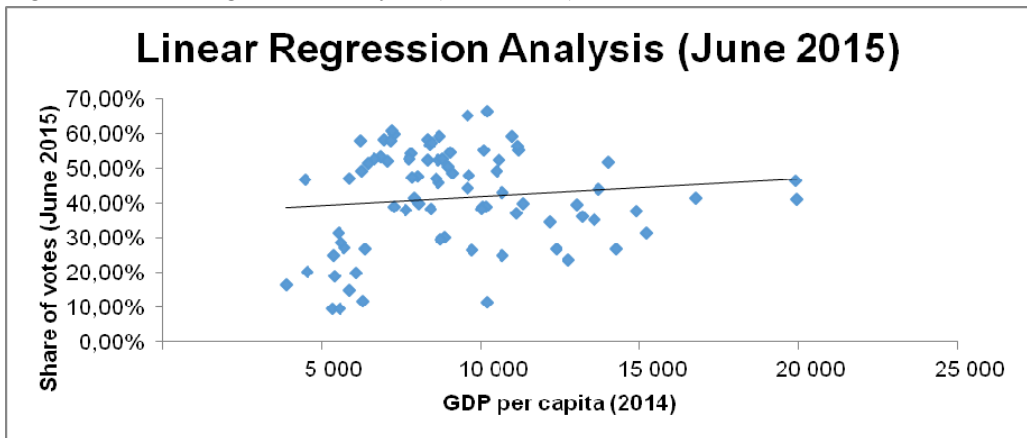


Note: R Square is 0,009317, Derrection is -4,2E-06.

Source: Election resources. 2017.

Finally, we have two last regression analyses from 2015. As mentioned earlier, in 2015 two parliamentary election took place in Turkey. The data of dependent variable is, indeed, from 2015 (June and November parliamentary election results by province). On the other hand, the independent variable – GDP per capita by province, is based on the data from 2014. Unfortunately, newest data providing GDP per capita by province are not available. Nevertheless, a year difference does not play significant role for our research. The R Square value is 0,012921 which means that by our model of regression line it is possible to explain only 1.3% of variability of electoral support of the AKP in June 2015. Direction of the regression line is positive which says that provinces with high GDP per capita tend to vote for the AKP in June 2015. Thus, the hypothesis is not verified – the R Square is at very low level and the direction of regression line is positive.

Figure 4: Linear regression analysis (June, 2015)

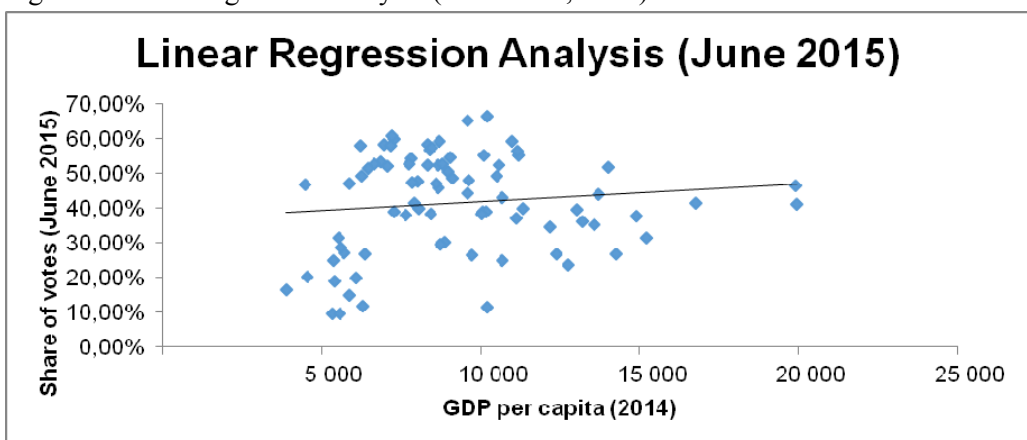


Note: R Square is 0,012921, Derection is 4,99E-06.

Source: Election resources. 2017.

The final regression is about pre-term parliamentary election in November 2015. As we may observe, the R Square value is at very low level. There is linear independence. By our model of regression analysis, we can explain only 0.1% of variability of the support of AKP in this parliamentary election. At the same time the direction of a regression line is positive, close to zero point. The line is almost horizontal which indicates, that we cannot say that in provinces with lower GDP per capita there is higher support of the AKP in the November 2015 election. Briefly, with respect of the level of R Square level, we claim that the hypothesis is not verified by our model.

Figure 5: Linear regression analysis (November, 2015)



Note: R Square is 0,001297, Derection is 1,76E-06.

Source: Election resources. 2017.

All in all, the most of the linear regression analyses indicated low level of the R Square value, so they could not verify the hypothesis of this paper. The R Square value was even lower than 1% in three out of five cases. In June 2015, the R Square was above 1% which is not significant for us. Only the case of regression analysis of parliamentary elections in 2007 is relevant for us. The value of R Square is 7 per cent which mean that we can explain 7% of variableness of electoral support of the AKP in 2007 by our model. The direction of regression line is negative, in other words, there is a trend that the provinces with lower GDP per capita tend to support the AKP. It follows that the hypothesis can be verified only in case of the parliamentary elections in 2007 where there is weak not direct linear dependency.

In the second part of our research we will analyse two poles of support. Firstly the number of provinces supporting the AKP in parliamentary election from 2002 until 2015 (see Table 2).

Table 2: The number of provinces supporting the AKP (above 65%)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of provinces supporting the AKP (above 65%)</i>
2002	0
2007	7
2011	13
2015 (June)	2
2015 (November)	18

Source: Election resources. 2017.

According to our criteria, the election result of at least 65% qualifies as the highest support. In 2002, there was not a single province exceeding 65% support of the AKP. Indeed, such a result may be explained by the fact that AKP was a newcomer – these were the first parliamentary elections AKP participated in. The ability of the AKP to achieve strong support from provinces rose from 2002 to 2015 with the exception of June 2015 when it experienced a great fall.

Now, let us concentrate on the development of provinces with the lowest support of the AKP. As written above, the lowest support is defined as less than 30% in the election results of the AKP.

Table 3: The number of provinces with the least support of the AKP (under 30%)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of provinces not supporting the AKP (under 30%)</i>
2002	34
2007	9
2011	5
2015 (June)	19
2015 (November)	9

Source: Election resources. 2017.

Unsurprisingly, there were many provinces where the support of the AKP did not exceed 30% in 2002 (see Table 3). In general, the development of the provinces with the lowest support was decreasing. From 2002 until 2011 the “lack of support” was declining, in 2011 it fell to its bottom. Despite the fact that in June 2015 the amount of provinces not supporting the AKP rose, in November in the same year it decreased again. Interestingly, even in June 2015 when there was the second highest “lack of support” recorded, the ratio was slightly more than a half of provinces not supporting the AKP compared to 2002.

Table 4: Provinces with the highest support of the AKP and their economic and social conditions

	<i>Province</i>	<i>GDP per capita 2014 (USD 12,112)</i>	<i>Gini coefficient 2014 (0.391)</i>	<i>Unemployment 2013 (9.7)</i>	<i>Kurdish majority</i>	<i>Happiness</i>	<i>Hope</i>
4/5	Konya	9 594	0.376 (Konya)	4.7%	no	2nd (61,6 - 68,2)	2nd (79,2 - 82,1)
3/5	Adiyaman	6 196	0.326 (Gaziantep)	9.1%	no	2nd (61,6 - 68,2)	3rd (75,8 - 79,1)
	Erzurum	7 061	0.413 (Erzurum)	6.6%	no	2nd (61,6 - 68,2)	2nd (79,2 - 82,1)
	Kahramanmaraş	7 208	0.379 (Hatay)	11.6%	no	2nd (61,6 - 68,2)	3rd (75,8 - 79,1)
	Malatya	6 954	0.367 (Malatya)	7.8%	no	4th (53,6 - 58,4)	2nd (79,2 - 82,1)
	Rize	10 210	0.309 (Trabzon)	6.7%	no	3rd (58,5 - 61,5)	1st (82,2 - 86,0)

Notes: Numbers in parentheses show national average value. The level of happiness/hope: the 1<sup>st</sup> group represents the highest level of happiness/hope, and the 5<sup>th</sup> group represents the lowest level of happiness/hope.

Source: Turkstat 2017; Watts 2011, p. 167.

With respect to the criteria set above, we chose the provinces with the highest support of the AKP. In the first place, it is important to emphasize that there is no province where the support of the AKP had exceeded the level of 65% in every five parliamentary elections since 2002. Anyway, there are six provinces which met our criteria: Konya, Adiyaman, Erzurum, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya and Rize. Now, let us focus on the development of the electoral results and on the economic and social situation of individual provinces in the Turkish national context. Let us begin with Konya province with the highest level of support of the AKP – 54.9% in 2002.

Moreover, Konya is the only province with the support of the AKP exceeding 65% of votes in the four remaining parliamentary elections. Looking at the election results in the Konya province, it will become clear why it became the most significant bastion of the AKP. The support of the AKP from 2002 had grown steadily, only in June 2015 there was a small fall. In November 2015, the AKP reached almost 75% of valid votes. Now, let us focus on the economic and social situation of individual provinces in the Turkish national context. Comparing elections in 2002 and 2007, there was a rise of support in every researched province. Moreover, in 2011 the support of the AKP in each of these provinces rose again, however in June 2015, the share of votes for the AKP felt.

Table 5: Support of the AKP in parliamentary elections, %

	<i>Province</i>	<i>2002</i> <i>(34.3)</i>	<i>2007</i> <i>(46.6)</i>	<i>2011</i> <i>(49.8)</i>	<i>June, 2015</i> <i>(40.9)</i>	<i>November,</i> <i>2015</i> <i>(49.5)</i>
4/5	Konya	54.90	65.30	69.60	65.10	74.00
3/5	Adiyaman	41.40	65.30	67.30	58.00	69.10
	Erzurum	54.60	68.30	69.20	52.00	67.80
	Kahramanmaraş	53.90	68.00	69.60	60.80	71.40
	Malatya	50.60	66.70	68.00	58.40	67.60
	Rize	44.20	53.70	68.90	66.40	75.40

Notes: Numbers in parenthesis show national parliamentary elections result.

Source: Election resources, 2017.

Economically, Konya's GDP per capita was around 2,000 USD lower than the Turkish national GDP per capita. However, Konya definitely does not belong to the group of poor provinces. Konya province is a part of the Konya sub-region where the Gini coefficient is at the same level as the Turkish national average. The unemployment rate in Konya was one of the lowest in Turkey.

Now, let us resume the analysis of the rest of the provinces which met the criteria to be regarded as "the supporter of the AKP". Focusing on the electoral development of the provinces, there is a common phenomenon in Adiyaman, Erzurum, Kahramanmaraş, and Malatya: The support of the AKP in each of these provinces had been growing steadily, except for the elections in June 2015, when it fell. Indeed, the AKP support did not exceed 65% in 2002 in these provinces, one year after its foundation, and in June 2015. In addition, the AKP did not exceed 65% of support in 2002 and 2007 elections in the Rize province. Economically, the lowest GDP per capita amounted to almost a half of the Turkish national average in Adiyaman.

Now let us see the rest of the provinces in this group. Malatya, Erzurum and Kahramanmaraş achieved a very low level of GDP per capita compared to the Turkish average. Rize had, compared to Turkish national average, a lower level of the GDP as

well, however, it was the highest level in the group of provinces with the highest support. Focusing on social differences, Erzurum province had a very high level of Gini coefficient, which means a higher social gap between the rich and poor. Other provinces reached a lower level of Gini coefficient compared to the Turkish average. Dealing with unemployment, every province in the group supporting the AKP had a low percentage of unemployed people in 2013; the highest unemployment in the group reached 11.6% in Kahramanmaraş.

To sum up, despite the bellow-average level of GDP per capita, the unemployment rate was average, in some provinces even lower. There is not a single province which would reach at least 12,112 USD which equals the Turkish national average GDP per capita. Except for Erzurum, the social differences between the rich and poor are lower compared to the Turkish national level. Likewise, speaking of unemployment, except for one province (Kahramanmaraş) all provinces of this group achieved a lower unemployment rate than the Turkish national average. Therefore, it seems that despite the lower GDP per capita, the conditions for living such as the low unemployment rate and a low gap between the rich and poor (Gini coefficient) are positive.

Now, let us focus on the regions where the AKP has a low support in the long term. There are three provinces where the AKP recorded less than 30% support in every parliamentary election since 2002: Tunceli, Şırnak and Kırklareli. However, what is the reason for such low popularity of the AKP in these provinces? Let us concentrate on the economic and social analysis of these provinces (see Table 6).

Focusing on the electoral development in Tunceli, the support of the AKP did not exceed even 16% of valid votes. In 2002 it was only 6.7% and it grew in 2007 and 2011. Then it fell again – the support was above 12% in June and November 2015. The GDP per capita of Tunceli was lower compared to the Turkish national GDP per capita. The situation of income equality in Tunceli was better than in Turkey in general. The Gini coefficient in the Malatya sub-region, which Tunceli is part of, was lower compared to the Turkish total Gini coefficient. Focusing on unemployment, the situation in Tunceli province was slightly better than in Turkey in general.

Table 6: Provinces with the lowest support of the AKP and their economic and social conditions

	<i>Province</i>	<i>GDP per capita 2014 (USD 12,112)</i>	<i>Gini coefficient 2014 (0.391)</i>	<i>Unemployment 2013 (9.7%)</i>	<i>Kurdish majority</i>	<i>Happiness</i>	<i>Hope</i>
5/5	Tunceli	10 198	0.367 (Malatya)	8.1%	yes	5th (42,0 - 53,5)	5th (64,0 - 71,5)
	Şırnak	5 572	0.362 (Mardin)	20.1%	yes	1st (68,3 - 77,7)	4th (71,6 - 75,7)
	Kırklareli	12 744	0.308 (Tekirdağ)	8%	no	5th (42,0 - 53,5)	3rd (75,8 - 79,1)
4/5	Hakkari	5 331	0.385 (Van)	11%	yes	1st (68,3 - 77,7)	2nd (79,2 - 82,1)
	Edirne	10 675	0.308 (Tekirdağ)	7.8%	no	4th (53,6 - 58,4)	2nd (79,2 - 82,1)
	Iğdır	6 280	0.366 (Ağrı)	6.9%	yes	3rd (58,5 - 61,5)	2nd (79,2 - 82,1)
3/5	Ağrı	3 880	0.366 (Ağrı)	6.8%	yes	3rd (58,5 - 61,5)	4th (71,6 - 75,7)
	Aydın	8 743	0.322 (Aydın)	6.9%	no	5th (42,0 - 53,5)	4th (71,6 - 75,7)
	Batman	5 393	0.362 (Mardin)	23.4%	yes	5th (42,0 - 53,5)	4th (71,6 - 75,7)
	Diyarbakır	5 853	0.412 (Şanlıurfa)	18.7%	yes	5th (42,0 - 53,5)	5th (64,0 - 71,5)
	Mardin	6 075	0.362 (Mardin)	20.6%	yes	5th (42,0 - 53,5)	5th (64,0 - 71,5)
	Mersin	9 702	0.391 (Adana)	12.4%	no	5th (42,0 - 53,5)	5th (64,0 - 71,5)
	Muğla	12 374	0.322 (Aydın)	7.3%	no	5th (42,0 - 53,5)	4th (71,6 - 75,7)

Notes: Numbers in parentheses show national average value. The level of happiness/hope: the 1<sup>st</sup> group represents the highest level of happiness/hope, and the 5<sup>th</sup> group represents the lowest level of happiness/hope.

Source: Turkstat 2017; Watts 2011, p. 167.



Table 7: Support of the AKP in Parliamentary Elections, %

	<i>Province</i>	<i>2002</i> <i>(34.3)</i>	<i>2007</i> <i>(46.6)</i>	<i>2011</i> <i>(49.8)</i>	<i>June, 2015</i> <i>(40.9)</i>	<i>November,</i> <i>2015</i> <i>(49.5)</i>
5/5	Tunceli	6.70	12.30	15.80	11.50	12.90
	Şırnak	14.00	26.90	20.60	9.70	12.30
	Kırklareli	12.50	20.20	27.40	23.70	28.40
4/5	Hakkari	6.80	33.50	16.50	9.70	13.80
	Edirne	8.70	20.70	30.40	24.80	27.80
	Iğdır	6.50	28.90	28.30	11.70	31.70
3/5	Ağrı	17.70	63.00	47.60	16.60	27.80
	Aydın	18.30	29.20	35.50	29.70	34.40
	Batman	20.60	46.40	37.10	18.90	29.10
	Diyarbakır	16.00	40.90	32.20	14.80	22.30
	Mardin	15.40	44.10	32.20	19.90	29.30
	Mersin	18.10	27.20	32.00	26.40	31.70
	Muğla	13.20	26.30	32.70	26.90	30.60

Notes: Numbers in parenthesis show national parliamentary elections result.

Source: Election resources, 2017.

Şırnak is another province where the AKP scored less than 30% in every election. In 2014, the GDP per capita in Şırnak province amounted to less than a half of Turkish national GDP per capita, so the economic conditions in this province were not good compared to the national average. However, Gini coefficient in Mardin sub-region, which consists of 4 provinces including Şırnak, was lower than the Turkish average – the social differences between rich and poor were not as significant. Şırnak was one of the provinces with the highest number of unemployed people.

In 2014, the GDP per capita in Kırklareli was almost at the same level as the Turkish national GDP per capita. The Gini coefficient in Tekirdağ sub-region, consisted of Kırklareli and two more provinces, was much lower compared to the Turkish national average. Thus, the social differences are not so significant in Kırklareli when compared to other provinces. To return to the economic analysis, the unemployment rate in Kırklareli province was almost at the same level as the Turkish average. We may claim that Kırklareli is economically above-average in comparison to other Turkish provinces. Geographically, this province is situated in the European part of Turkey. The reason for the unhappiness of people is not completely clear. However, nowadays, there are problems with the migration crisis. With respect to the deal between Turkey and the EU concerning tackling migration, Kırklareli is a city within the province of the same name with a refugee centre for migrants who are going to be sent back home from Europe (Daily Sabah 2016).

Now, see the provinces where the support of the AKP did not exceed the level of 30% in four out of five parliamentary elections: Hakkari, Edirne and Iğdır. Except

for 2007, the AKP did not gain more than 30% of votes in Hakkari. In 2014, the GDP per capita of Hakkari was lower than the half of the Turkish national GDP per capita. Speaking of income equality, in 2014, the Gini coefficient in Van sub-region, where Hakkari province is, was almost the same as the Turkish national level as well as in the unemployment rate.

To continue, the support of the AKP exceeded 30% in Edirne only in 2011. Geographically, The GDP per capita was about 2,000 USD lower than the Turkish total GDP per capita. The Gini coefficient was low in Tekirdağ sub-region where Edirne belongs to. The social gap was not as large as on the national level. Speaking of labour, the unemployment rate was slightly lower than the Turkish national average.

Iğdır is the third province where the support of the AKP was not very high. Except for November 2015, the AKP support did not reach a score of more than 30%. The GDP per capita in Iğdır province was almost half the Turkish national GDP per capita. However, compared to the Turkish national Gini coefficient the Gini coefficient was lower in Ağrı sub-region (Iğdır province). All the same, unemployment rate was lower than Turkish national unemployment rate.

Finally, let us focus on the last group of provinces, where the support of the AKP did not reach 30% in three out of five elections. Except for Muğla, none of these provinces reached the average level of the Turkish national GDP per capita. The lowest GDP per capita was in Ağrı, however, the level of the GDP in Batman, Diyarbakır and Mardin was also very low. Dealing with income equality, every province in the group reached a better score in the Gini coefficient level than the Turkish average except for the Diyarbakır province and Mersin whose score was equal to the Turkish average level. In Ağrı and Aydın, the unemployment rate was around 6%, in Muğla it was 7.3%, in Mersin 12.4%, in Diyarbakır 18.7%, but in Mardin and Batman, the unemployment rate exceeded 20%. It follows that the unemployment rate varies province by province.

## **7 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

The results of regression analyses revealed that only in one out of five cases there is a weak linear dependence between variables – in parliamentary elections 2007. In other words, only in parliamentary election in 2007 may be claimed that the provinces with lower GDP per capita supported (to some extent) the AKP. Taking into consideration the results of complementary method analysing more indicators in the provinces with the strongest and the lowest support of the AKP the findings does not differ so much. Every province with the strong support had lower GDP per capita than the national average. It seems that the provinces supporting the regime are, compared to the others, not as economically developed. However, more or less the same results we found in the provinces with the lowest support of the AKP. These provinces mostly

had a lower GDP per capita than the national average. In some cases, it was merely half of the national GDP per capita.

As far as Gini coefficient is concerned we can find small differences. In the majority of provinces with the highest support of the AKP Gini coefficient was lower than the national average, the social gap between the rich and poor was smaller in these provinces than national average. In provinces with low support Gini coefficient was higher and two provinces had a higher Gini coefficient than the national average.

The strongest difference appeared when the level of unemployment rate was used as indicator. The result proved low level of unemployment and thus relatively good social situation in the provinces with high support of the AKP. Contrarily, the high unemployment rate was a big problem for some of the provinces. In some cases, the rate exceeded 15%. Nonetheless, the level in most of the provinces was close to average.

The results of this research did not bring the final answer for the question in the title of this study. Who supports Erdogan? This study taught us that socio-economic environment did not play important role. There is high probability that the key factor can be the role of Kurdish minority, but this would need further deep research.

Both the regression analysis and the analysis of poles of support (biggest and lowest support of the AKP) did not prove that in recent five parliamentary elections the electorates with lower economic development (in our case according to GDP per capita, unemployment rate, and Gini coefficient) tend to support the AKP. Thus, we cannot simply state (as an analogic to Lipset and Morre democracy and socio-economic development theory) that not fully democratic regime (defined by scholars usually as “hybrid regime” or “electoral authoritarianism”) goes hand in hand with low level of economic development nor we can simply state that neopatrimonialism as characterized by Yilmaz and Bashirov is oriented on lower social groups.

At the beginning of this paper we set up the main hypothesis and two sub-hypotheses:

**H:** *The provinces with lower level of the socio-economic indicators supported AKP in parliamentary election 2002-2015.*

**SH1:** *The provinces with lower GDP per capita supported the AKP in parliamentary election from 2002 to 2015.*

**SH2:** *The provinces with highest support of AKP will have lower level of GDP, higher unemployment rate and higher Gini coefficient.*

With respect to the regression analyses only in 2007 there was found a weak linear dependence between two set of variables. In case of other analysed

parliamentary election there was a linear independence between the support of the AKP and the GDP per capita. Thus, the first sub-hypothesis was rejected.

Using results of complementary method it was not proved that the support of the AKP was related to the level of the GDP per capita; Gini coefficient and level of unemployment rate did not play important role as well. To sum up, both regression analysis and the complementary analyses did not prove that the provinces with lower level socio-economic indicators supported the AKP in parliamentary elections. Therefore, the hypothesis cannot be verified.

The future research of the support of the AKP can be based on the qualitative factors or on the combination of quantitative and qualitative factors. Despite the rejection of the hypothesis, the socio-economic factors may play some role if the research combines them with qualitative factors. The support of the AKP may be affected by political customs and ideologies (Ottomanism, Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism). In this case, the future research should be based on historical analysis of Turkish politics and ideologies. In addition, the analysis of Turkish political parties should be covered as well because the AKP was established as a party against political establishment.

Currently, after the constitutional changes approved in a referendum in 2017, the complex analysis of electoral system (in case of parliamentary and presidential elections) and its effect on the support of the ruling AKP is needed. Future research may continue current findings dealing with the effect of minorities in Turkey on the regime. Kurdish minority is the most significant in Turkey and the analysis of its electoral behavior would give us the answers to the questions of the support of the AKP. Likewise, the Alevis, a religious minority in Turkey are not insignificant. The preferences of the minorities in Turkey need to be identified and analysed. Finally, the development in Turkey has been dynamic in recent years and has a big impact on global politics. Thus, the topic is still relevant.

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