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Welfare, Corruption, and the Economic Vote of Punishment: The Turkish Case

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Abstract

Do social security and corruption control buffer electoral punishment for poor economic conditions? Previous studies have shown that both generous social security and corruption control mitigate the impact of economic conditions on incumbent votes. However, whether these two noneconomic issues lessen punishment or reward behaviours or both is unclear. Using a dataset from a 2018 post-election survey in Turkey, this study shows that social security weakens reward behaviour but not punishment behaviour, whereas corruption control weakens punishment behaviour but not reward behaviour. When economic grievances dominate public opinion, corruption control is more critical for incumbent support than social security provision.

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Introduction

Do social security and corruption control buffer electoral punishment for poor economic conditions? Previous literature on welfare and voting has suggested that generous social security can mitigate the impact of economic conditions on incumbent votes or economic voting at the macro level (Singer 2011; Park and Shin 2019) and the micro level (Fossati 2014; Singer 2013; Singer 2016). A more limited body of literature on corruption and voting has indicated that the control of corruption can reduce the tendency of economic voting (Zechmeister and Zizumbo-Colunga 2013; Klašnja and Tucker 2013). However, both the aforementioned research areas have rarely addressed which side of economic voting is mitigated, that is, whether punishment for poor economic performance becomes lenient, reward for good economic performance becomes meager, or both. Although the direct effect of social security and corruption control on incumbent support has attracted substantial interest, the present study focuses on the indirect (mediating) effects of these aspects on such support.

In particular, we argue that punishment attenuation matters more for the incumbent than reward attenuation. Although whether reward is attenuated does not significantly affect government survival, the failure in punishment attenuation most likely sweeps the incumbent from power. The 'cost of ruling' theory posits that the longer a party remains in power, the more votes it will lose in future elections because of growing voter boredom or policy failures (Nannestad and Paldam 2002; Thesen, Mortensen and Green-Pedersen 2020; Wlezien 2016; Cuzán 2015). The most crucial policy failure for the governing party concerns the national economy. In other words, the longevity of the incumbent government significantly depends on buffering the negative effects of economic fluctuations on voter support. This question is particularly

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relevant for Turkey, where the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has persisted for nearly two decades, has been experiencing economic decline and corruption allegations since 2014 while claiming credit for social security reforms. Its single party government has been associated with high clarity of responsibility (Powell and Whitten 1993), which makes it easy for the voters to attribute credit until 2014 but blame since 2014: high clarity of responsibility has been found to strengthen not only economic voting in general (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2007) but also welfare voting (Park and Shin 2019) and corruption voting (Schwindt-Bayer and Tavits 2016).

Using a dataset from a 2018 post-election survey in Turkey, this study investigates how voters' social security and corruption perceptions interact with national economic perceptions to predict incumbent support. We address certain methodological challenges. First, although the results are based on voting behaviour in a single general election, we included three additional policy issues as controls to check for the alternative possibility that not only social security and corruption control but non-economic issues in general moderate economic voting one way or another. Second, some scholars argue that partisanship directs economic evaluation rather than the opposite (Anderson, Mendes and Tverdova 2004; Evans and Andersen 2006; Evans and Pickup 2010).[1] In our cross-sectional analysis, controlling for the potential endogeneity of economic perception was not possible. However, using previous incumbent support as a control, we checked for the endogeneity of economic perception, or the effect of partisanship on economic perception and found that in the presence of partisanship control, economic perception still significantly affected incumbent support. Third, our model is flexible for the possibility of asymmetry in economic voting (Nannestad and Paldam 1997; Reidy, Suiter and Breen 2018; Kappe 2018; Nezi 2012; Stanig 2013; Maloney and Pickering 2015). When such asymmetry exists, poor economic

perceptions are more likely to affect voter decisions than good economic perceptions, thereby making voter punishment overwhelming voter rewards.

Thus, we contribute to the theory of economic voting moderation by showing which nonecomoic issues influence which side of economic voting using Turkey's case, where the government is credited and blamed for the current state of social security and corruption. The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. The following subsections review the literature to formulate the hypotheses. Subsequently, the research design section elaborates on the data and methodology. The results section presents the major findings of the logit model analysis, and the final section interprets the findings and discusses the implications thereof.

Welfare, corruption, and economic voting

Welfare

At the macro level, earlier studies have produced mixed results regarding the impact of social security conditions on economic voting (Pacek and Radcliff 1995; Palmer and Whitten 2002; Margalit 2011). However, more recent research has considered the comprehensive measures of social security and the clarity of responsibility and has shown that stronger social security protection can weaken economic voting (Singer 2011; Park and Shin 2019). At the micro level, previous studies have shown that employment insecurity can increase individual tendencies for economic voting (Fossati 2014; Singer 2013; Singer 2016). These findings suggest that individuals who benefit from social security are less likely to associate their support for the government with its economic performance than those who do not benefit from social security.

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In addition, research has also been conducted on the impact of social security reforms on voter support or turnout. These investigations have evinced mixed findings. On the one hand, some studies indicate certain effects on voter support or turnout. Voters can reward the incumbent regardless of whether the party introduced cash transfers (Zucco Jr. 2013; Díaz Cayeros, Estevez and Magaloni 2016, pp. 158-81). Conover *et al.* (2020) also showed that conditional cash transfers can increase voter turnout and votes for the incumbent party that initiated the program. On the other hand, the impact of social security reform on voter behaviour is conditional, limited, or incremental. Conditional cash transfers can only help incumbent garner votes if they enhance voter turnout (Layton and Smith 2015).[2] Food stamp programs can mobilise voters but do not necessarily convert incumbent opponents into supporters (Kogan 2021). Social assistance policies can reduce poverty and make lower-income voters less dependent on clientelistic politicians or politics in the long term (Frey 2019). According to Imai, King and Rivera (2020, p. 724) programmatic (i.e., non-clientelistic) social policies do not affect incumbent support if objective rules prevent incumbents from using discretion in implementation or if the broad support that is required for legislation does not allow any single party to claim credit for its implementation. Because extant studies on social security reforms have primarily focused on their effect on voter support, such studies have not addressed the effect of these reforms on economic voting. Accordingly, the current study addresses this research gap by investigating whether voters' social security benefits can mitigate incumbent punishment.

Corruption

The impact of corruption on incumbent support is less scrutinised and appears to be more nuanced and conditional than that of social security. Several studies have

suggested that voters blame the incumbent when they have information regarding corruption among politicians (Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2013; Costas-Pérez, Solé-Ollé and Sorribas-Navarro 2012; Klašnja, Tucker and Deegan-Krause 2014; Welch and Hibbing 1997; Ferraz and Finan 2008; Chang, Golden and Hill 2010) or when they have more ideological alternative parties to support (Charron and Bågenholm 2016).

In the context of economic voting, voters blame the incumbent for corruption to a lesser extent when their subjective or objective economic conditions (Zechmeister and Zizumbo-Colunga 2013; Klašnja and Tucker 2013; Klašnja, Lupu and Tucker 2020) or the side benefits of corruption (Klašnja, Lupu and Tucker 2020) are more favourable than unfavourable. Some studies have also shown that favourable personal economic perceptions (Chang and Kerr 2017) or the expectation of tax reductions (Pani 2011) can make voters more tolerant of corruption apparently of the incumbent. Zechmeister and Zizumbo-Colunga (2013, pp. 1195-6) argued that, in essence, good (bad) economic conditions can dissuade (assuage) voters from (into) believing that incumbent corruption is spoiling the economy and that good (bad) economic conditions can make the issue of corruption more (less) salient. Here, we recast this question by asking whether high corruption perceptions make voters hold the incumbent more accountable for poor economic performance compared to low corruption perceptions.

Asymmetry in economic voting

Prior research on the interaction effect of economic and social security/corruption evaluations on incumbent support assumes that a one-unit change in the voter's evaluation of the economy has a constant impact on incumbent support. However, some arguments suggest that the impact of economic evaluations on incumbent support is asymmetric. The grievance asymmetry hypothesis posits that poor economic

perceptions are more likely to affect voter decisions than good economic perceptions, thereby making voter punishment overwhelming voter rewards. The grievance asymmetry hypothesis is based on the empirical theory of valence asymmetry, that is, negative events/objects/situations have stronger effects on individual attitudes than positive ones (Paolini and McIntyre 2019; Frijda 1986; Fazio, Eiser and Shook 2004; Neve *et al.* 2018; Shook and Clay 2011). Systematic cross-national studies have not provided supportive evidence (Stevenson 2002; Park 2019; Duch and Stevenson 2008) whereas some (longitudinal) country studies have indicated grievance asymmetry (Nannestad and Paldam 1997; Reidy, Suiter and Breen 2018; Kappe 2018; Nezi 2012).

In addition to valence asymmetry, other studies have suggested that two types of voter heterogeneity cause economic voting asymmetry: First, political polarisation induces asymmetry in aggregate voter response: when the economy is in good shape, only the incumbent supporters reward the incumbent, whereas when the economy is in a bad shape, both the incumbent and opposition supporters punish the incumbent (Stanig 2013). Ellis and Ura (2021) also showed at the macro level that polarisation mitigated economic voting (either rewards or punishment) but did not examine the asymmetric effect. Second, economically sophisticated voters punish the incumbent for growth volatility, regardless of whether this entails a positive or negative deviation from trend growth, whereas unsophisticated voters positively (negatively) respond to positive (negative) growth (Maloney and Pickering 2015). In both accounts, negative economic conditions (or perceptions) are more strongly associated with punishment than positive economic conditions (or perceptions) are associated with rewards.

In sum, the possibility of asymmetry in economic voting must be considered, particularly 1) for single-country studies, 2) when there is political polarisation, and 3) when there is a voter sophistication gap. Our single case study shares these three

conditions. As noted earlier, the AKP has polarised voters by emphasising the differences in social cleavages to consolidate voter support, a strategy called 'cleavage enclosure' (Roberts 2014). Also, Turkish voters are likely to have more diverse levels of education and economic knowledge compared to voters in advanced democracies. In the following subsection, we provide background for the examination of social security, corruption, and economic voting in Turkey.

The Context of Economic Voting in Turkey

Welfare

The social security system has undergone major reforms under the AKP, particularly with respect to public healthcare and social assistance. First, the Health Transformation Program (HTP), which was launched in 2003, eliminated the disparities in public healthcare that had previously favoured public sector employees over those from the private sector by integrating the three health insurance organisations into the Social Security Institution [Sosyal Güvenlik Kurumu]. Previously, uninsured citizens gained access to public healthcare on the condition that they had paid the system for at least 60 days (World Bank 2010; Yasar 2011). Basic public healthcare has also expanded considerably beyond the scope of public health insurance, including the provision of free emergency healthcare, a free ambulance service, conditional cash transfers for regular check-ups for children, social services for tuberculosis (TB) patients, and improved immunisation and antenatal care services (Yılmaz 2013; Atun *et al.* 2013; World Health Organization 2012). Moreover, the HTP increased the number of healthcare beneficiaries, improved health indicators, and reduced household health expenditures (Akinci *et al.* 2012; Erus and Aktakke 2012; Tatar *et al.* 2011; Yardim,

Cilingiroglu and Yardim 2010; Yasar 2011).

Second, the AKP consistently increased social assistance as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) by three times in 14 years, that is, from 0.5% in 2002 to 1.5 in 2016, while diversifying its type.[3] However, social security expenditures primarily comprised pensions and health services, thereby favouring the 'better off' more than the 'worse off' (Üçkardeşler 2015). In addition, the share of continuous income support for social assistance increased from 35% in 2006 to 44% in 2017 (Yentürk 2018, p. 67). Although social assistance in Turkey has a smaller share of GDP than Latin American countries, according to household income data analysis, it reduced poverty and income inequality (Tekgüç 2018). In 2016, the beneficiaries of social assistance increased to 15% (3.15 million) of the 22 million households in Turkey (ASPB 2017, p. 48).

Although social assistance has been criticised for its arbitrary implementation at local administration levels (Karaman 2013, pp. 3422-3424; Erman 2016; Urhan 2018, pp. 185-188; Karadoğan 2018, pp. 218-222; Metin 2011, pp. 195-6; Özel and Yıldırım 2019), it has become more programmatic (and less clientelistic) in the long term (Öktem Kerem and Erdogan 2020). Imai, King and Rivera (2020) argued that credit for programmatic social policies is generally shared by multiple political parties. However, Turkish voters most likely attribute the credit for the current state of social security to the AKP, which retained the parliamentary majority almost without interruption until the 2018 general election.

Little research has been conducted on the impact of social security on voting behaviour in Turkey,[4] partly reflecting the dearth of such studies in general. Özel and Yıldırım (2019) showed that social assistance provision does not directly affect incumbent support; that is, only the recipients who fear a reduction in their benefits

should the incumbent lose the referendum tend to support the incumbent. Although the aforementioned investigation did not address the impact of social security on economic voting, this result indicates that social assistance provision can create a status quo wherein the recipients do not remain indebted to the incumbent, which significantly increases their benefits. Rather, only a negative expected change in social assistance, which reflects risk perceptions, affects the behaviour of recipients. Furthermore, if material benefits (e.g., social assistance) are more likely to be offered to incumbent sympathisers instead of opposition sympathisers, as revealed by Çarkoğlu and Aytaç (2015),[5] the possible effect of such benefits on voting behaviour might be limited to turnout alone rather than to a shift in party support.

Corruption

To date, limited research has been conducted on corruption voting in Turkey. In the AKP's first general election as the incumbent, both AKP supporters and opposition supporters had essentially the same assessment of the level of corruption among public officials (Rose 2008, p. 372). Although the AKP was not free from corruption allegations, its economic success helped maintain its electoral support (Gumuscu 2013, p. 233).[6] However, a major corruption investigation into government officials was conducted in December 2013, and the conversations of these officials leaked to the Internet (Göknar 2020) seriously eroded public confidence in the government. More recently, irregularities in public tenders and certain corrupt practices of AKP-connected foundations have become difficult to conceal from the public (Gürakar 2016; Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018, p. 1820; Yildirim 2016, pp. 120-127).

Political polarisation

Political polarisation in Turkey has primarily been analysed in the context of democratic backsliding (Esen and Gumuscu 2016; Somer 2019). However, its impact on voting behaviour deserves scrutiny because competitive authoritarianism, which is how the current Turkish political system is described, still derives its legitimacy from multiparty elections. Most scholars agree that the AKP has used divisive discourse and (although less often) policies to encourage political polarisation between its supporters and the opposition, which does not structurally arise from the major (centre-periphery) cleavage in Turkey (Somer 2019; Laebens and Öztürk 2021; Çakır 2020; Bakiner 2018; Selçuk and Hekimci 2020). As for Turkey's partisanship rate, the percentage of individuals who feel close to any party was the second highest at 74% in Module 4 of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (Laebens and Öztürk 2021, p. 254). Thus, advanced political polarisation in Turkey fits the assumption of Stanig's (2013) asymmetric voter response model.

Research Design

Hypotheses

The arguments in the preceding section suggest the following: 1) social security and corruption perceptions might mitigate economic voting; 2) voters might punish the incumbent party more than they reward it; and 3) social security and corruption control perceptions might increase incumbent support. Although we primarily test the first claim, we also consider the final two claims to formulate the following two hypotheses:

Punishment Attenuation (PA) Hypothesis: Social security and corruption control perceptions contribute *more* to incumbent support when voters' evaluations of the national economy are more negative than neutral.

Reward Attenuation (RA) Hypothesis: Social security and corruption control perceptions contribute *less* to incumbent support when voters' evaluations of the national economy are more positive than neutral.

Dataset

The data (N = 1,999) in this study are from the post-election survey conducted as Türkiye'nin Nabzı (Turkey's Pulse) for July 2018 by the Metropoll Opinion Poll Company (hereinafter Metropoll). Although Metropoll also conducts monthly opinion surveys that are most widely followed in Turkey, post-election surveys provide more reliable data than opinion surveys for estimating voting behaviour by asking actual voting behaviour rather than which party to vote for in the future election; opinion surveys accommodate sizable undecided voters, which only decrease right before the election day.[7] The survey used stratified probability sampling and weighting methods to identify 1,999 individuals from 26 regions of Turkey's Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS-2) system, who were interviewed in person between June 27 and July 2, 2018. For this survey, we added 10 questions of our own (including short-term and long-term economic perceptions, six policy-issue perceptions, and religiosity), to those prepared by Metropoll. Sampling weights were also used for all the analyses. The descriptive statistics are presented in Appendix 1.

Dependent variable

The binary dependent variable is *incumbent support*, which was measured by the AKP votes in the 2018 general election (i.e., 1 = a vote for the AKP; 0 = a vote for any other party; or abstention).[8] No answers were considered missing values. The AKP and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) have been virtually in coalition since 2017. The period of coalition was only one year and half before the 2018 election. Furthermore, because the MHP did not send any of its members as ministers to the government, its share of responsibility for this coalition was limited. In our preliminary analysis, we conducted a multinomial logit analysis that replaced the binary dependent variable of the support for the AKP with the multinomial dependent variable of voter choice, including all parties, abstentions, or protest votes. The coefficients for the major variables of interest, such as issue and economic perceptions, were signed in the same direction between the MHP and other opposition parties, but in the opposite direction between the MHP and the AKP. Hence, in our logit model, we coded the MHP vote as 0 for the dependent variable.

Major independent variables

Among the independent variables, the respondents' perceptions of the national economy for the past 12 months were measured on a five-point scale (i.e., 1 = 'Much worse'; 2 = 'Worse'; 3 = 'Neither better nor worse'; 4 = 'Better'; and 5 = 'Much better') using the standard economic voting question: 'In the last 12 months, did the national economy become better or worse?' For this question, 'Don't know' responses and nonresponses were treated as missing values. It should be noted that we did not adopt a continuous variable that retained five value categories. Furthermore, when we ran the logit model (without the interaction term) that changed national economic perceptions into a five-

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categorical variable (from a continuous variable), its negative categories (i.e., 'Much worse' and 'Worse') had stronger effects than its positive ones (i.e., 'Much better' and 'Better'), thus giving support to the asymmetric model. The Wald test, when applied to the aforementioned model, detected a statistically significant quadratic effect of the logit coefficient for national economic perceptions on the dependent variable.[9]

To evaluate the robustness of our finding concerning grievance asymmetry, we ran the logit model that comprised support for the AKP as the binary dependent variable and national economic perceptions as the five-category variable (i.e., five-minus-one dummy variables) by using two separate datasets: our Metropoll dataset and the Turkish dataset (N = 1,071) from Module 4 of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES); the interviews for the latter were conducted between July 23 and September 9, 2018. As shown in Figure 1, the similar results from the two datasets indicate that the grievance asymmetry is not caused by the particular conditions of the datasets. This tendency conforms to the theory of grievance asymmetry, as discussed earlier. Hence, we collapsed the categories of 'Very worse' and 'Worse' into 'Worse' and 'Better' and 'Much better' into 'Better' while renaming 'Neither better nor worse' as 'Same'.

[Figure 1 near here]

We assume that social security perceptions pertain to public healthcare and social assistance. Unemployment benefits only cover the formal sector workforce and are not relevant to informal sector workers, who constitute a third of the total workforce in Turkey.[10] Social security perceptions were thus captured by only two variables: the respondents' evaluations of public healthcare and social assistance based on a five-point scale (1 = 'Very negative'; 2 = 'Negative'; 3 = 'Neither positive nor negative'; 4 = 'Positive'; and 5 = 'Very positive'). In this case, the question was as follows: 'How do you view the current conditions in the following issues: [public healthcare/social

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assistance]?' The same five-point scale was used for corruption control ('fighting corruption'). For the robustness checks, we included three other issues, namely, transportation, education, and foreign affairs, to determine if these issues were less relevant moderating variables compared to social security and corruption perceptions.

The histogram of the respondents' evaluations of the six policy issues is illustrated in Appendix 2 and shows the higher frequencies of the more favourable evaluations of public healthcare, social assistance, and public transportation as well as the relatively even distributions of evaluations of corruption control, education, and diplomacy. Hence, we test whether only social security and corruption perceptions show moderating effects but not other policy issues that have similar frequency distributions. We further conducted a logit model (without the interaction term) that changed each of the six-issue perception variables into a five-categorical variable (from a continuous variable), which was similar to the approach for national economic perceptions. The Wald test, when applied to the aforementioned models, showed that the logistic coefficient for the evaluation of each of the six issues only had a linear effect on the dependent variable.[11]

Control variables

Among the standard demographic variables, gender was coded as 0 for men and 1 for women. Age was measured according to five age-group dummies: 18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, and ≥55. Education level was measured as a four-category variable: 1 = primary school graduate or below, 2 = middle school graduate or below, 3 = high school graduate, and 4 = university/college graduate or above. Monthly household income was initially measured with nine levels: 0–500 TL, 501–1000 TL, 1001–1500 TL, 1501–2000 TL, 2001–2500 TL, 2501–3000 TL, 3001–3500 TL, 3501–4000 TL, and ≥4001

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TL. Subsequently, it was converted into a continuous variable, with each level representing the mean range (250 TL, 750 TL, etc.). Its missing values (4.7%) were multiply imputed using 'mi' commands in STATA.[12]

Among the attitudinal and identity variables, religiosity was coded as -2 = 'Not religious', -1 = 'Slightly religious', 0 = 'Religious', 1 = 'Fairly religious', and 2 = 'Very religious' based on the responses to the question, 'Without regard to the frequency of prayer, how religious do you think you are?' Ideology was initially coded into seven categories: 1) 'Conservative/religious' (27.7%); 2) 'Nationalist' (33.6%); 3) 'Ataturkish/secular' (16.2%); 4) 'Social democratic/leftist' (9.8%); 5) 'Liberal/democrat' (3.4%); 6) 'Other' (1.6%);[13] and 7) 'Don't know' (5.5 %).[14] Religious identity was initially categorised as 1 = Alevi Muslim, 2 = Other, and 3 = No response, with Sunni Muslims as the reference category. Ethnic identity was initially coded as 1 = Kurdish, 2 = Arab, 3 = Do not care, 4 = Other, and 5 = No response, with Turkish as the reference category. For these three categorical variables, only statistically significant categories have been retained for the final analysis. By running a model that included the economic perception and control variables (without issue perception), we found conservative/religious ideology, Alevi Muslim religious identity, and Kurdish ethnic identity to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Location imposes a contextual constraint on public opinion. According to Agnew (1987), individuals with various socioeconomic attributes interact with each other before making their own decisions. As the most relevant spatial unit, 12 regional dummies were included in the model for the first level of the NUTS system (NUTS1): Istanbul, Western Marmara, Aegean, Eastern Marmara, Western Anatolia, Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, Western Black Sea, Eastern Black Sea, North Eastern

Anatolia, Central-Eastern Anatolia, and Southeastern Anatolia.[15] Istanbul was used as the reference category.

Estimation model

The hypothesis was tested using a logit model because the dependent variable was binary. In this case, when the binary variable of incumbent support is defined as Y, the probability of incumbent support under the given condition (b) is expressed as follows:

$$\text{Prob } (Y = 1|b) = \text{SUPPORT}.$$

The logarithm of the odds of SUPPORT is then obtained:

$$\text{Ln } [\text{SUPPORT} / (1 - \text{SUPPORT})].$$

The final logit estimation model, which corresponds to the interaction models in Table 1, takes the following form:

$$\text{Ln } [Support / (1 - Support)] = \alpha + \beta_1 * (EconomyWorse) + \beta_2 * (EconomyBetter) + \beta_3 * (Issue\ Perception) + \beta_4 * (EconomyWorse * Issue\ Perception) + \beta_5 * (EconomyBetter * Issue\ Perception) + \mathbf{X\beta}$$

where α is the intercept, β_k are the k coefficients to be estimated, and $\mathbf{X\beta}$ represents the matrix of the control variables and their coefficients. The EconomySame dummy is the reference category for the three-category variable of national economy perceptions.

Results

Grievance asymmetry and economic voting attenuation

Table 1 presents the summary estimation results of the logit model by issue. Because

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substantial correlations were observed between issue perceptions ranging from 0.580 (transportation vs. corruption) to 0.819 (health vs. assistance) (see the correlation matrix in Appendix 3), we entered a one-issue perception for each estimation. Appendix 4 presents the full results. The odd-numbered models are base models, and the even-numbered models are interaction models.

[Table 1 near here]

The base models point to the asymmetric effect of economic perceptions on incumbent support. In other words, 'worse' perceptions have a more negative (and thus stronger) effect than the 'same' perceptions ($p < 0.01$), whereas the effect of 'better' perceptions does not differ from that of the 'same' perceptions ($p > 0.10$). These findings support the argument regarding grievance asymmetry, although the lack of a time component in our dataset precludes an examination of the effect of political polarisation in accordance with Stanig (2013). The results further indicate that voters attribute the credit (or blame) for the current state of policy issues to the AKP, which was ruled in the form of a single-party government for 16 years before forming a coalition with the MHP in 2018.

For the control variables (Appendix 4), the coefficient estimates for the standard demographic variables were largely statistically insignificant: only education appears to be negatively associated with incumbent support. The coefficient estimates for the attitudinal and identity variables, however, yielded more significant results. Conservative-religious ideology and Alevi Muslim religious identity had the strongest effects (positive and negative, respectively) on incumbent support, which indicates the alignment of polarisation over the AKP. At the same time, religiosity (or how religious the voter is) did not have any effect on incumbent support. These results provide support for the argument that the AKP represents political Islam but not necessarily

piety (Korkut and Sarfati 2020; Ciftci, Wuthrich and Shamaileh 2022). Kurdish ethnic identity also had a negative but weaker impact than Alevi Muslim religious identity, which comports with the argument that the AKP can garner votes from religious Sunni Muslim Kurds.

Interaction effects

Even numbered models display the coefficient for the interaction of issue and 'better' ('worse') economic perceptions when the reference category of economic perceptions are the 'same'. In the logit model, because the effect of its independent variables on the probability of the dependent variable taking a value of one is nonlinear, the interaction effect of issue and economic perceptions can vary depending on the specific values of the two variables (see Figure 2).

[Figure 2 near here]

To determine whether the average marginal effect of issue perception on the probability of incumbent support differs across the three levels of economic perceptions, we followed the approach proposed by Long and Mustillo (Forthcoming), which uses the average discrete change (ADC), that is, the average of the discrete changes computed conditionally on the observed values of the xs for each observation. First, we calculated the ADC of the issue perceptions computed for each observation, in which the observed value increased by a value of 1 from 1 to 5.[16] Subsequently, the ADC when economic perceptions were 'worse' was compared to the ADC when these perceptions are the 'same' for the PA hypothesis. Similarly, the ADC when economic perceptions are 'better' was compared to the ADC for when these perceptions are the 'same' for the RA hypothesis.

Table 2 presents the results of these comparisons by issue. Based on the previous argument, we assume that the PA hypothesis is supported if the difference between the two ADCs is positive, whereas the RA hypothesis holds if the difference is negative. The results show that the PA hypothesis is only supported for corruption control ($p = 0.07$), whereas the RA hypothesis holds for public healthcare ($p = 0.09$) and social assistance ($p = 0.04$). In other words, the relevance of corruption control increases for incumbent support when economic perceptions are poor; the relevance of public healthcare and social assistance reduces for incumbent support when economic perceptions are good. The perceptions of the other issues attenuated neither punishment nor rewards. For the robustness check see the Supplementary File.

[Table 2 near here]

Conclusion

We addressed the question of whether social security and corruption control affect economic voting. In brief, when economic grievances dominate public opinion, controlling corruption is more crucial for incumbent support than the provision of social security. The results herein were obtained even when other policy issues (such as transportation, education, and foreign policy) were not associated with either punishment attenuation or reward attenuation. Thus, this research adds to the theory of economic voting moderation that builds on welfare voting and corruption voting, although against a backdrop of political polarisation and diverse voter sophistication.

The results are consistent with the argument that social security mitigates economic voting (Fossati 2014; Singer 2011; Singer 2013; Singer 2016; Park and Shin 2019); our results also resonate with the finding that social security reforms fail to convert government opponents to supporters, which suggests their limited effect on

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rewarding behaviour (Kogan 2021). The perceptions of social assistance and public healthcare matter less for incumbent support when voter evaluations of the national economy are more positive than neutral. In particular, because social assistance primarily targets individuals without jobs, greater employment opportunities associated with favourable economic perceptions can reduce the importance of such assistance. However, the absence of PA betrays the expectation that social security benefits lessen voter grievances over the economy. These results may be partly because the social security benefits per recipient did not increase during economic downturns (while the number of recipients did). Similarly, another possibility is that the social security benefits created a status quo by having become a part of the recipients' household income (Özel and Yıldırım 2019). In this regard, any worsening economic conditions only erode their benefits.

The finding that corruption control perceptions soften punishment but not reward makes intuitive sense even more if we imagine the converse situation, that is, perceived corruption weakens incumbent support when economic perceptions are more unfavourable than neutral. This finding is consistent with other related studies (Zechmeister and Zizumbo-Colunga 2013; Klašnja and Tucker 2013; Klašnja, Lupu and Tucker 2020) as well as earlier evidence that greater income inequality can influence economic voting (Goubin *et al.* 2020; Hicks, Jacobs and Matthews 2016). This further suggests that a sense of injustice or relative deprivation can encourage voter punishment for poor economic conditions. In contrast, it appears less plausible that individuals are significantly more tolerant of corruption when their economic perceptions are more favourable than neutral, although the difference between favourable and unfavourable (thus not neutral) economic perceptions should make a difference in corruption tolerance (Klašnja, Lupu and Tucker 2020).

Our findings are particularly relevant for the incumbent AKP (in a virtual coalition with the MHP) in Turkey. Turkey's GDP per capita in terms of dollars has been continuously declining since 2014, especially since 2018. The AKP is struggling to hold its electoral base by polarising public opinions into government and opposition camps. Polarisation depends on the cleavage enclosure (Roberts 2014) and non-materialistic political values. Thus, it loses its influence when voters prioritise materialistic economic issues, particularly when their purchasing power is eroded by rising inflation fuelled by declining values of their domestic currency. In this case, the AKP will find it difficult to retain its supporters with social assistance when the economy is struggling, and political corruption is rampant. For example, in the 2019 general local elections, the AKP lost its Istanbul metropolitan government, which is known for its extensive social assistance program (Urhan *et al.* 2015), to the opposition party candidate who promised to eradicate corruption (Esen and Gumuscu 2019). This outcome might serve as a reminder that, under economic difficulties, the issue of corruption resonates with voters more strongly than that of social security.

The conclusions offer avenue for future research. First, our case showed that social security or corruption control attenuated economic voting that was asymmetric. This invites a question of whether asymmetric economic voting is more susceptible to this attenuation effect than symmetric economic voting. At the same time, we have to be aware of the possibility that salient policy issues make economic voting asymmetric. Second, the impact of polarisation on economic voting attenuation and asymmetry (Ellis and Ura 2021; Stanig 2013) deserves further scrutiny. A sophisticated measurement of individual partisanship level might help to analyse whether strong partisanship mitigates rewards and punishment alike.

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Notes

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[1] In response, conventional economic voting scholars have shown supporting evidence for economic voting obtained when controlling for the effect of incumbent support on economic perception (Lewis-Beck 2006; Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2011; Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2012; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2009; Nadeau, Lewis-Beck and Bélanger 2013; Lacy and Christenson 2017).

[2] There is evidence that conditional cash transfers increase all forms of political participation, including voting (Schober 2019).

[3] Social assistance categories in Turkey include housing, childbirth, education, family, health, disability, as well as widows and families of conscripted soldiers and veterans (Özel and Yıldırım 2019, p. 9; Appendix).

[4] For a study on social assistance and vote buying, see Çarkoğlu and Aytaç (2015).

[5] This finding is consistent with the literature on clientelism.

[6] A typical justification by AKP supporters is expressed as follows: 'They steal but work' [*Çalıyorlar ama çalışıyorlar*].

[7] https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2021/03/02/what-2020s-election-poll-errors-tell-us-about-the-accuracy-of-issue-polling/

[8] For voting choices in the 2018 general election, Metropoll asked the respondents about which electoral alliance and/or political party they voted for. The electoral law, amended prior to the 2018 election, allows one to vote for an electoral alliance or a political party even if the party is in an electoral alliance. The dataset shows that all but two respondents identified the electoral alliance and as well as the party that they voted for. This means that although some respondents might have voted for an electoral alliance, they had a clear party preference.

[9] We used the Contrast command (for orthogonal polynomial contrasts) of STATA, as suggested by Jeph Herrin (April 2014, Posts: 191, http://www.statalist.org/forums/forum/general-stata-discussion/general/1335688-regression-with-continuous-dependent-variable-with-ordinal-independent-variables).

Although the dependent variable for the logit model is the log of odds (logit), in practice, the impact of a change in a continuous variable on the logit is considerably similar to the impact of the same change on the probability.

[10] http://www.sgk.gov.tr/wps/portal/sgk/tr/calisan/kayitdisi_istihdam/kayitdisi_istihdam_oranlari /kayitdisi_istihdam_orani.

[11] The results with the five-categorical variables are available from the author upon request.

[12] Employment status was not included because only 4.2% of the respondents answered 'unemployed' to the question on the type of their job.

[13] The 'other' category consists of 'Center-right/secular' and 'Kurdish nationalist'.

[14] In parentheses are the sample weighted percentages.

[15] Hence, we followed the estimation model by Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu (2007, pp. 177-87), which used NUTS1 as the spatial unit.

[16] According to Long and Mustillo (Forthcoming), '[t]he ADC for x_k in group g is the average of the discrete changes for each observation in the group:

$$\mathrm{ADC}^g_{x_k} = \frac{1}{N_g} \sum_{i \in g} \frac{\Delta \pi (\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{x}_i, g)}{\Delta x_k (start_i \rightarrow end_i)}$$

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Table 1. Logit model estimation results for incumbent support by issue perceived

	Health		Assistance		Corruption		Transportation		Education		Foreign	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Economic perceptions:	−1.392**	−2.117***	−1.346**	−1.117	−0.982**	−2.608**	−1.422**	−1.956	−0.903**	−2.226**	−0.942**	−1.331
Worse	(0.242)	(1.132)	(0.253)	(1.089)	(0.249)	(0.649)	(0.244)	(1.125)	(0.257)	(0.624)	(0.261)	(0.742)
Same	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Better	0.599**	2.329*	0.790***	2.629**	0.778***	0.570	0.781***	1.292	0.727***	0.0630	0.500*	0.435
	(0.276)	(1.198)	(0.279)	(1.073)	(0.280)	(0.738)	(0.269)	(1.155)	(0.265)	(0.700)	(0.267)	(0.816)
Issue perceptions:	1.018***	1.084***	0.882***	1.068***	0.689***	0.439***	0.889***	0.874***	0.751***	0.503***	0.935***	0.872***
5 levels	(0.104)	(0.235)	(0.0859)	(0.237)	(0.0746)	(0.160)	(0.0924)	(0.223)	(0.0725)	(0.151)	(0.0912)	(0.167)
EconWorse *Issue		0.170		−0.0591		0.528***		0.128		0.403**		0.114
		(0.284)		(0.277)		(0.192)		(0.267)		(0.183)		(0.217)
EconSame* Issue	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.

EconBetter*Issue	−0.406	−0.456*	0.0736	−0.117	0.190	0.0217						
	(0.292)	(0.267)	(0.207)	(0.273)	(0.193)	(0.216)						
Observations	1674	1674	1616	1616	1594	1594	1672	1672	1671	1671	1646	1646

Notes: Summary estimation results of the logit model by issue. Appendix 4 provides the full results. The entries are logit model coefficients. Standard errors are shown in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10, ^{**}p < 0.05, ^{***}p < 0.10$.

Table 2. Tests of the attenuation hypotheses using the difference between the two average discrete changes (ADC1–ADC2)

Issue	Attenuated Behavior	ADC1 Worse	ADC1 Better	ADC2 Same	ADC1–ADC2 Difference	p-value
Health	Punishment	0.162		0.148	0.014	0.553
	Reward		0.105	0.148	−0.043	0.087*
Assistance	Punishment	0.129		0.143	−0.014	0.538
	Reward		0.096	0.143	−0.047	0.035**
Corruption	Punishment	0.114		0.072	0.042	0.071*
	Reward		0.085	0.072	0.013	0.654

Transportation	Punishment	0.135		0.133	0.002	0.951
	Reward		0.114	0.133	−0.019	0.485
Education	Punishment	0.113		0.083	0.03	0.159
	Reward		0.106	0.083	0.023	0.305
Foreign	Punishment	0.12		0.12	0	0.999
	Reward		0.123	0.12	0.003	0.818

Notes: Two-sided tests using estimates from the interaction models. $^{*}p < 0.10,^{**}p < 0.05$.

Figure 1. Replication of grievance asymmetry: Metropoll and CSES samples.
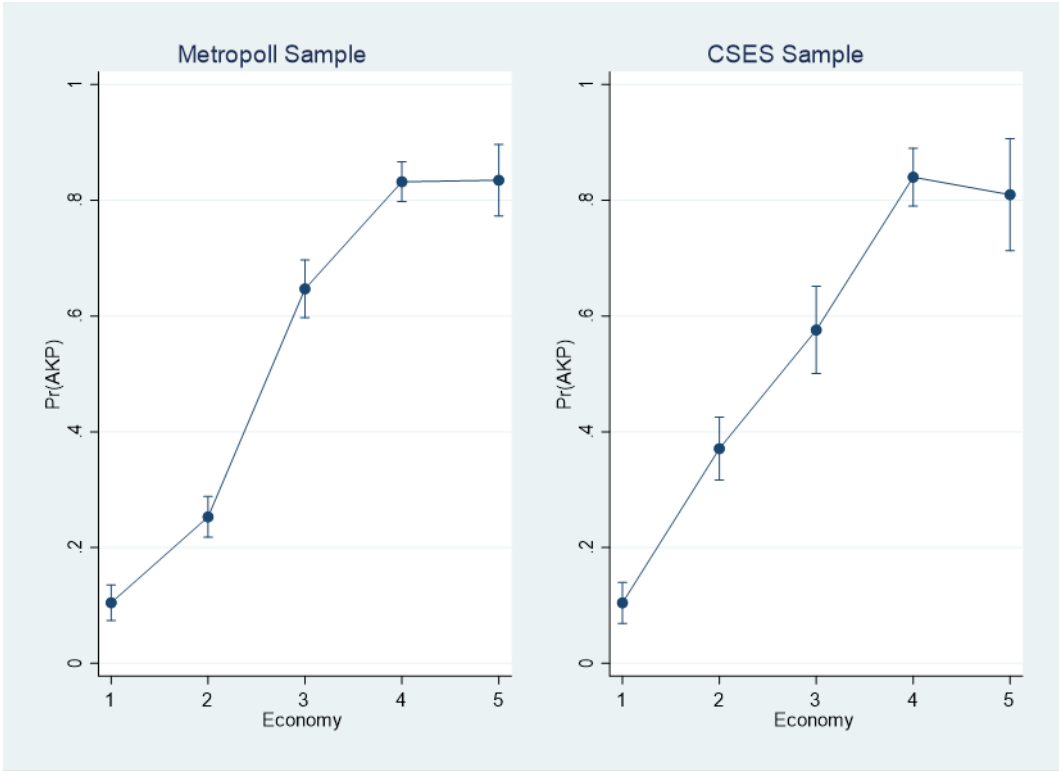
Figure 2. Impact of perceived policy issues on incumbent support by economic perception.
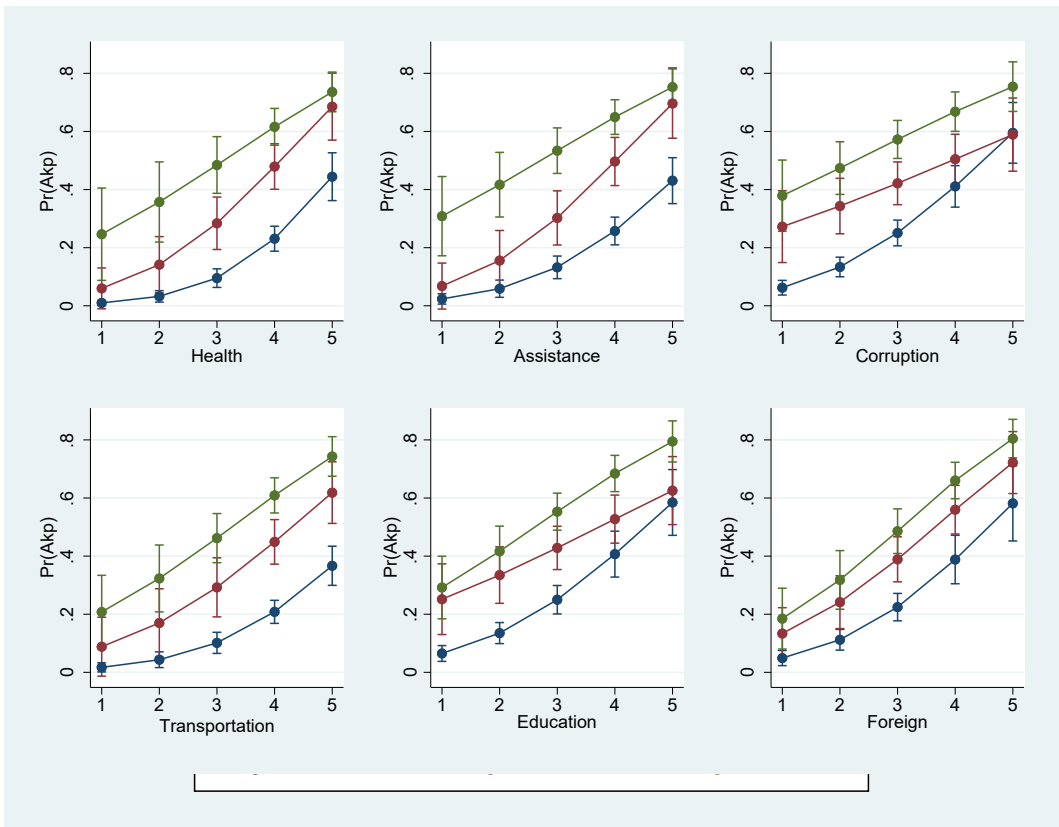
Appendix 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
AKP support	1,999	0.469	0.499	0	1
Health	1,933	3.647	1.331	1	5
Assistance	1,860	3.541	1.342	1	5
Corruption	1,840	2.867	1.495	1	5
Transportation	1,928	3.749	1.272	1	5
Education	1,927	2.911	1.485	1	5
Foreign	1,898	3.072	1.479	1	5
EconomyWorse	1,912	0.506	0.500	0	1
EconomySame	1,912	0.185	0.389	0	1
EconomyBetter	1,912	0.309	0.462	0	1
Gender	1,999	1.534	0.499	1	2
Income	1,905	2396.194	986.259	250	4250
Religiosity	1,807	3.175	0.871	1	5
Age_1	1,999	0.210	0.407	0	1
Age_2	1,999	0.280	0.449	0	1
Age_3	1,999	0.237	0.425	0	1
Age_4	1,999	0.153	0.360	0	1
Age_5	1,999	0.120	0.325	0	1
Education_1	1,999	0.394	0.489	0	1
Education_2	1,999	0.426	0.495	0	1

Education_3	1,999	0.180	0.384	0	1
Alevi	1,999	0.050	0.217	0	1
Kurdish	1,999	0.142	0.349	0	1

Appendix 2. Histogram of the Respondents' Evaluations of the Six Policy Issues
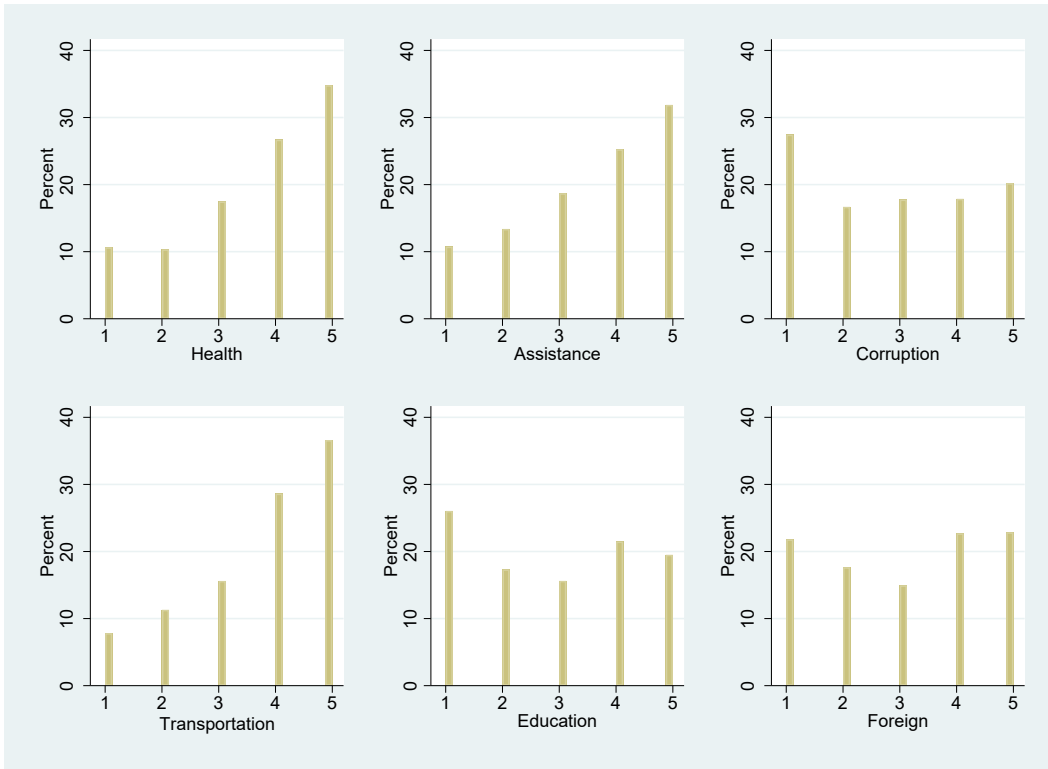
Appendix 3. Correlation Matrix ($N = 1{,}478$)

	AKP Vote	Income	Religiosity	Economy	Health	Assistance	Transportation	Education	Foreign	Corruption
AKP vote	1.000									
Income	0.017	1.000								
Religiosity	0.256	0.029	1.000							
Economy	0.581	−0.045	0.191	1.000						
Health	0.604	0.103	0.242	0.471	1.000					
Assistance	0.619	0.088	0.244	0.490	0.819	1.000				
Transportation	0.562	0.089	0.216	0.427	0.768	0.798	1.000			
Education	0.663	−0.066	0.262	0.591	0.615	0.644	0.583	1.000		

Foreign	0.702	0.022	0.276	0.584	0.689	0.726	0.654	0.775	1.000	
Corruption	0.623	0.065	0.250	0.547	0.613	0.630	0.580	0.721	0.768	1.000

Appendix 4. Logit Model Estimation Results for Incumbent Support by Issue Perceived

	Health		Assistance		Corruption		Transportation		Education		Foreign	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Economic perceptions:	−1.392***	−2.117*	−1.346***	−1.117	−0.982***	−2.608***	−1.422***	−1.956*	−0.903***	−2.226***	−0.942***	−1.331*
Worse	(0.242)	(1.132)	(0.253)	(1.089)	(0.249)	(0.649)	(0.244)	(1.125)	(0.257)	(0.624)	(0.261)	(0.742)
Same	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Better	0.599**	2.329*	0.790***	2.629**	0.778***	0.570	0.781***	1.292	0.727***	0.0630	0.500*	0.435
	(0.276)	(1.198)	(0.279)	(1.073)	(0.280)	(0.738)	(0.269)	(1.155)	(0.265)	(0.700)	(0.267)	(0.816)
Issue perceptions:	1.018***	1.084***	0.882***	1.068***	0.689***	0.439***	0.889***	0.874***	0.751***	0.503***	0.935***	0.872***
5 levels	(0.104)	(0.235)	(0.0859)	(0.237)	(0.0746)	(0.160)	(0.0924)	(0.223)	(0.0725)	(0.151)	(0.0912)	(0.167)

EconWorse*Issue		0.170		−0.0591		0.528***		0.128		0.403**		0.114
		(0.284)		(0.277)		(0.192)		(0.267)		(0.183)		(0.217)
EconSame*Issue	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
EconBetter*Issue		−0.406		−0.456*		0.0736		−0.117		0.190		0.0217
		(0.292)		(0.267)		(0.207)		(0.273)		(0.193)		(0.216)
Gender	−0.0587	−0.0745	−0.170	−0.170	−0.0193	−0.000735	−0.0787	−0.0811	−0.137	−0.161	−0.156	−0.161
	(0.201)	(0.200)	(0.199)	(0.198)	(0.199)	(0.199)	(0.197)	(0.198)	(0.199)	(0.197)	(0.205)	(0.204)
Age: 18–24	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
25–34	0.469*	0.485*	0.441	0.440	0.412	0.431	0.433	0.434	0.430	0.454	0.320	0.320
	(0.279)	(0.270)	(0.274)	(0.271)	(0.295)	(0.289)	(0.276)	(0.270)	(0.283)	(0.282)	(0.284)	(0.283)

35–44	0.330	0.348	0.384	0.402	0.610**	0.617**	0.530*	0.534*	0.398	0.397	0.538*	0.537*
	(0.292)	(0.286)	(0.286)	(0.284)	(0.293)	(0.287)	(0.282)	(0.278)	(0.296)	(0.293)	(0.299)	(0.298)
45–54	0.432	0.470	0.274	0.304	0.351	0.463	0.406	0.410	0.363	0.398	0.412	0.430
	(0.311)	(0.306)	(0.313)	(0.308)	(0.348)	(0.345)	(0.310)	(0.306)	(0.332)	(0.331)	(0.333)	(0.332)
≥55	0.338	0.402	0.460	0.508	0.429	0.508	0.365	0.386	0.326	0.369	0.346	0.359
	(0.347)	(0.343)	(0.340)	(0.340)	(0.361)	(0.355)	(0.334)	(0.332)	(0.347)	(0.347)	(0.349)	(0.350)
Education: Middle school or below	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
High school	−0.428**	−0.436**	−0.522***	−0.519**	−0.290	−0.273	−0.474**	−0.468**	−0.266	−0.236	−0.391*	−0.387*
	(0.201)	(0.200)	(0.202)	(0.203)	(0.206)	(0.206)	(0.203)	(0.202)	(0.203)	(0.201)	(0.210)	(0.210)
University or above	−0.583**	−0.578**	−0.690**	−0.669**	−0.220	−0.207	−0.455*	−0.448*	−0.292	−0.251	−0.324	−0.320

(0.284)	(0.279)	(0.279)	(0.274)	(0.270)	(0.271)	(0.256)	(0.254)	(0.282)	(0.281)	(0.274)	(0.274)

Monthly household income: 10 levels

0.000144	0.000165	0.000103	0.000118	0.0000881	0.0000770	0.000140	0.000143	0.000233*	0.000234*	0.000134	0.000136
(0.000128)	(0.000126)	(0.000123)	(0.000122)	(0.000129)	(0.000130)	(0.000129)	(0.000129)	(0.000135)	(0.000136)	(0.000142)	(0.000143)

Subjective religiosity: 5 levels

0.113	0.105	0.179	0.176	0.197	0.194	0.153	0.151	0.152	0.142	0.191	0.184
(0.144)	(0.140)	(0.137)	(0.136)	(0.139)	(0.137)	(0.142)	(0.141)	(0.137)	(0.137)	(0.146)	(0.145)

Ideology: Conservative-religious

1.947***	1.931***	1.907***	1.893***	2.163***	2.154***	1.981***	1.978***	1.908***	1.923***	1.905***	1.894***
(0.233)	(0.236)	(0.241)	(0.242)	(0.244)	(0.244)	(0.233)	(0.233)	(0.242)	(0.241)	(0.247)	(0.246)

Religious identity: Alevi Muslim	−1.826***	−1.729***	−1.839***	−1.766***	−1.911***	−1.843***	−1.847***	−1.827***	−1.940***	−1.888***	−1.811***	−1.806***
	(0.599)	(0.614)	(0.615)	(0.629)	(0.573)	(0.593)	(0.601)	(0.603)	(0.618)	(0.618)	(0.570)	(0.574)
Ethnic identity: Kurdish	−0.550*	−0.497*	−0.336	−0.293	−0.572*	−0.568*	−0.474*	−0.454	−0.558*	−0.525*	−0.457	−0.447
	(0.287)	(0.290)	(0.301)	(0.304)	(0.310)	(0.312)	(0.278)	(0.283)	(0.300)	(0.298)	(0.306)	(0.303)
Regional dummy: Istanbul	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Western Marmara	−0.127	−0.109	−0.0485	−0.0110	0.000604	0.157	0.174	0.181	0.323	0.418	0.253	0.279
	(0.406)	(0.409)	(0.391)	(0.401)	(0.396)	(0.412)	(0.380)	(0.383)	(0.400)	(0.402)	(0.396)	(0.400)
Aegean	−0.632*	−0.601*	−0.913***	−0.873**	−0.426	−0.530	−0.478	−0.474	−0.434	−0.486	0.157	0.141
	(0.332)	(0.331)	(0.346)	(0.349)	(0.350)	(0.343)	(0.340)	(0.340)	(0.349)	(0.348)	(0.364)	(0.362)

Eastern Marmara	−0.320	−0.278	−0.267	−0.247	−0.186	−0.0991	−0.0556	−0.0828	0.00192	−0.00819	0.103	0.120
	(0.373)	(0.359)	(0.355)	(0.342)	(0.390)	(0.387)	(0.344)	(0.340)	(0.369)	(0.380)	(0.412)	(0.417)
Western Anatolia	−0.829**	−0.754*	−0.877**	−0.820**	−0.942**	−0.925**	−0.744*	−0.731*	−0.704*	−0.731*	−0.503	−0.509
	(0.416)	(0.408)	(0.410)	(0.398)	(0.412)	(0.405)	(0.397)	(0.395)	(0.427)	(0.425)	(0.380)	(0.380)
Mediterranean	0.468	0.494	0.106	0.148	0.254	0.277	0.458	0.464	0.266	0.255	0.441	0.443
	(0.381)	(0.378)	(0.376)	(0.382)	(0.426)	(0.426)	(0.374)	(0.375)	(0.399)	(0.403)	(0.415)	(0.416)
Central Anatolia	−1.012*	−1.034**	−1.108**	−1.124**	−0.596	−0.623	−0.683	−0.723	−0.868	−0.906*	−1.061**	−1.076**
	(0.537)	(0.519)	(0.516)	(0.506)	(0.559)	(0.526)	(0.530)	(0.520)	(0.537)	(0.528)	(0.537)	(0.531)
Western Black Sea	−0.229	−0.181	−0.334	−0.266	−0.443	−0.443	−0.437	−0.409	−0.320	−0.346	0.169	0.161
	(0.468)	(0.481)	(0.415)	(0.416)	(0.426)	(0.432)	(0.490)	(0.490)	(0.452)	(0.461)	(0.440)	(0.441)
Eastern Black Sea	−0.411	−0.388	−0.853	−0.795	−0.435	−0.461	−0.138	−0.169	0.0890	0.0750	0.0557	0.0428

	(0.652)	(0.617)	(0.630)	(0.594)	(0.539)	(0.537)	(0.587)	(0.583)	(0.490)	(0.509)	(0.573)	(0.578)
North Eastern Anatolia	1.320***	1.394***	0.357	0.386	0.793	0.656	0.836*	0.833*	0.489	0.444	0.567	0.556
	(0.503)	(0.531)	(0.479)	(0.492)	(0.515)	(0.516)	(0.471)	(0.478)	(0.487)	(0.486)	(0.489)	(0.486)
Central-Eastern Anatolia	0.467	0.375	−0.390	−0.372	−0.293	−0.454	−0.0507	−0.0626	−0.336	−0.442	−0.281	−0.289
	(0.683)	(0.712)	(0.715)	(0.725)	(0.727)	(0.718)	(0.688)	(0.696)	(0.667)	(0.653)	(0.722)	(0.713)
Southeastern Anatolia	0.465	0.444	0.148	0.146	−0.0886	−0.0894	0.145	0.119	0.0337	−0.00441	0.217	0.215
	(0.621)	(0.658)	(0.572)	(0.595)	(0.626)	(0.645)	(0.576)	(0.588)	(0.563)	(0.569)	(0.670)	(0.675)
Constant	−5.171***	−5.474***	−4.284***	−5.083***	−3.836***	−3.031***	−4.972***	−4.916***	−4.025***	−3.101***	−4.683***	−4.435***
	(0.795)	(1.154)	(0.727)	(1.049)	(0.680)	(0.769)	(0.794)	(1.160)	(0.762)	(0.810)	(0.855)	(0.910)

| Observations | 1674 | 1674 | 1616 | 1616 | 1594 | 1594 | 1672 | 1672 | 1671 | 1671 | 1646 | 1646 |

Appendix 5. Tests of the attenuation hypotheses: results from interaction models with partisanship and economic baseline perception controls

Issue	AB	Base		Control Partisanship		Economic		Partisanship & Econ.	
		Dif.	P-value	Dif.	P-value	Dif.	P-value	Dif.	P-value
Health	P	0.014	0.553	0.027	0.265	0.014	0.509	0.023	0.26
	R	-0.043	0.087*	-0.018	0.533	-0.039	0.109	-0.019	0.461
Assistance	P	-0.014	0.538	0.027	0.195	-0.01	0.619	0.019	0.27
	R	-0.047	0.035**	0	0.99	-0.043	0.032**	-0.008	0.672
Corruption	P	0.042	0.071*	0.046	0.017**	0.039	0.034**	0.039	0.016**
	R	0.013	0.654	0.035	0.105	0.007	0.743	0.026	0.158
Transport.	P	0.002	0.951	0.016	0.474	0.012	0.655	0.015	0.438
	R	-0.019	0.485	-0.006	0.811	-0.008	0.782	-0.003	0.885
Education	P	0.03	0.159	0.019	0.238	0.033	0.079*	0.018	0.224
	R	0.023	0.305	0.019	0.308	0.026	0.187	0.021	0.224
Foreign	P	0	0.999	0.022	0.134	0.001	0.922	0.016	0.21
	R	0.003	0.818	0.021	0.215	-0.001	0.952	0.012	0.422

Notes: The interaction effects were estimated in the same manner as in Table 2 using the ADC. AB = Attenuated Behavior. P = Punishment. R = Reward.

*$p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$.

Supplementary File

Robustness check

We admit that this cross-sectional analysis does not control for the possibility of reverse causality, wherein government supporters tend to perceive economic and policy issue conditions more favourably compared to government non-supporters. To check for this reverse causality, we apply two separate measures. First, it is conventional to use previous party vote as a control for partisanship to address endogeneity concerns, as shown by Klašnja, Tucker and Deegan-Krause (2014); Lacy and Christenson (2017); Lewis-Beck and Martini (2020). The variable for previous incumbent support reflects the voter's party choice in the general elections held in November 2015 and was coded as 1 = AKP and 0 = otherwise, including non-responses. While in general previous incumbent support is an appropriate control for the impact of partisanship, it can sweep away the effects of the other covariates, especially when partisanship is very strong; our sample weighted estimation shows that out of 711 respondents who voted for the AKP in 2018, 655 (92.1%) had voted for the AKP in 2015, whereas out of 1229 respondents who did not vote for the AKP in 2018, 164 (13.3%) had voted for the AKP in 2015.

Second, although the economic perception variable pertains to perceived change in the last 12 months, there can be baseline differences in economic evaluation (Gerber and Huber 2010). The respondent's evaluation of earlier years that forms baseline perception may affect the impact of the perceived change in the last 12 months on incumbent support, especially because the AKP government has continued since 2002. We captured the baseline differences in individual evaluative criteria using economic perception over the last five years. The respondents' perceptions of the national economy for the past five years were initially measured on a five-point scale (i.e., 1 = 'Much worse'; 2 = 'Worse'; 3 = 'Neither better nor worse'; 4 = 'Better'; and 5 = 'Much

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better') and then recoded into a three-category variable: (i.e., 1 = 'Worse'; 2 = 'Same';
3 = 'Better').

We ran three models that added, respectively, (1) partisanship (incumbent
support in the 2015 election), (2) economic perception baseline (for the last five years),
and (3) both variables to the original non-interaction models shown in Table 1. We then
found that economic perception for the last 12 months and every policy issue perception
remained statistically significant. (The estimation results are available from the author
upon request.) We then ran interaction models with the same controls to test the
hypotheses. The results are summarised in Appendix 5, where the first column
reproduced the results of the original models for comparison. First, punishment
attenuation by corruption control was confirmed in all three control models. Second,
reward attenuation by social assistance was confirmed in the economic perception
baseline control model, but not in the other two models that included partisanship
control, whereas reward attenuation by public healthcare was not supported in any
control model. The lack of punishment attenuation in the social security model was
consistent with earlier results. Third, punishment attenuation by education was found to
be statistically significant in the economic baseline control model but only at the 0.10
level.

In sum, the robustness check confirmed the earlier finding that corruption
control perception attenuates punishment; it provided partial support for the earlier
finding that social security perception attenuates rewarding behaviour. Partisanship
might have been associated with the tendency for social security perception to neutralise
the effect of favourable economic perception on incumbent support: previous non-
supporters might have been less likely than previous supporters to attribute credit to the
incumbent for social security when their economic perception was favourable.

[Appendix 5 near here]