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Abstract

Can we argue that pressures generated from grassroots politics are responsible for the rapid expansion and ethnically/racially uneven distribution of social assistance programs in emerging economies? This article analyzes the Turkish case and shows that social assistance programs in Turkey are directed disproportionately to the Kurdish minority and to the Kurdish region of Turkey, especially to the internally displaced Kurds in urban and metropolitan areas. The article analyzes a cross-sectional dataset generated by a 10,386-informant stratified random sampling survey and controls for possibly intervening socioeconomic factors and neighborhood-level fixed-effects. The results show that high ethnic disparity in social assistance is not due to higher poverty among Kurds. Rather, Kurdish ethnic identity is the main determinant of the access to social assistance. This result yields substantive support to argue that the Turkish government uses social assistance to contain the Kurdish unrest in Turkey. The Turkish government seems to give social assistance not simply where the people become poor, but where the poor become politicized. This provides support for Fox Piven and Cloward's thesis that relief for the poor is driven by social unrest, rather than social need. The article concludes that similar hypotheses may hold true for other emerging economies, where similar types of social assistance programs have recently expanded significantly and have been directed to ethnic/racial groups.

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Introduction

During the last decade, Turkey has drastically expanded means-tested social assistance and free health care programs for the poor, sharply increasing the number of beneficiaries and the share of government budgets allocated. This has included dramatic increases in free health care, conditional cash transfers, food stamps, housing, education, and disability aid for the poor. The most extensive social assistance program in Turkey is the Green Card (*Yeşil Kart*) program, a means-tested free health care program for the poor, which was introduced in 1992. Administered by the Ministry of Health, this program has grown considerably during the 2000s, eventually covering 12 percent of the population. Similarly, the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity has significantly expanded education and health conditional cash transfer programs, food stamps, housing, and education aid during the 2000s. In 2009, conditional cash transfers covered one million beneficiaries with health-based conditions and 2.1 million with education-based conditions. Overall, between 2003 and 2009, total social expenditures as percentage of the GDP increased by 85 percent, free health care card (Green Card) program expenditures by 115 percent, education-based conditional cash transfer by 201 percent, health-based conditional cash transfer by 313 percent, food stamps by 422 percent, housing aid by 2500 percent, education aid by 772 percent and disability aid by 1034 percent¹. In terms of coverage, the percentage of Green Card holders increased by 27 percent between 2004 and 2009, education-based conditional cash transfer by 178 percent, health-based conditional cash transfer by 197 percent, housing aid 903 percent, and disability aid by 277 percent.² In 2011, the Ministry of Family and Social Policy was established to administer all central government programs and to introduce new social assistance benefits. Furthermore, there has been a proliferation of social assistance programs implemented by municipalities in almost every city.³

As I will illustrate in this article, aside from this rapid expansion, social assistance programs are directed disproportionately at the Kurdish minority and to the Kurdish region of Turkey, particularly to the internally displaced Kurds in urban and metropolitan areas. This disparity cannot be explained by higher levels of poverty among the Kurds. Rather, I suggest considering the impact of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey in order to explain the striking ethnic disparity in the government's provision of social assistance. My findings suggest that the Turkish government uses social assistance to contain the ongoing Kurdish unrest, which has become highly threatening with the participation of impoverished Kurds in urban slums.

The expansion of the social assistance in Turkey is part of a global tendency. Over the last decade, emerging economies⁴—including Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, India, China, Indonesia and Turkey—have led the global rise of social assistance programs by

rebuilding their welfare systems upon such programs.⁵ It is important to note that these countries did not follow in the footsteps of the Western world, but instead invented new forms of social assistance programs, which then spread to Western countries and low-income countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America through World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies.⁶ Rapid expansion of conditional cash transfer programs that require the beneficiaries to participate in education or health-related public programs are good examples of this trend. *The Economist* described the Brazilian conditional cash transfer program *Bolsa Família* as an “anti-poverty scheme invented in Latin America” which “is winning converts worldwide.”⁷ Today, more than forty countries have adopted or planned conditional cash transfer programs, comprising a total budget of US\$8.25 billion worldwide.⁸ But, conditional cash transfers are not the only social assistance programs proliferating through emerging markets. A broader array of assistance programs is targeted at the informal poor, of which the Turkish Green Card program is a good example. As I will discuss in more detail in the last section, the Indonesian free health care program *Askeskin*, the Mexican health insurance program, *Seguro Popular*, the Chinese Minimum Living Standard Assistance program, and similar programs in other emerging economies have largely expanded their coverage and budget since the 1990s.

Scholarly explanations for the global rise of social assistance programs have mostly emphasized structural, rather than political, factors, including the rise of poverty, aging, labor informalization, unemployment, deindustrialization, and the rise of the service sector.⁹ The literature on poverty and social assistance programs in Turkey has been guided by this structural perspective.¹⁰ Scholars have argued that with the rapid rural-to-urban migration, jobless economic growth policies, and the commodification of urban land, nonstate social protection mechanisms have eroded since the 1990s. This erosion has necessitated the expansion of state-led social assistance programs to cover the growing informal poor.¹¹

Yet these structural factors alone cannot explain the disproportionate targeting of Kurdish ethnic identity in Turkish social assistance programs. A political explanation is needed because politics is deeply rooted in the formation of Kurdish ethnic identity in Turkey. I have derived a possible political explanation from a previous literature, which argues that political *containment* and *mobilization* of grassroots groups were important factors driving the midcentury expansion of Western welfare states. In the United States, Cloward and Fox Piven have described relief for the poor as a political mechanism to “regulate the poor.”¹² They claim that poor relief in capitalist societies has two political functions: First, in times of civil disorder, relief systems expand as a means of establishing control over the disorderly; but when disorder subsides, relief rolls contract. Thus, the key impetus for expanding social assistance is not social need, but social disorder. Second, when there is no unrest, relief for the poor tends to assume a highly stigmatizing character, driving the poor to the labor market to work for lower wages. Thus, the second function of relief for the poor is to reinforce work norms.¹³ This argument has created a longstanding debate, sharply dividing scholars of welfare systems who have tried to validate and invalidate the central argument of the *Regulating*

the Poor.¹⁴ In Europe, scholars have emphasized the expansion of modern welfare states as means of politically containing the radicalization of labor movements.¹⁵ Under the Soviet threat, the United States helped aid the recovery of European economies through the Marshall Plan and financed their welfare systems in order to pacify potentially insurgent workers and to halt the communist expansion.¹⁶

Other scholars have emphasized that states often use welfare provisions to politically *mobilize* lower classes during periods of intra-elite conflict or wartime. First, conflict and competition between elites and parties, especially in electoral politics, often lead to populist welfare policies. The generosity of a state's social assistance policies is geared toward the mobilization of the lower classes in the electoral process.¹⁷ Greater interparty competition often leads to more generous social welfare policies.¹⁸ Second, many scholars have observed that during wartime, states must mobilize citizens to garner mass patriotic support. The rising dependency on conscription, the industrialization of warfare, and the increasing social power of the working class entails welfare provision in gaining the cooperation of working classes for war efforts when mere coercion will not suffice.¹⁹

These political perspectives illuminate political struggles and interests that allow us to analyze various puzzles in welfare system development that structural explanations cannot account for. I argue that a similar political perspective must be assumed in order to understand the development of new social assistance programs in the emerging economies, including Turkey. The case of contemporary Turkey suggests that the Kurdish conflict has transformed structural pressures into social policies unevenly and has ultimately led to an ethnic disparity in social assistance provision.

In this paper, I first outline the history of Kurdish conflict and recent political competitions in Turkey. Then, I present a quantitative analysis of free health care provision in Turkey by focusing on an ethnic disparity that characterizes this social program. I conclude that the disproportionately high social assistance provision for Kurds provides evidence that the Turkish government uses social assistance to *contain* Kurdish unrest. In the global and theoretical implications section, I suggest that similar expansions and ethnic disparities in social assistance programs through other emerging economies can also be explained by looking at government strategies to contain and mobilize the growing political power of the poor ethnicized informal proletariat.²⁰

The Kurdish Conflict and Politics in Turkey

Since the early 1980s, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*—PKK) has led a Kurdish uprising against the Turkish state.²¹ During the 1990s, under the Emergency State Rule, Turkish military forces evacuated and burned more than 3,000 villages in the Kurdish regions and initiated a policy of internal displacement to block the growing Kurdish popular support for the PKK. Millions of displaced Kurdish peasants fled to big cities and crowded the slum areas, in the western cities of the country such as Istanbul, Izmir, Mersin, and in the Kurdish east²². There is no government figure on the percentage of ethnic minorities in Turkey. Yet, as shown by the KONDA survey

(one of the leading public opinion research institutes in Turkey) on which the regression analysis in this article is based, Kurds are estimated to be 18.3 percent of the total population in Turkey, i.e., 13.3 millions out of a total population of 73 million.²³ In this survey, percentage of internally displaced people (IDP) is estimated to be 4.8 percent, indicating that the number of IDPs can be estimated to be 2.8 million by taking into account the population of Turkey in 1995, which was 58.9 million.²⁴ This indicates that almost one-quarter of the Kurds in Turkey were internally displaced during the 1990s. The data also illustrates that the population from internally displaced families in Turkey grew to a total of 3.5 million people in 2010. Although internal displacement is not the only dynamic behind the Kurdish rural to urban migration, it has sharply accelerated this process, whose roots can indeed be traced back to agrarian transformations in the Kurdish region that started in the 1950s.²⁵ The KONDA survey indicates that the percentage of Kurds living in urban and metropolitan areas (70.60 percent) is very close to this percentage for the overall population (76.13 percent).²⁶

Accompanying this rapid Kurdish urbanization, the Turkish economy has shifted from import-substitutionist developmentalism to export-oriented growth since the 1980s and been shaped by neoliberal policies of privatization, flexibilization, informalization, and deregulation.²⁷ The combined social effect of these processes has been the creation of a large poor informal proletariat. The globally competitive sectors of the Turkish economy, i.e., textiles and apparels, construction, shipbuilding, and electrical equipment production, depend largely on subcontracting chains based in the informal economy and an informal proletariat, which crowded the slum areas of big cities in the 1990s.²⁸

Displaced Kurds have become a major part of the emerging informal proletariat, by constituting a cheap labor force, without professional qualifications and ready to work in any job they can find.²⁹ In other words, rapid urbanization and proletarianization of the Kurds and the growth of the informal proletariat have turned out to be two converging processes: the war has changed the ethnic composition of the working class in Turkey by proletarianizing the Kurdish population, and Kurdicizing the enlarging informal proletariat.³⁰

It is central to our explanation that this informal proletariat of the slums, and particularly the Kurds, has become the center of grassroots politics in Turkey, providing both potential threats as well as potential bases of popular support for elite groups. Thirty years of Kurdish armed struggle, urbanization, proletarianization, and impoverishment have expanded the Kurdish political movement into the slum areas of big cities. The urban Kurds have increasingly radicalized and carried out massive protests and uprisings during the decade in the Kurdish region as well as in the metropolises of the western parts of Turkey. This ethnic threat to the regime has also been translated into electoral competition. Starting in the 1990s, the Kurdish movement in Turkey has been organized through illegal and legal wings, similar to how ETA-Herri Batasuna in Spain and IRA-Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland have been organized. Many Kurdish parties have been founded, each succeeding one another since all of them have been outlawed by the Supreme Court. The latest of the Kurdish political parties is the Peace

Table 1. Votes in 2002 and 2007 National Elections and 2004 and 2009 Local Elections

	2002	2004	2007	2009	2011
AKP	34.3	41.7	46.6	38.4	50
CHP	19.4	18.4	20.9	23.8	26
Kurdish Parties*	6.14	N/A**	5.3	5.7	6.6
Others	40.1	39.9	27.2	32.1	17.4

(Source: Supreme Council of Elections Statistics, 2011)³¹

*Before the BDP, previous Kurdish parties DEHAP and DTP joined the elections before they were banned by the Supreme Court.

**The DEHAP did not participate the general provincial council part of the local elections.

and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi* -BDP), founded in 2008. During the 2000s, the governing AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*-Justice and Development Party) has been competing intensively with these Kurdish parties in the entire Kurdish region of Turkey as well as in the slum areas of metropolises. While the AKP has gained a majority of support among the national electorate, the BDP has managed to gain thirty-six seats in the parliament with 6 percent of votes, and to govern ninety-eight municipalities, mostly in the Kurdish region.

The AKP's response to this rising Kurdish electoral and grassroots power has been fluctuating and ambivalent. On the one hand, the AKP has used a discourse and policy of democratic co-optation with the program of so-called Kurdish Overture. This program included public TV broadcasting in Kurdish and the legalization of the teaching of Kurdish language.³² On the other hand, the AKP has continued a militaristic approach to the Kurdish issue by launching large-scale police operations and mass detentions targeting the BDP leadership and grassroots cadres. As the BDP mobilized the Kurds, antiterror police units' appearance has become a constant part of the everyday life in the Kurdish-populated slums. *The Associated Press* reported that with 12,897 terrorism convictions, "Turkey alone accounted for a third of all [terrorism] convictions in the world since the 9/11."³³ The AKP has recently leaned further toward the stick side of this carrot-and-stick strategy and the police have arrested 3,895 members of the BDP since 2009.³⁴

Furthermore, the political competition between the AKP and the main opposition Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*-CHP) for national power sets up the larger political context in Turkey. The electoral success of the AKP in 2002 as a reformist Islamist party was the strongest challenge ever against the Kemalist establishment in Turkey, which today consists of the main opposition party CHP, the high ranks of the army and the civil bureaucracy. This challenge has turned into a regimewide political struggle that involved the use of military and judicial power as well as the mobilization of popular support.³⁵ The army attempted to wage a coup d'état and the judicial bureaucracy tried to ban the AKP at the Supreme Court. In response, the AKP initiated a series of police investigations that led to the arrest and imprisonment of many

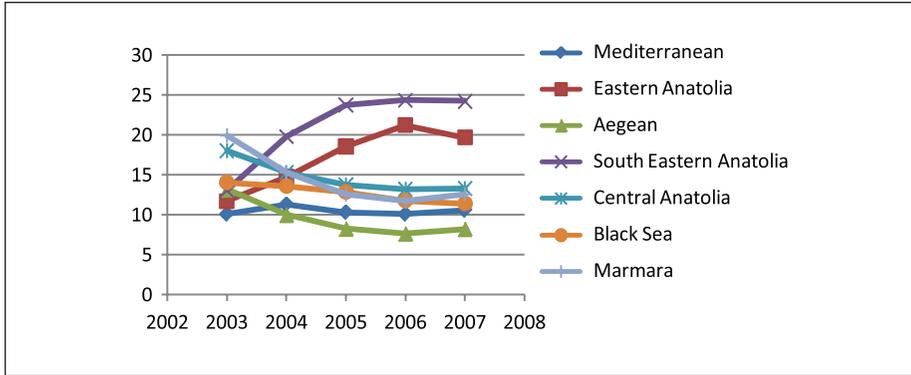


Figure 1. Changes in Social Aid and Solidarity Foundation Expenditures as Percent of Total Expenditures by Region

(Source: Graph generated by the author from State Planning Institution, 2009)³⁸

civil and military leaders, including 15 percent of the army generals. In this political struggle, the AKP has managed to gain the support of the poor and to increase its votes to 49 percent in the 2011 general elections, even after its second term in power. Another survey done by the KONDA indicates that the AKP and BDP compete for the votes of the poor and workers, while the Kemalists CHP mobilizes mainly the middle classes. 14.7 percent of those who voted for the Kurdish party DEHAP in 2002 elections changed their votes to the AKP in 2007, while there was not much shift between AKP and CHP voters.³⁶

Social Assistance and the Kurds

In this section, I will examine the relationship between social assistance provision and Kurdish ethnic identity in Turkey. Figure 1 shows that between 2003 and 2007, shares of Kurdish populated Southeastern and Eastern Regions³⁷ in total social assistance expenditures have largely increased while all other non-Kurdish regions' shares have constantly shrunk.

By 2007, share of Kurdish regions (Southeastern Anatolia and Eastern Anatolia) in total Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation expenditures has increased to 43.9 percent, as well as education conditional cash transfers increasing to 62.36 percent and health conditional cash transfers to 77.21 percent, while only 17.31 percent of the total population lives in these regions³⁹. Also, according to data from the State Planning Institute, the percentage of conditional cash transfer recipients and Green Card holders in the Kurdish regions of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia is approximately three times higher than the national average.⁴⁰ Yet, the shift of social assistance to the Kurdish regions, however, cannot be explained by their worsened economic conditions.

Table 2. Regional Rates of Green Card, Poverty, and Kurdish Population, KONDA dataset

Regions	Poverty Rate	% of Green Card Holders	% of Kurds
Istanbul	10.3	2.92	14.57
West Marmara	18.3	5.2	2.23
Aegean	27.9	4.16	5.03
East Marmara	20.8	2.16	2.47
West Anatolia	24.1	3.13	6.76
Mediterranean	31.4	13.23	8.69
Central Anatolia	37.2	11.33	2.16
West Black Sea	47.4	12.04	2.35
East Black Sea	29.5	13.75	0
Northeast Anatolia	50.2	44.8	27.6
Central East Anatolia	47.9	45.3	61.49
Southeast Anatolia	68.6	37.87	67.98

(Source: Regional poverty rates generated by the author from State Planning Organization, 2009 and the other two columns from the KONDA, 2011 dataset)⁴¹

Table 2 shows that Green Card holding rates in geographical regions seem to have correlated with the density of Kurds in each region, rather than the poverty rates. For instance, the percentage of free healthcare card holders is 45.4 percent in Central East Anatolia region and 12.04 percent in West Black Sea region. However, the rate of poverty is almost the same in both regions. When we look at the percentage of Kurds living in these regions, it is seen that ethnicity plays a big role: in the Central East Anatolia Region, where free healthcare card is much more common, 61.49 percent of the population is Kurdish, while in West Black Sea region, only 2.35 percent of the population is Kurdish. Therefore, macro scale data tends to indicate a social policy orientation to Kurdish regions.

Data and Method. In order to examine the relationship between social assistance and Kurdish ethnic identity, I run logistic regression analyses, with robust standard errors, of a dataset generated by a 10,386-informant stratified random nationally representative sampling survey carried out by the KONDA. The KONDA survey is the first nationally representative survey in Turkey to ask questions about ethnicity, internal displacement, income, employment, social welfare, and political support together. The KONDA used the Address-based Population System of the government to select the informants from the entire national population⁴². Then 55,000 neighborhoods and villages were clustered into categories of town, city, metropolis, or countryside in order to ensure that each subregion of the country has been represented. 874 neighborhoods and villages to visit were selected randomly by computer. Then twelve houses from each neighborhood and village were again selected randomly and quotas for age and gender were applied. The selected informants were older than the age of 18.

Variables and the Empirical Model. Free health care card (called Green Card) holding status is the dependent variable estimated. The Green Card program provides free

health care for the poor who are not covered by any other social security institution. There are two national eligibility criteria for the program, which apply to all Green Card holders. First, since Green Cards are targeted at informal workers and their families, applicants should not be registered in any social security institution. Second, declared household income per capita should be lower than one-third of the minimum wage. When these conditions are met, applicants are granted a Green Card for a period of one year and they are required to go through an eligibility test for renewal.

Green Card eligibility is determined through means tests, but since beneficiaries are informal, and thus lacking in official documentation, local boards resort to indirect ways of income determination to approximate an estimate of the household income and to determine eligibility. These indirect means tests involve interviews with applicants where case workers ask for the total level of income that enters the household per month. In addition, to verify the declared income, case workers observe living standards, consumption patterns, quality of buildings and furniture, and employment status of applicants through regular visits to households. Means tests also involve interviews with neighbors about the wealth of the applicant. Thus, in order to be eligible for the Green Card, applicants should not be registered at any other social security institution, declared income per capita must be lower than one-third of the minimum wage, and case workers interpret living to verify declared income. The indirect means test leaves ample scope for discretionary classifications, as I will describe below.

The variable Green Card is an individual-level dichotomous variable and it indicates whether the person holds a Green Card. The independent variables are dichotomous individual-level variables. The key independent variable is “Kurd,” which indicates whether or not the informant self-identified as Kurdish. There is an individual level dummy variable “IDP” (internally displaced people), which indicates whether the respondent has been internally displaced³. Among the individual-level dummy control variables, income, household size, age, and education levels have been presented for each corresponding segment. Dummy variables for house types have been ordered in an increasing economic value, from squatter house to villa. Employment status has been divided into employed and unemployed. I have included one dummy variable for each geographical region of Turkey. Finally, I use a dummy variable for support for the governing AKP. The variable “AKP” indicates whether or not the informant said that s/he would vote for the governing AKP.

I expect that income, household size, education, house type, employment status, age, and geographical region will be significant factors predicting one’s chances of holding a free health care card because they are basic indicators of socioeconomic status and poverty. They will allow me to see whether the explanatory variable for ethnic identity will be significant after controlling for socioeconomic status, or not.

Descriptive statistics show that Green Card holding is much higher among Kurds (36 percent) than non-Kurds (7 percent), for AKP supporters (15 percent) than other party supporters (9 percent), for the Kurdish regions (40 percent) than for the non-Kurdish regions (7 percent), and among the internally displaced (29 percent) than non-internally displaced (10 percent). Also, 45 percent of Green Card holders are Kurdish, whereas 10 percent of Green Card nonholders are Kurdish, 43 percent of Green Card

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics (numbers represent means and numbers in parentheses represent standard deviations, e.g., 36 percent of Kurds hold Green Card)

	Total	Green Card	No Green Card	Support for the AKP	Support for Other Parties	Kurds	Non-Kurds	Kurdish Regions	non-Kurdish Regions	Internally Displaced	Not Internally Displaced
Green Card	0.11 (.32)	1.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	.15 (.36)	.09 (.39)	.36 (.48)	.07 (.26)	.40 (.49)	.07 (.26)	.29 (.45)	.10 (.31)
Kurdish Ethnicity	0.14 (0.35)	.45 (.49)	.10 (.30)	.15 (.35)	.14 (0.35)	1.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	.65 (.47)	.07 (.26)	.71 (.45)	.11 (.32)
Support for the AKP	.37 (.48)	.48 (.50)	.36 (.48)	1.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	.38 (.48)	.37 (.48)	.45 (.49)	.36 (.48)	.25 (.43)	.38 (.48)
Kurdish Region	.12 (.33)	.43 (.49)	.08 (.27)	.15 (.36)	.10 (.31)	.55 (.49)	.05 (.21)	1.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	.33 (.47)	.11 (.47)
Internally Displaced	.048 (.21)	.12 (.32)	.03 (.19)	.03 (.17)	.05 (.23)	.23 (.42)	.01 (.12)	.12 (.33)	.03 (.18)	1.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)

Source: KONDA, Perceptions and Expectations in the Kurdish Issue, 2011

holders live in the Kurdish regions, while 8 percent of Green Card nonholders live in non-Kurdish regions, 48 percent of Green Card holders support the AKP, while 36 percent of Green Card nonholders support the AKP and 12 percent of Green Card holders have been internally displaced, while 3 percent of Green Card nonholders have been internally displaced. In total, 23.4 percent of the Kurds have been internally displaced. While the percentage of those who have formal social security is 72.9 percent among the Turks, it is 40.8 percent among the Kurds. It is worth noting that while 14 percent of respondents are self-identified as Kurdish, the KONDA survey estimates the Kurdish population to be 18.3 percent of the total by taking into account household sizes. The descriptive statistics suggest a strong relationship between Green Card holding status and Kurdish ethnic identity, internal displacement, and also the support for the AKP. I conduct the subsequent multivariate analysis in order to find out to what extent these correlations are simply a product of Kurds being disproportionately poor.

The following is the empirical model estimated

$$G_i = \alpha + \beta (\text{Kurd}_i) + \Phi X_i + N_i + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

where, subscript i refers to the household (or individual). In equation (1), G is a binary indicator of whether the informant has a Green Card or not; “Kurd” represents whether the household is a Kurdish household or not; X is a set of family level dichotomous controls, which are binary household size, household income, education, house type, age, and employment status; N is a vector of neighborhood dummies; and ε is the idiosyncratic error term.

The objective of the regression analysis is to see whether there is a relationship between the likelihood that a person holds a Green Card with the ethnic characteristics of the person. I expect the coefficient for the variable *Kurd* to be positive at the beginning and to remain positive after controlling for possibly intervening socioeconomic factors, such as household size, family income, and employment status. Education and age indicators further control for family-level unobserved heterogeneity that may affect Green Card acquisition.

Additionally, I use neighborhood fixed effects methodology to account for neighborhood level determinants of Green Card eligibility and acquisition. For instance, people who live in the areas with higher poverty levels are more likely to receive Green Cards than those with lower poverty levels. Similarly, the distance to the “Green Card office” or the attitudes of regional government officers may influence the probability of Green Card acquisition. Controlling for neighborhood fixed effects accounts for these and any other neighborhood-specific factors affecting the likelihood of receiving Green Card. Because there are only twelve households per neighborhood interviewed, neighborhood dummies strongly control for the common characteristics of each neighborhood. It is worth mentioning that a neighborhood (or in Turkish, *mahalle*) refers to a considerably small residential area. That is, a *mahalle* is very comparable to a census block or census block groups that exist in the United States. Hence, neighborhood fixed effects very strongly account for neighborhood level unobserved heterogeneity

Results. I analyze sixteen models of estimation to understand the effects of explanatory and control variables and I present the results of only eight models for space considerations. All other models are available upon request. In subsequent models, I try to estimate the effect of critical explanatory and control variables by including or excluding these variables one by one. I use the command “dprobit” of STATA because all the variables are dichotomous. “Dprobit” yields estimates of marginal effects. From each of the models, the pseudo- R^2 either increases or remains constant, indicating the reasonable explanatory capacities of the models. (See Table 4 for the results)

In Model 1, probability of holding a Green Card is estimated on being Kurdish with no other controls variables. The coefficient 0.287 for the variable Kurd means that probability of holding a Green Card increases by 28.7 percentage points for Kurds. Yet, since the incidence of Green Card is only 11.7 percent, this means being Kurdish increases the likelihood of holding a green card by 245 percent (calculated as $(28.7/11.7) \times 100$). Yet, analyses of variance show that the Kurds do have lower household incomes. For that reason, I examine whether or not the Kurds are more likely to have Green Cards because of their lower socioeconomic status.

Therefore, in Model 2, in addition to the variable Kurd, I control for income, household size, education, house type, employment status, and age. These variables indicate the eligibility criteria for Green Card. While income and household size represent the household income per capita, other variables represent other indicators that case workers investigate during house visits for the verification of the declared income.⁴⁴ As expected, Green Card acquisition falls monotonically with increasing income, education, and house type levels, and rises along with increasing household size and unemployment. Green Card acquisition is higher for people aged between 29-43 and lower for those older than 43. This is probably because the elderly are less capable of handling the application procedures.

In Model 2, the variable Kurd still remains statistically significant with a highly positive coefficient, 0.116. This means that, in comparison to average Green Card holding rate (11.7 percent), being Kurdish is associated with 99 percent increase in Green Card receiving status after controlling for the eligibility criteria. This indicates that being Kurdish has a highly positive effect on Green Card holding that is beyond socioeconomic status. Thus, poor Kurds are more likely to hold Green Card than the poor non-Kurds based on their ethnic identity.

Then, I examine the effect of region of residence on Green Card holding status by using regional dummies. Here, the non-Kurdish East Black Sea region was the omitted region. An original model that I do not present shows that while residents of all non-Kurdish regions are less likely to receive Green Card services than the omitted region, residents of the three Kurdish regions respectively are 207.7 percent, 207.8 and 150.4 percent more likely to receive Green Card with 0.01 statistical significance. Analysis of variance also shows that Kurdish regions are poorer than non-Kurdish regions. Therefore, I include the effect of Green Card eligibility criteria in Model 3. However, Kurdish regions are still more likely to have greater rates of Green Card holding with statistical significance in comparison to other regions.

Table 4. Logistic Regression Estimates for Green Card Holding Status

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	(Kurds Only)	(Kurds + Controls)	(Regions + Controls)	(Kurds + Regions + Controls)	(Kurds + Controls + Neighborhood Dummies)	(Kurds + IDP + Controls + Neighborhood Dummies + at Urban and Metropolitan Areas)
Ethnicity (reference: non-Kurds)						
Kurd	0.287*** (0.0126)	0.116*** (0.0106)		0.0683*** (0.0101)	0.142*** (0.0293)	0.106*** (0.0294)
Party support (reference: other parties)						
AKP		0.0227*** (0.00477)	0.0104** (0.00430)	0.0140*** (0.00432)	0.0450*** (0.0152)	0.0333** (0.0160)
Income (reference: <300)						
300-700		-0.0541*** (0.00547)	-0.0444*** (0.00507)	-0.0422*** (0.00502)	-0.111*** (0.0201)	-0.103*** (0.0237)
700-1200		-0.0911*** (0.00627)	-0.0766*** (0.00581)	-0.0739*** (0.00576)	-0.223*** (0.0169)	-0.188*** (0.0209)
1200-2000		-0.0935*** (0.00487)	-0.0803*** (0.00478)	-0.0773*** (0.00470)	-0.239*** (0.0116)	-0.204*** (0.0147)
>2000		-0.0697*** (0.00386)	-0.0587*** (0.00374)	-0.0566*** (0.00365)	-0.193*** (0.0105)	-0.156*** (0.0103)
Household Size (reference: < 3)						
3-5		0.0255*** (0.00720)	0.0223*** (0.00664)	0.0196*** (0.00653)	0.0465* (0.0240)	0.0338 (0.0258)
5-8		0.0947*** (0.0145)	0.0792*** (0.0134)	0.0657*** (0.0124)	0.115*** (0.0308)	0.109*** (0.0364)
> 9		0.162*** (0.0261)	0.136*** (0.0241)	0.107*** (0.0218)	0.152*** (0.0441)	0.197*** (0.0580)
Education Level (Reference: illiterate)						
Literate		-0.0247*** (0.00758)	-0.0186*** (0.00713)	-0.0193*** (0.00689)	-0.0575** (0.0268)	-0.0363 (0.0299)
Primary School		-0.0438***	-0.0388***	-0.0332***	-0.0921***	-0.0856***

(continued)

Table 4. (continued)

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	(Kurds Only)	(Kurds + Controls)	(Regions + Controls)	(Kurds + Regions + Controls)	(Kurds + Controls + Neighborhood Dummies)	(Kurds + IDP + Controls + Neighborhood Dummies + at Urban and Metropolitan Areas)
Secondary School		(0.00678) -0.0373***	(0.00614) -0.0371***	(0.00609) -0.0337***	(0.0211) -0.122***	(0.0220) -0.105***
High School		(0.00580) -0.0619***	(0.00488) -0.0600***	(0.00500) -0.0549***	(0.0192) -0.178***	(0.0183) -0.174***
University		(0.00611) -0.0651***	(0.00552) -0.0607***	(0.00550) -0.0571***	(0.0177) -0.191***	(0.0172) -0.156***
House Type (Reference: Squatter House)		(0.00452)	(0.00391)	(0.00393)	(0.0126)	(0.0120)
Traditional		-0.000555 (0.00857)	-0.00766 (0.00805)	-0.00384 (0.00802)	-0.0170 (0.0320)	-0.0172 (0.0258)
Naked-wall Building		-0.0197 (0.0121)	-0.0130 (0.0118)	-0.0108 (0.0120)	-0.0203 (0.0519)	0.00926 (0.0542)
Building		-0.0492*** (0.00791)	-0.0266*** (0.00794)	-0.0242*** (0.00794)	-0.0464 (0.0336)	-0.0280 (0.0283)
Gated Building Complex		-0.0338*** (0.00826)	-0.0286*** (0.00789)	-0.0269*** (0.00800)	-0.147*** (0.0326)	-0.0950*** (0.0327)
Villa		-0.0218** (0.00855)	-0.0215*** (0.00758)	-0.0212*** (0.00740)	-0.0633* (0.0364)	
Employment Status (Reference: Employed)						
Unemployed		0.0278** (0.0113)	0.0195* (0.0104)	0.0209** (0.0104)	0.0915*** (0.0315)	0.135*** (0.0383)
Age (Reference < 29)						
29-43		0.00875 (0.00598)	0.00345 (0.00532)	0.00570 (0.00530)	0.0329* (0.0176)	0.0122 (0.0179)
>43		-0.0256*** (0.00581)	-0.0290*** (0.00520)	-0.0245*** (0.00516)	-0.0714*** (0.0180)	-0.0824*** (0.0178)

(continued)

Table 4. (continued)

VARIABLES	Model 1 (Kurds Only)	Model 2 (Kurds + Controls)	Model 3 (Regions + Controls)	Model 4 (Kurds + Regions + Controls)	Model 5 (Kurds + Controls + Neighborhood Dummies)	Model 6 (Kurds + IDP + Controls + Neighborhood Dummies + at Urban and Metropolitan Areas)
Internally Displaced People IDP						0.110*** (0.0388)
Regions (reference: East Black Sea)						
Istanbul			-0.0536*** (0.00554)	-0.0574*** (0.00514)		
West Marmara			-0.0343*** (0.00606)	-0.0340*** (0.00570)		
Aegean			-0.0516*** (0.00472)	-0.0513*** (0.00450)		
East Marmara			-0.0531*** (0.00390)	-0.0523*** (0.00374)		
West Anatolia			-0.0494*** (0.00435)	-0.0496*** (0.00408)		
Mediterranean			-0.0187** (0.00783)	-0.0223*** (0.00709)		
Central Anatolia			-0.0320*** (0.00595)	-0.0311*** (0.00575)		
West Black Sea			-0.0240*** (0.00725)	-0.0240*** (0.00691)		
Northeast An.			0.0988*** (0.0276)	0.0726*** (0.0242)		
Central East An.			0.0601*** (0.0207)	0.0149 (0.0143)		
South East An.			0.0126 (0.0124)	-0.0175** (0.00802)		
Pseudo-R ²	0.1051	0.2957			0.3128	0.3160
Observations	10,386	10,386	10,386	10,386	4,395	2,883

Table 4. (continued)

VARIABLES	Model 7	Model 8
	(Controls + Eligible x Kurd)	(Kurds + Controls + Eligible x Kurd)
Ethnicity (reference: non-Kurds)		0.147***
Kurd		(0.0432)
Party support (reference: other parties)	0.0541***	0.0550***
AKP	(0.0161)	(0.0161)
Internally Displaced People	0.0912**	0.0799**
IDP	(0.0402)	(0.0388)
Income Eligibility (reference: per capita household income > 200 Liras)	0.213***	0.231***
Income Eligible	(0.0168)	(0.0177)
Kurd x Eligible	0.119***	0.000518
House Eligibility (reference: house better than naked wall building)	(0.0329)	(0.0398)
House Eligible	0.0597***	0.0590***
Education Eligibility (reference: education higher than secondary school)	(0.0215)	(0.0214)
Education Eligible	0.132***	0.128***
Employment Status (reference: Employed)	(0.0154)	(0.0154)
Unemployed	0.110***	0.110***
Age (reference < 29)	(0.0344)	(0.0342)
29-43	0.0280	0.0276
>43	(0.0180)	(0.0179)
Pseudo-R2	-0.0458**	-0.0432**
Observations	(0.0179)	(0.0178)
	0.2885	0.2909
	3,943	3,943

Robust standard errors in parentheses

***p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

In Model 4, I add the variable *Kurd* to the Model 3 in order to understand the effect of ethnicity in this regional disparity. The result is that the significance of Kurdish regions vanishes. The Kurdish South Eastern Anatolia's coefficient even turns into negative. This indicates that strikingly higher Green Card holding in the Kurdish regions cannot be explained solely by higher levels of poverty in these regions, but also and most importantly by the ethnic characteristics of the regions.

In Models 5 and 6, I control for neighborhood level fixed-effects. This helps me to control for unobserved heterogeneity at the neighborhood level. Thus, I will be able to examine the determinants of Green Card holding among people living in the small vicinity of neighborhood and thus sharing the same culture, same labor market conditions, same Green Card offices, and same local bureaucrats. Model 5 shows that the variable *Kurd* has a coefficient of 0.14. After controlling for all socioeconomic factors and neighborhood level fixed-effects, being Kurdish increases the likelihood of receiving Green Card by 120 percent, which is a really high effect. Importantly, the coefficient of the variable *AKP* is 0.0450, indicating that voting for the governing AKP is associated with 38.8 percent increase in the likelihood of holding Green Card in comparison to average Green Card level—with statistical significance. Those who support the AKP are also more likely to hold Green Cards, as also indicated in all models.

In Model 6, I make the same estimation by controlling for the variable *IDP* (internally displaced people) at the metropolitan and urban areas. In comparison to average Green Card holding rate, internal displacement is associated with an additional (90.6 percent) increase in Green Card-receiving status at the neighborhood level after controlling for ethnicity, party support, and socioeconomic status. Both being Kurdish and being internally displaced greatly increase the likelihood of Green Card holding in the urban and metropolitan areas. In two other models that I do not present here, I make the same estimation for the entire non-Kurdish region of the country and also for metropolitan areas. The Kurds outside of the Kurdish region are also much more (148.7 percent) likely to receive social assistance than non-Kurds after controlling for the eligibility criteria as well as neighborhood-level fixed effects. Kurds living in metropolitan areas are 70.1 percent more likely to receive Green Cards than non-Kurds, as well.

In order to rule out the possibility that Kurds hold more free health care cards because of their lower socioeconomic status, I then consider interactions between Kurdish ethnic identity and other intervening variables in Model 7 and Model 8. In these models, again I control for neighborhood level fixed effects. I create four additional dichotomous variables that would measure the eligibility criteria and that could be multiplied with the variable “*Kurd*”: The first one is an index for income eligibility. First, I convert the categorical variable of income and household size into continuous variables by taking mid-points of each income and household size bracket. Then, I create a variable for income per capita by dividing income by household size. Following, I create a dichotomous variable for income eligibility, which takes the value 1 if income per capita is less than 200 Turkish Lira (one third of minimum income in 2010 when the survey was conducted—the official eligibility criteria), and 0, otherwise. Second, the house eligibility dichotomous variable differentiates three types of houses that are considered “poor” by

case workers: squatter house, traditional house and naked wall building, from “non-poor” houses types such as regular building, gated building complex, or villa. Third, I use the same dichotomous variable for unemployment. Fourth, I create an education eligibility dummy variable, which takes the value 1 if the applicant has a level of education lower than high school degree. I included this because case workers hold the belief that people are more likely to find jobs if they have higher than secondary school diplomas.

To start with, I control for all dichotomous control variables and the explanatory variable “Kurd.” In this model that is not presented, being Kurdish is again associated with 138.5 percent increase in Green Card holding after controlling for all eligibility criteria and neighborhood level fixed effects, with statistical significance. Also, income eligibility, education eligibility, house eligibility, employment eligibility, being internally displaced, and voting for the governing party have all statistically significant and highly positive coefficients. In Model 7, I exclude the variable Kurd and include the Kurd x Eligible Income interaction term. The positive and statistically significant coefficient of this interaction term indicates that being both Kurdish and poor has a very positive effect on Green Card holding. Yet, when I introduce the variable Kurd in Model 8, the effect of this interaction variable vanishes, while being Kurdish is associated with 125.6 percent increase with statistical significance. This suggests that while having eligible income per capita is a very important factor for the entire population, for Kurds this has no significant effect. This indicates that the positive effect of being a Kurdish poor stems mainly from the ethnic identity of being Kurdish: the most salient factor for the Kurdish access to Green Cards appears to be ethnic identity.

Furthermore, I subsequently control for the interaction terms Kurd x House Eligibility, Kurd x Education Eligibility, and Kurd x Employment and Kurd x Internal Displacement. Interactions with house eligibility and education eligibility do not yield significant results. Interaction with Internal Displacement does not result significant results, possibly because almost all of IDPs are already Kurdish. Interaction between Kurd and Unemployed has a significant coefficient; yet, the difference between this interaction term and the variable unemployed is statistically zero, as shown by the test. These models are available upon request, too.

It is worth noting that for all models, the coefficient for the >2000 Lira income bracket is not statistically different from the 1200-2000 bracket, as the statistical test of variance shows, supporting the monotonic trend. In Model 8, no statistical difference between 700-1200 and 1200-2000 levels can be observed, either. The same is the case for education levels. Coefficients for high school and university are not statistically different in any model. In Model 8 again, there are no statistical differences between primary school and secondary school levels, either.

Thus, including the interaction term does not remove the effect of being Kurdish. In all models, coefficient of the explanatory term Kurd does not vanish, indicating that while socioeconomic status plays the main role in determining the chances of receiving a Green Card for the general population, the main determinant for Kurds turns out to be ethnic identity itself.

The results indicate that for the general population, fulfilling the eligibility criteria has utmost importance. Yet, for the Kurds, ethnic identity is the main determinant. If the targeting of Kurds resulted from the poverty of Kurds, the coefficient of the variable Kurd would be vanishing, but this did not happen. This result is expected because earlier I had already checked for socioeconomic factors. I also control for the interaction between AKP voting and Kurdish ethnic identity. The interaction term is not statistically different from AKP voting alone, indicating that being Kurdish does not mitigate the effect of AKP voting.

In conclusion, regression models indicate that there is a strong association between free health care card holding status and Kurdish ethnic identity. This association is even stronger for the internally displaced Kurds in urban and metropolitan areas. Living in Kurdish regions of Turkey also greatly increases the chances of holding free health care card due to ethnicity. Yet, Kurds in non-Kurdish regions also receive higher levels of social assistance than non-Kurds. The models also show that there is a strong association between voting for the AKP and Green Card acquisition. These findings hold true after controlling for socioeconomic factors and interaction terms. The strongest aspect of the analysis is that the neighborhood-level fixed effects are controlled for, which allows me to show that Kurds are much more likely to hold Green Cards than non-Kurds, even in the small vicinity of a neighborhood or village.

Discussion

My results show that social assistance programs in Turkey are disproportionately directed to the Kurdish minority and to the Kurdish region on an ethnic basis. I also show that this is not limited to Kurds in the Kurdish region. Thus, ethnic disparity in social assistance provision in Turkey is not only due to the concentration of social assistance programs in the Kurdish region. Rather, my findings suggest that there is an ethnic identity-based targeting of social assistance toward the Kurdish minority. Kurds across the country are being qualified more often for social assistance on the basis of being Kurdish *per se*. This is also the case for the Kurds in metropolitan areas and especially for the internally displaced Kurds, who are most likely to get social assistance. I control for possibly intervening socioeconomic factors, neighborhood-level fixed effects, and interaction terms. Thus, my analysis rules out the possibility that Kurds, the Kurdish region, and the internally displaced Kurds receive more social assistance simply because they are poorer. Instead, Kurdish ethnic identity is the main determinant for the access of Kurds to Green Cards. Controlling for neighborhood-level unobserved factors means that I control for conditions that all people living in the same neighborhood encounter, including same case workers, same local labor market conditions, same local culture, and same social network effects, etc. With this methodology, I manage to show that even among the people from the small vicinity of a neighborhood or village, being Kurdish largely increases one's chances of getting a Green Card. This is a very important finding, which shows that Kurdish families are being differentiated even from their neighbors on the basis of their ethnicity.

I argue that the Kurdish conflict can be considered a key factor to explain this ethnic discrepancy in social assistance provision. My empirical findings yield substantive evidence to argue that the governing AKP uses social assistance provision to deal with the Kurdish issue. The government tries to quell the Kurdish unrest, which highly involves the participation of poor Kurds. This is especially true for the Kurds in the metropolitan areas and the internally displaced Kurds in the urban and metropolitan areas. Although analyses of variance show that average income of the internally displaced Kurds and the non-internally displaced Kurds are statistically not different, the KONDA dataset shows that the support for the BDP is significantly higher and the support for the AKP is significantly lower among the internally displaced Kurds (54 percent for the BDP and 21.8 percent for the AKP) than the non-internally displaced Kurds (29.2 percent for the BDP and 44 percent for the AKP). This means that the support for the Kurdish political movement is higher among the internally displaced Kurds than other Kurds. This is probably because the internally displaced Kurds have experienced the war and suffered most from the state violence since the 1990s.⁴⁵ Rapidly urbanized poor Kurds have also politically radicalized in urban slums of big cities under the influence of Kurdish political organizations. The high level of political radicalization among these displaced Kurds is a possible explanation for this utmost social assistance provision. It is likely that the government uses social assistance in an effort to contain this political radicalization of Kurds.

The results and discussions suggest that the highly positive effect of being Kurdish on Green Card holding status cannot be merely attributed to the socioeconomic characteristics of Kurds. Rather, Kurdish ethnic identity seems to be the main factor explaining the disproportional access of Kurds to Green Cards. Given that there is no official affirmative action policy in Turkey toward Kurds regarding welfare provision, we can ask through which mechanisms Kurds receive disproportionately more Green Cards. There are a number of possible mechanisms through which Kurds might gain disproportional access to Green Cards, for which I cannot present full evidence in this article. Rather, I present these mechanisms as specific hypotheses for future research.

First, the Turkish government may be allocating disproportional budgets for Kurdish regions. Since the southeastern and eastern regions of the country are almost fully populated by Kurds, regional targeting for social assistance could possibly be used for ethnic targeting. As Figure 1 has previously shown, during the AKP government, shares of the Kurdish regions in total social assistance expenditures have dramatically increased, while all other non-Kurdish regions' shares have constantly shrunk. It seems that, without any regional affirmative policy, the AKP government has shifted social assistance budgets to the Kurdish regions in a clandestine way, which can help explain the ethnic discrepancy in Green Card provision.

Second, in conditional cash transfer applications, Kurdish regions have a lower (25.84 percent) rejection ratio than the country average (53.26 percent).⁴⁶ Conditional cash transfer applications differ from Green Card applications to some degree, because they require beneficiaries to maintain school attendance and health examinations of children. Yet, eligibility criteria are very much alike. Therefore, similar regional patterns of

rejection rates might be expected in Green Card applications, too. This would imply that either unqualified citizens in the Kurdish regions apply to these programs less than unqualified citizens in other regions or residents of Kurdish regions are disproportionately more likely to be approved

Third, discretion of local case workers might be an explanatory factor, too. Yoltar has shown that eligibility criteria for Green Cards, indirect determination of income through means tests, as well as the disendowment procedures, are always ambiguous and leave “ample room for discretion.”⁴⁷ The process is said to be rule-based; yet, because there is no way of objectively determining the income obtained in the informal sector, caseworkers’ personal discretion comes to dominate eligibility decisions. Although not explicitly addressed by Yoltar, it is likely that in Kurdish regions and neighborhoods, this discretion of caseworkers is utilized to direct Green Cards to Kurds. There might be some deliberate government policies that encourage caseworkers to evaluate eligibility criteria with more flexibility in Kurdish regions and neighborhoods. In addition, discretion might be used to target Kurds living in ethnically heterogeneous neighborhoods and regions. My quantitative findings hold true, controlling for the neighborhood-level fixed effects, suggesting that even in ethnically heterogeneous neighborhoods, Kurds are being identified on an ethnic basis in gaining more access to Green Cards, *ceteris paribus*. High levels of caseworker discretion, which Yoltar has pointed out, might be a factor explaining this, too.

This mobilization of discretionary power might target the Kurds under a clandestine bureaucratic hierarchy. Green Card offices serve under local governorships that are not elected by the locals but assigned by the government. Professional trainings that caseworkers receive from governorships, decrees sent out by higher-level bureaucrats and ministries, or perhaps unwritten informal directives communicated to caseworkers might “motivate” them to be more inclusive of Kurds. Also, in Kurdish regions, the government might employ caseworkers of Kurdish origin that would be more inclined to interpret the eligibility criteria positively.

The results of the neighborhood-level fixed effect method also indicate that possible individual differences among caseworkers in different neighborhoods in terms of the level of discretion cannot account for the disproportional targeting of Kurds. Rather, discretionary power of caseworkers is likely being used in a more systematic way to target the Kurdish minority. These hypotheses thus imply a deliberate government strategy to allocate social assistance to Kurdish citizens in a disproportionately positive way. To explore these possibilities requires detailed state ethnographies that would analyze quotidian processes of Green Card applications, means tests, house visits, and interactions between street-level bureaucrats and higher-level government actors/institutions, by conducting interviews and document analyses at both levels.

In conclusion, although many scholars have argued that growing social assistance is a response to poverty and informalization in Turkey, this is a limited explanation. The strong statistical associations from my analysis, trends in social assistance provision, and the recent history of political conflicts in Turkey indicate that political motivations are very likely to have shaped the expansion and ethnically uneven distribution of social

assistance in Turkey. As the Kurds have been rapidly urbanized through internal displacement, become a growing part of the informal proletariat, and finally politically more radical, they have become a growing source of political threat in Turkey. My findings suggest the possibility that the AKP uses social assistance in order to contain the political threat resulting from the Kurdish movement. Thus, the Turkish government seems to give social assistance not simply where the people become poor, but where the poor become politicized. I have tried to examine the Green Card system within the theoretical framework provided by Fox Piven and Cloward. My findings indeed support Fox Piven and Cloward's thesis that social assistance is driven by social unrest, rather than social need.

I also suggest that the AKP also tries to win the electoral support of Kurds, along with other poor voters, in its growing competition for national political power. Social assistance provision seems to be one basis of popular support of the increasingly entrenched and globally influential Islamic government in Turkey because the poor make up a significant part of the AKP supporters. By directing social assistance to the Kurds, the AKP has been involved in a dual task: garnering the electoral support of the Kurdish poor—as a contending political party—and containing the Kurdish unrest—as the ruling government of Turkey. This strategy can explain the rapid and uneven expansion of social assistance in Turkey.

I should note that there has been a widespread discourse among non-Kurds that interprets an assumed Kurdish overaccess to free health care as an abuse on the side of the Kurds, rather than a government strategy to cope with Kurdish unrest. This logic perfectly fits the mainstream discourse of what is called “exclusive recognition” of Kurds.⁴⁸ Also, this anti-Kurdish sentiment related to social assistance—together with the rapid expansion of social assistance programs and their political usage by the governing AKP—has galvanized other political parties, which have developed a harsh political competition involving social assistance projects and proposals, a trend intensified especially before the elections in 2011.

Moreover, my conclusions do not mean that directing social welfare to Kurds has been the main government strategy for the Kurdish issue. Rather, Turkish governments, including the AKP, have utilized a repertoire of tactics and strategies to deal with the long-lasting Kurdish unrest, which has involved parallel and fluctuating usages of repressive and conciliatory strategies. Lately, the period between 2007 and 2009 was marked by the so-called “Kurdish Opening” of the AKP, promising the Kurds identity rights under constitutional recognition. This period was, however, succeeded by another wave of heavy repression, which did not suffice to pacify the Kurds, either.⁴⁹ Security politics scholars have already shown that poverty among the Kurds has been one of structural causes for the durability of this Kurdish radicalism and suggested that “increased investment in social welfare can result in reduced terrorism” in addition to repression,⁵⁰ echoing the emerging international literature on welfare and counterterrorism.⁵¹ The call for the use of social assistance in counterterrorism was also expressed by the ex-president of the World Bank, an institution whose effect on Turkish welfare system has recently become more significant than that of the European Union.⁵² It seems that the AKP government has embraced this proposed strategy enthusiastically.

Global and Theoretical Implications

Social assistance programs in Turkey follow two broader trends that seem to characterize social assistance programs in other emerging economies. First, these programs are largely expanding, possibly as a reaction to the growing political power of the informal proletariat. Second, many social assistance programs are directed to ethnic/racial groups, often in a disproportionate way, as response to ethnic/racial political dissent.

Since the 1990s, emerging economies have significantly expanded new types of social assistance programs (e.g., conditional cash transfers), which have also spread to other higher- as well as lower-income countries. During the 2000s, *Bolsa Familia* program has grown exponentially in Brazil, expanding to cover one-quarter of the Brazilian population.⁵³ In China, the Minimum Living Standard Assistance program, introduced in 1994, covered 2.6 million people in 1999, and by 2002, 20.6 million people were receiving benefits. Also, the adjusted level of social assistance per capita in China increased from 1 Yuan to 43 Yuan between 1988 and 2002.⁵⁴ Finally, in 2011, the official poverty line was increased from US\$180.7 to US\$226, increasing the number of eligible recipients/individuals from 36 million to 100 million.⁵⁵ In India, five different social assistance programs have covered more than one-quarter of the population since the 1990s.⁵⁶ In Indonesia, the free health care program for the poor, called *Askeskin*, had reached 76.4 million beneficiaries, 35 percent of the Indonesian population.⁵⁷ In Mexico, a widespread conditional cash transfer program *Oportunidades* expanded in four years to cover, approximately, one-quarter of Mexico's population in 2007.⁵⁸

It is likely that political exigencies involving the growing social and political weight of the informal proletariat have led the governments of emerging economies to develop these social assistance policies. The growing economic success of emerging economies has depended heavily on an abundance of cheap labor from the growing informal proletariat of the slums. Yet these slums have also become the new spatial and social epicenters of popular threats and support for the governments. The political reaction of these slums against rising poverty has increased government efforts for the containment of threats. Moreover, the numerical strength of the informal proletariat and its tendency to respond to populist policies has increased the will to mobilize the popular support.⁵⁹ Whether new social assistance programs have actually been driven by this political change must be examined in future cases and comparative studies.

In addition to their rapid expansion, social assistance programs in most emerging countries are also directed to ethnic/racial groups. Scholars have argued that the Workers Party (PT) of Brazil has used *Bolsa Familia* as highly effective tool to garner political support from Afro-Brazilians of northern Brazil and *favelas* where the government also competes with drug traffickers.⁶⁰ Specifically, Souza's logistic regression analysis of Brazilian census data shows that Afro-Brazilians are more likely, with statistical significance, to receive conditional cash transfers after controlling for intervening socioeconomic variables.⁶¹ The Chinese social assistance system has shown signs of similar strategies for political containment of ethnic and urban unrest using social assistance. While the MLSA program in China reaches 17.9 percent of the poor nationwide; in

Tibet, where there is ongoing ethnic unrest, 92.1 percent of the poor receive this relief.⁶² Scholars argue that the social base of public assistance in China has shifted toward the urban poor in order to “avoid serious social unrest from those who were left behind by the economic reforms.”⁶³ In Mexico, Diaz Cayero et al have shown that change in local public good coverage in a region has been positively correlated with the percentage of indigenous population, when controlling for other socioeconomic variables.⁶⁴ In Indonesia, as response to a thirty-year armed ethnic conflict, the government initiated a social assistance programs in the Aceh region to “encourage people to overcome mistrust of government that is result of the conflict.”⁶⁵

But why? The conclusions I draw from the Turkish case seem to be more broadly applicable to other emerging economies where rising poverty of the informal proletariat has interacted with existing racial and ethnic grievances to generate domestic political disorder. Wallerstein has claimed that the lower classes of the world system overlap heavily with ethnic and racial distinctions.⁶⁶ According to Arrighi, the “surplus population” of the contemporary world has acquired a politically unstable ethnic characteristic, as in the case of the Kurdish informal proletariat of the slums in Turkey.⁶⁷ Wacquant has emphasized that the contemporary rise of ethnic urban marginality in the U.S. ghettos, Brazilian *favelas* and French *banlieues* tend to coalesce urban inequalities, ethnic cleavages, and political unrest.⁶⁸ It is probable that, as response, governments tend to direct social assistance programs to specific ethnic groups based on their ethnic identity.

It is important to note that the central finding of my research is the disproportionate Green Card targeting of Kurds, controlling for the eligibility criteria of the program. Scholars working on social assistance systems in other emerging countries should take this finding into account. As I stated above, some scholars have already shown similar trends in Brazil, partly in Mexico and, perhaps, China. An increasing effort should investigate whether ethnic groups in other emerging countries receive disproportionate social assistance. In that way we can examine whether the use of social assistance programs has become a common government strategy to cope with ethno-political threats in emerging economies. There is a good possibility that Fox Piven and Cloward’s thesis, which connected the expansion of relief for the poor in the United States to racial unrest, holds true at a global scale almost four decades after its formulation. Further comparative studies are required to examine this possibility.

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Notes

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 44. KONDA survey asks all informants about their income, household size, and other socio-economic indicators. Yet, there might be differences between the ways in which informants

- respond to KONDA surveyors and to actual Green Card caseworkers for questions regarding the eligibility criteria. Also, surveyors might assess the housing and “other variables” differently from the caseworkers. In this research, I assume these differences are minimal, normally distributed, and do not significantly affect the estimation results.
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