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Just Another Erdoğan: How Migrants Map Political Beliefs onto New Contexts*

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Abstract

An emerging body of literature is beginning to consider how immigrants from an authoritarian home country adapt and change upon moving to more a democratic context. Building on the literature on political socialization, I argue that immigrants are “resocialized” within their new political environment. As part of this process, immigrants use existing prior political beliefs and ideologies – often based heavily on their foundational political experiences in their authoritarian home country – as heuristics for understanding their new political context. By conducting and analyzing in-depth interviews with Turks living the United States, I theorize the process by which immigrants map these prior political beliefs and ideologies onto their new context and the resulting impact on their political behavior, a key concern for both the home country and the hosting country.

Keywords: Migration, authoritarianism, democratic norms, political ideology, political resocialization, Turkish immigrants, interview methods

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1 Introduction

The nexus between authoritarianism and immigration is an emerging topic in comparative politics that transcends sub-fields and even disciplines. As globalization has made migration easier and cheaper, citizens of repressive regimes often choose simply to leave their countries in search of a better life abroad. Several scholars have noted that authoritarian regimes may encourage or even facilitate these immigration trends, as they weaken domestic opposition to the regime (Lueders 2024; Michel et al. 2023; Miller and Peters 2020; Dendere 2015).

When immigrants from authoritarian contexts leave their country of origin, they carry their beliefs about democracy and their orientations towards the state with them. Immigration is a defining life event that catalyzes a process of political resocialization in the new country (Sears and Valentino 1997; Brown 1981). Depending on the level to which they eventually become incorporated in their new country, these translated political beliefs may eventually motivate patterns of political participation. Though the literature has illuminated many trends in immigrant political participation, it has dedicated less space to the internal mental processes immigrants undergo as they adapt existing political beliefs to a new context and then translate their updated political beliefs into political action. This paper seeks to help bridge that gap by providing insight into the mental models common among immigrants who oppose authoritarian regimes in their home countries and are at least partially motivated to migrate by political circumstances.

2 Immigrant Political Resocialization

Existing work examining patterns of immigration from less democratic countries to more democratic countries has established that immigrants from authoritarian contexts need to “learn” democracy (Bilodeau 2004; Ciornei and Østergaard-Nielsen 2020). Upon arrival, they are less likely to express opinions about their new country and show lower levels of institutional trust when compared to the local population; however, over time they may achieve levels of engagement and trust similar to those that were born in a democratic context (Bilodeau 2004; Superti and Gidron 2022). This newer literature has debunked prior work that suggested that immigrants’ socialization in an authoritarian context resulted in a more-or-less immutable “authoritarian personality” (Sanford et al. 1950).

Much of the work on immigrant politics has focused on observable behaviors, such as voting, party affiliation, and protest. This is understandable as these observable behaviors are easier to measure, and the immigrant populations that are able to engage in these forms of political behavior are likely to be more integrated into US society and more accessible to researchers. Though not directly relevant to the questions asked here, this work on observable political behaviors has also illuminated some of the unobservable trends of ideological translation that take place for various immigrant groups. In

particular, immigrant party affiliation can tell us something about where particular immigrant groups stand on the ideological spectrum and, in some cases, how they got there. Perhaps most famously, Cuban immigrants are known to have historically had a strong affiliation with the Republican Party (Portes and Mozo 1985). This has been attributed to a dual mechanism by which (a) most Cubans who left Cuba did so out of opposition to the Communist authoritarian regime and immediately identified with anti-Communist rhetoric within the Republican Party and (b) the US actively utilized immigration policy to facilitate the exit of anti-Communist Cubans. This pathway of immigrants from Communist (or formerly Communist) countries gravitating toward the Republican Party has been shown for some other immigrant groups as well (Bolotnyy et al. 2023). However, other cases can be found for which this pattern does not hold. For example, Vietnamese immigrants, who also come from a Communist context, have not developed a strong affiliation with the Republican Party (Collett 2000). Likewise, many Latin American immigrants who come to the US from a variety of home country contexts have chosen to affiliate with the Democratic Party. Therefore it is unclear what mechanism might facilitate identification with the Republican Party for ex-Communist migrants; indeed it is unclear if such a trend even exists, on average, for ex-Communist immigrants.

One component of party affiliation is party outreach. The literature has shown that an important predictor of a particular immigrant group choosing to affiliate with a US political party is party outreach. However, I argue that party outreach is a necessary but insufficient condition for party affiliation. In addition to party outreach, immigrants' ideologies must play a role. It stands to reason that one would not affiliate with a party that drastically deviated from one's existing political beliefs, even if that party reached out to your community. This ideological component of immigrant political engagement requires a more nuanced understanding of which features of an immigrants' existing political beliefs can carry over to their new context, and which cannot.

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have begun to theorize in this area. The literature has clearly established a link between the political beliefs an individual held while living in their home country and those they adopt in their new country (Preuhs 2020; Wals 2013; Finifter and Finifter 1989). Wals (2013) describes it particularly well, arguing that immigrants "use their pre-migration ideological predispositions...as a heuristic by which immigrants anchor and adjust their political views in the new host nation." This resocialization, translation, or anchoring process serves as the basis for this and other papers on immigrant ideology.

Scholars have begun to further narrow down the question of how pre-migration political socialization impacts immigrant political beliefs by looking at one particular set of pre-migration political experiences: authoritarianism. These scholars seek to answer the question: How does pre-migration exposure to authoritarianism impact immigrants' political beliefs, orientations, and

behavior in their new countries. Trust has been a particular focus in this literature, as immigrants from authoritarian contexts often exhibit very low levels of institutional trust. [Superti and Gidron \(2022\)](#) have leveraged survey data from Israel to show that immigrants from less democratic contexts gradually “update” their trust levels as they spend more time in their new country, becoming more trusting of the new country’s legal system and parliament. There have been similar findings for immigrants in Western Europe ([Dinesen and Hooghe 2010](#)). Unfortunately, the opposite finding appears to hold for Mexican immigrants living the US, who likely become more aware of discrimination over time and therefore lose trust in their new country ([Michelson 2003](#); [Wals and Rudolph 2019](#)).

These contradictory findings illuminate an important gap in the literature surrounding the mechanisms by which immigrants adapt their political beliefs to a new context. This paper aims help fill this gap by answering two key questions: (1) How do immigrants translate their political beliefs onto their new contexts? (2) In what ways do the features of their pre-migration contexts, and especially authoritarianism, affect this translation process?

3 A Theory of Ex-Authoritarian Political Translation

The literature has established a clear relationship between immigrant integration and political involvement. As an immigrant’s new society becomes more legible and they become more invested in its conditions, they naturally begin to participate more. This can be seen both on the individual level and on the generational level, as second and third generation immigrants are consistently more politically active than the generations before them. Additionally, it is clear that material factors, such as socioeconomic status, influence the degree to which any individual can participate politically. However, the fact remains that some immigrants enter their new country with a higher baseline interest in and knowledge of its political situation than others. I theorize that one key difference between these politically engaged immigrants and others is their ability to translate their ideologies onto their new context. More specifically, immigrants who hold ideologies that transcend their home regime will more readily apply these to their new context than those whose ideologies are tied closely to their home regime.

To understand this further, I classify anti-authoritarian immigrant ideologies into three categories: (1) anti-regime, (2) anti-state, and (3) global. Each subsequent category includes the previous category but enlarges the scope of the political ideas being emphasized. For example, an anti-state ideology would also be anti-regime (but not vice versa). A global ideology would be both anti-state and anti-regime. For a visual depiction of this idea see [Figure 1](#).

To define each of these categories more precisely, anti-regime ideologies emphasize that the primary

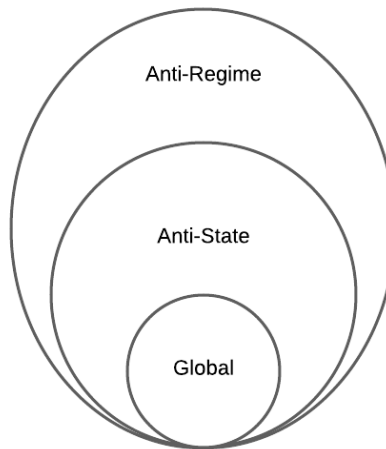


Figure 1: A Nested Typology of Anti-Authoritarian Ideologies

problem in the home country is the regime (or dictator), but that the state and its institutions are still legitimate in some way. Those who hold this type of ideology will typically emphasize a particular political party or even a particular person as the cause of their country's problems. They will also express hope that if only this regime could be removed or changed, their country would be restored to a desirable state. In contrast, anti-state ideologies emphasize that the problems with the home country extend beyond just the regime to the state itself. Immigrants who hold this type of ideology may express misgivings about their home country's institutions or history, and they will clearly indicate that removal of the current regime would not solve their country's problems. Finally, global ideologies identify a set of universal principles for which all countries ought to strive. Such ideologies are direct products of globalization; some common examples include communism, environmentalism, feminism, and human rights frameworks. Those who hold such ideologies generally see problems with both the home country regime, which does not uphold such principles, and the home country state, which was not founded on such principles. They will emphasize the global scale of the political problems with which they engage and may be a part of the global NGO community working to address the particular issue(s) in which they are interested.

I argue that the type of ideology an immigrant holds can facilitate (or hinder) the translation of their political ideas onto a new context. This translation process can subsequently fuel political engagement and, ultimately, participation. The broader the ideology, the easier it will be to translate. Global ideologues will likely see their new country as no different, or only marginally

different, than their home country. They will readily identify the same global problems at play in the new country, in spite of the fact that the quality of governance may be higher. This group will therefore transition most quickly to political engagement in the new context, especially if they were politically active in their home context. Anti-state ideologues will also likely find correlates between their home country and their new country, but this process will take more time. Anti-state ideologues object to the institutions, history, and fundamental structure of their home country; they may initially be unfamiliar with their new country and therefore retain a positive or neutral outlook towards its politics. However, over time as they learn more about the new country's institutions, history, and structure, they will begin to find ways to translate the anti-state ideology from the old context to the new. They therefore comprise a middle category in terms of the ease with which they translate their political ideas. Finally anti-regime ideologues will follow one of three possible paths. Without the home country regime as an anchor point, some may struggle to translate their political ideas and remain politically uninterested and inactive in their new country. Others will identify a particular party or political figure within the new country that they believe represents an authoritarian threat and thus find a correlate to the regime from their old country. Still others will use the foreign policy of their new country as an anchor point, supporting the parties or political figures in the new country that oppose the authoritarian regime in the old country. These latter two groups may eventually become politically active in their new country, but the first category is likely the most common among first generation immigrants.

What leads an individual to adopt a particular category of ideology? Education almost certainly plays a large role. Global ideologies in particular require the ability to speak another language¹, participate in online activism spaces, and understand theoretical concepts that may not be part of one's country's civic education process. Similarly, anti-state ideologies require an understanding of one's country's history and institutions. A complete understanding may necessitate research above and beyond what is presented in schools. Anti-regime ideologies are likely the easiest to grasp without a deeper understanding of a country's history and/or place in the world.

Likewise, I argue that exposure to government repression plays a fundamental role in the development of anti-state ideologies. Anti-state ideologues believe that, though the ruling regime in their country may be problematic, larger institutional forces have allowed this regime to come to power and remain in power. They therefore blame these institutional forces for the problems their country faces and often see the military and the police as agents of their country's institutions.

¹Likely English, but this depends on the specific ideology

4 Who Is an Immigrant?

Fundamental to any theory around immigration is the question of who exactly is an immigrant. The boundaries of this concept have always been fuzzy, but they are increasingly more so in our globalized and interconnected world.

For the purposes of this research, I embrace the definition proposed by [Hochschild et al. \(2013\)](#), i.e. “individuals or groups who have moved from their country of origin to a new country in which they plan to reside for a considerable period of time.” This definition is broad enough to accommodate both those who attempt to leave their home country permanently and those who believe that their time in another country will be temporary. The latter is the case for many immigrants who leave authoritarian contexts; they may feel a strong desire to return to their home country should conditions improve at some point in the future.

Another important feature of this definition is that it emphasizes so-called first generation immigrants. These individuals make the decision to migrate for a variety of reasons, but for those leaving authoritarian contexts, political factors are generally at least part of the equation. They spend their childhood and are initially socialized in their countries of origin, but then find themselves - and their ideologies - transplanted into a new political system. This differentiates them from young children or second generation immigrants who are socialized almost entirely in their new country and may be relatively unfamiliar with the politics of their family’s country of origin.

One challenge of examining the political engagement of first generation immigrants is that there may not be a lot of it, at least not that is immediately visible. First generation immigrants generally cannot immediately gain citizenship, so they cannot vote in most elections in their new country. They may be afraid to engage in contentious political activity out of fear that their Visa or Green Card may be revoked. Finally, they may be absorbed by the daily challenges of surviving in a new country and have little free time to engage with politics. I therefore echo several prior scholars’ emphasis on “the practice of citizenship,” i.e. broadening our understanding of citizenship beyond its definition as a legal category to include “cultural initiative or effective presence in the public sphere” ([Reed-Danahay and Brettell 2008](#); [Balibar 1988](#)). This more inclusive definition allows me to consider a variety of political engagement that may be less visible and less easy to measure. It is also a more suitable definition for our globalized world, in which political activity frequently transcends country borders.

5 Empirics

To support my theory, I conducted semi-structured interviews with Turkish immigrants living in the US. Participants were recruited both from a previous survey I conducted and from Facebook.

Throughout the data collection processes, I engaged in a process of inductive iteration (Yom 2015), refining my theory while also collecting further evidence.

5.1 Why Turkish Immigrants in the US?

Turkish² immigrants in the US present an excellent case study for testing my theory for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the majority of Turkish immigrants in the US oppose the current president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and espouse pro-democratic ideals. Indeed, there appears to be a sort of path dependence at play by which this particular type of Turk tends to immigrate to the US, while those who support Erdoğan are more likely to relocate to Europe, if they relocate at all. This relative uniformity of belief allows me to focus on the variable of interest in my theory: type of ideology. Second, Turkey represents the “new” authoritarianism that has become global in scope, in which elections occur on an uneven playing field and the dominant party or politician engages in institutional capture over time. This makes the case of Turkish immigrants generalizable to many other authoritarian contexts. Third, the dominant political cleavages in Turkey are significantly different than those in the US. More specifically, while the US is typically considered a left-right political spectrum, Turkey’s dominant cleavage lies along an Islamism-secularism spectrum (Aydogan 2021). This means that immigrants will face challenges in translating their political beliefs onto the US context, necessitating theory building in this area. Fourth, Turkish immigrants still comprise a relatively small group of potential voters in the US, so the two major US political parties have not made significant efforts to reach out to this community. The helps perpetuate the challenges this group faces in making sense of the US political context. Fourth and finally, Turkish immigrants are an understudied migrant group. This makes them inherently interesting and important as a means of contributing to our collective knowledge on the immigrant experience.

5.2 Interview Process

To recruit participants, a bilingual ad was sent out to a listserv of previous study participants, as well as posted in several Facebook groups for Turks living in the US.³ People who clicked on the ad were taken to a brief survey, meant to obtain informed consent, collect some basic information, and allow them to select an interview time. The only eligibility criterion was that the person hold Turkish citizenship and currently live in the United States. All interviews took place on Zoom from May to July 2024. The interviews were not recorded; however, the transcript feature of Zoom was used to create a written record of the conversation.

²Though I use the phrase “Turkish immigrants” throughout this paper, a more accurate phrase would be “immigrants from Turkey” or “immigrants with Turkish citizenship.” Among my participants, a portion identified as Kurdish and sought to clearly distinguish their ethnicity from their citizenship.

³AMERIKADA YASAYAN TURKLER, Amerika’daki Türk Firma Sahipleri, Turks in Greater Seattle Area

Interviews were semi-structured, with a set questionnaire from which I would deviate slightly depending on my level of rapport with the participant and any unique information that was revealed as part of the interview process. The full interview questionnaire may be found in Appendix A. Sometimes my research assistant joined the interviews, but mostly I conducted them alone. The vast majority of interviews were conducted in Turkish, with occasional English words and sentences mixed in when convenient. Interviews generally lasted about one hour, including an oral discussion of informed consent that generally took up the first five to ten minutes. Participants were offered a digital gift card as an incentive for completing the interview, and the majority accepted it. Upon completion, any personally identifiable information was redacted from the interview transcripts, and they were saved for analysis.

Interview transcripts were subjected to a qualitative coding process with the primary goal being to identify language expressing the different types of ideologies outlined in Section 3. The coding scheme was developed after fully reading the interview transcripts and reflecting on trends that emerged throughout the interview process. Redacted interview transcripts were loaded into NVIVO and coded using the software's workflow. Coding was hierarchical and non-exclusive, meaning that a particular statement could receive multiple different labels, if it represented multiple concepts of interest. The full coding scheme can be found in Appendix B.

6 Results

Participants expressed a variety of political beliefs in the interviews, both about Turkey and the US. It was relatively straightforward to identify anti-regime, anti-state, and global ideologies within the statements participants made about Turkish politics.

Anti-regime ideologies were characterized by a narrow focus on Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the AK Party (Turkey's ruling party) as the source of Turkey's problems. For example, when asked about Turkey's top three problems as a country, one participant responded, "One word: Erdoğan. I mean, you can sum up all [of Turkey's] problems like this. Erdoğan."⁴ This participant went on to predict that Erdogan might lose the next election, arguing, "Fortunately I am sure that we will not become Iran, for example. Because secularism and democracy are still strong in Turkey."⁵ Another participant explained that, in their view, Erdogan is the biggest problem in Turkey because he has been in power too long. They went on to say that the problem is not the AK Party, but rather Erdogan specifically, the man.⁶ Anti-regime ideologues clearly differentiated the regime from the state, arguing that there were still some positive institutional features of the state that had endured in spite of authoritarianism.

⁴"Tek kelime: Erdoğan. Yani bütün sorunlar bu şekilde özetlenebilir. Erdoğan."

⁵"Biz mesela İran olmayacağıımıza ben neyse ki eminim. Çünkü Türkiye'deki sekülerizm ve demokrasi halen güçlüymüş."

⁶No Turkish transcript available for this interview due to technical issues.

Anti-state ideologies identified broader anti-democratic or unjust trends within Turkish government and Turkish institutions. Participants who held such ideologies explicitly stated that Turkey's problems predate and/or surpass Erdoğan. For example, one participant joked, "Like if we could get Erdoğan tomorrow and lose him in a forest, it wouldn't be a solution, but if those who are running against him could start to win I think it would go better...There's Tayyip. And then there's the people who choose Tayyip. Say that Tayyip were to go, like, he were pushed out and replaced. Today, tomorrow, [the people] would vote for someone similar to Tayyip."⁷ A Kurdish participant I interviewed expressed similar views with respect to the last Turkish presidential election, saying "We voted for him [Kılıçdaroğlu, the opposition candidate]. My only aim was to shake things up a little. It was to change the status quo in Turkey a little. Kılıçdaroğlu was not going to be better. Never! If Kılıçdaroğlu came, some powers would have passed into Kılıçdaroğlu's hands. Another set of powers would still be in Erdoğan's. The state would still perhaps be closer to Erdoğan's mentality. But at least then we wouldn't be stuck in the troubles of the status quo."⁸ These participants indicated that removing Erdogan from power would not be enough to solve Turkey's political problems, and that a broader change would need to take place in Turkish society to effectively combat authoritarianism.

Finally, participants who held global ideologies emphasized relatively narrow political issues that had little to do with the specifics of Turkish or US politics. They expressed disillusionment that neither Turkey nor the US were doing enough to address these issues. In the interviews I conducted, the most common global ideologies mentioned were environmentalism and human rights. One participant expressed, "My general point of view is that we ought to ward off world war, stay away from nuclear weapons. Be against global warming, if possible. I want to see people who are moving away from mainstream society and more towards green energy, the type of people who help out society's most unfortunate. In Turkey as well. For some reason I feel very alone in these views. I have felt very alone in both countries."⁹ Another participant emphasized the important of human rights, saying, "In my opinion the most important problem in Turkey is the lack of freedom of thought...I mean there is no such right anymore."¹⁰ Though these participants still opposed Erdogan and the AK Party's regime,

⁷"Hani Erdoğan aldık yarın, yarın Erdoğan ormanda kayboldu, bir çözüm değil ama karşındakiler kazanmaya başlarsa daha iyiye gideceğini düşünüyorum...Tayyip var. Ve Tayyibi seçen insanlar var. Tayyibi çekip sahibinin yerini hani Tayyip gitti desek? Bugün yarın onun yerine gelen insan da Tayyibe benzer birine oy verecekler."

⁸Ona oy verdik. Tek amacım sadece bunun biraz çalkalanması. Türkiye'deki statükonun biraz değişmesiydi hani. Kılıçdaroğlu gelecek daha iyi olacak değildi. Asla! Kılıçdaroğlu gelse birtakım güçler Kılıçdaroğlu'nun eline geçmiş olacaktı. Diğer bir takım güçler yine Erdoğan'da olacaktı. Yine devlet belki Erdoğan'ın aklına daha yakın olacaktı. Ama en azından sonra dert statük oturmayacağız.

⁹"Ya benim genel bakış açım olabildiğince dünyayı savaştan uzaklaştıran nükleer silahlanmadan uzaklaştıran. Global warming karşısı olan, mümkünse. Sosyolojidan uzaklaşıp daha green energy yöneltten insanların...toplumun en şanssızlarına yardım eden bir tarzda insanlar görmek istiyorum. Türkiye'de de...nedense bu görüşlerimde çok yalnız hissediyorum. İki ülkede de çok yalnızlık ettim."

¹⁰"Bende Türkiye'deki en önemli sorun düşünce özgürlüğünün olmaması...Yani artık o hukuk diye bir şey yok."

they articulated broader, more global political principles as their reasons for opposing the regime.

When discussing US politics, participants displayed varying abilities to translate their political views related to Turkey to the US context. These abilities roughly aligned with the type of ideology they expressed.

Participants classified as holding anti-regime ideologies generally did not see noticeable similarities between the US and Turkish political systems. They also did not see Trump as analogous to Erdogan in terms of the threat he might pose to democracy. One anti-regime participant explained, “Here, you do not clearly see a dictatorship or something like that in Turkey. The reason is, well, every term a different party comes to power. That’s the reason actually.”¹¹ The participant who expressed that “Erdogan, the man” is the biggest problem in Turkey was supportive of Trump. When I asked about Trump, he put two thumbs up in approval and said “You don’t get to that place in life [Trump’s wealth, power] without doing something right.”¹² Though these participants had developed opinions about US politics, they demonstrated some ignorance of the ways in which US democracy might come under threat, in spite of their experiences in authoritarianism in Turkey.

In contrast, anti-state ideologues showed a clear ability to identify authoritarian trends in the US and often saw Trump as a threat to US democracy. For example, one of the previously quoted participants explained, “I think, well, from my perspective, Trump and Erdoğan are not very different people. Well, as I said before, I think Trump is a big problem in America too, but I think the same problem will happen if you remove Trump and replace him with someone else.”¹³ Likewise, the Kurdish participant quoted earlier explained, “I think I made a connection between the process by which Trump was chosen, the process by which Trump became president, the experiences in America, and the past experiences in Turkey.”¹⁴

Participants who held global ideologies expressed disappointment in the US political system and the lack of candidates who were seriously addressing the issues they cared about. For example, the participant who emphasized environmental concerns explained, “When here [in the US] as well, the closest viewpoints I’ve seen to my own seem to be the same no matter the country. Actually they all resemble each other a great deal. The global party, you know, with views about more equality, environmental concerns. For me, I feel closest to, you know, I could say Jill Stein right now, a

¹¹“Burada, mesela Türkiye’deki gibi çok net bir şekilde diktatörlüğü veya şeyi görmüyorsun. Sebebi, şey, her dönem farklı bir parti başa geçiyor. Bunun sebebi bu aslında.”

¹²No Turkish transcript available for this interview due to technical issues.

¹³“Bence hani benim bakış açım göre Trump ve Erdoğan birbirinden çok farklı insanlar değiller hani. Ee, daha önce dediğim gibi, Amerika’da da Trump’ın büyük bir sorun olduğunu düşünüyorum ama Trump’ı çekip yerine kim koysan aynı sorunun olacağını düşünüyorum.”

¹⁴“Bence Trump’ın seçildiği süreçte Trump’ın başkan olduğu süreçte Amerika’da yaşananlarla Türkiye’de geçmişte yaşananlar arasında biraz bağ kurdum.”

political figure whose party has 2000 people, but you know, because she doesn't have a chance in an election, it's a bit open to debate how much of a political figure she is in America."¹⁵ Similarly, the participant who mentioned freedom of thought as their main political interest equivocated, "I'm still mulling over who I will vote for [in the 2024 US election]. Like, I'll probably vote for the Green Party or something."¹⁶ These participants had no trouble applying their political principles to the US context and identifying candidates and parties that aligned with their views, but they did express disappointment at the deficiencies they perceived with the US political system. In some cases, they saw the US and Turkish systems as more or less the same regarding the issues they cared about.

7 Limitations

The insights from my interviews reflect the perspectives of a specific subset of immigrants. I cannot claim they are representative of Turkish immigrants in the US; at least one important group, the Gülenists, are not currently represented within my participants. There may be other groups that have also been omitted. Furthermore, Turkish immigrants in the US are not representative of Turkish immigrants overall. Turkish immigrants in Europe tend to be much more conservative and supportive of Erdogan. Nonetheless, I believe that the insights from this subset of immigrants can still offer some unique insights into the general translation process that immigrants undertake when they exit authoritarianism.

It is important to note that the Turkish context represents a particular type of authoritarianism: electoral and competitive authoritarianism. The current regime may also be characterized as personalistic and/or single-party hegemonic, depending on whether one sees Erdogan or the AK Party as the dominant force. As a country, Turkey maintains relations with other countries, including the West, and holds competitive elections, though they may take place on an uneven playing field. These features allow Turkish citizens to distinguish between the regime in power and the state that pre-exists the regime and sometimes acts separately from it. In contexts where these two features are less separable, or where the form of authoritarianism is closed, this theory may not apply. Similarly, it may not apply in authoritarian contexts where participation is forced and competition is less pronounced, such as the former Soviet Union.

Another key feature of the immigrants with whom I spoke is that all of them followed sanctioned migration processes. These included Visa sponsorship by a job, Visa sponsorship by an educational institution, and winning the Visa diversity lottery. None of my participants entered the US without

¹⁵"Buradayken de en yakın gördüğüm görüş hangi hangi ülkenin olursa. Aslında çok benzer durumlar. Global Parti'nin hani daha eşitlik environment kaygılı bakış açısı. Beni, ee, en çok yakın hissettiğim dolayısıyla hani şu anda da figür olarak 2.000 partili Jill Stein'i gösterebilirim, ama hani, ee, bir seçim şansı olmadığı için kendisinin Amerika'nın herhangi bir noktasında ne kadar politik fikir olduğu tartışmaya açık, biraz."

¹⁶"Şu anda da kara kara düşünüyorum. Kime oy vereceğim diye. Ee, muhtemelen yeşillere falan vereceğim.

documentation, which severely limits the generalizability of this work for the vast number of immigrants who do not have the privilege to follow the sanctioned path. Additionally, most of the immigrants with whom I spoke were quite educated, which likely facilitated the migration process. Their education level is reflected in their answers to my questions, answers which were often quite nuanced and complex. A less educated immigrant - or perhaps one who was still working to learn English - likely would not have been able to speak in such a coherent manner about US politics. This therefore limits the generalizability of my findings to immigrants who are educated to at least the high school level and speak the language of their new country at some minimum level, likely well enough to read a simple news article.

Finally, this theory only offers insights into how immigrants who oppose their home regimes translate their political beliefs. Though many immigrants from authoritarian politics are at least partly motivated to relocate by political concerns, it is conceivable that there are some immigrant groups who move entirely for non-political reasons. This may be especially true for authoritarian contexts that are economically strong, such as Singapore or the U.A.E. This theory provides little to no insight into how such pro-regime immigrants might translate their political beliefs to the US context and begin to incorporate politically.

8 Next Steps

My interviews with Turkish immigrants have provided preliminary evidence to support a theory of nested ideologies among anti-authoritarian immigrants. These nested ideologies include anti-regime beliefs, the most basic and limited anti-authoritarian ideology; anti-state beliefs, which represent a deeper way of thinking about one's country's problems; and global beliefs, which focus on issues that are not specific to any one country. This theory predicts that immigrants who hold global ideologies will most easily transfer their political beliefs to their new context, followed by anti-state ideologues. Those who hold only anti-regime beliefs will have the hardest time translating their political beliefs. An ideal next step would be to test these mechanisms more rigorously. As part of these tests, I would like to be able to control for education level and time spent in the US, among other demographic characteristics.

Although this theory relates to immigrants, it could be tested without considering immigration at all. Migrants come to the US already holding a particular type of ideology, so one could theoretically test their ability to transfer these beliefs before they relocate. One possibility would be to survey citizens of authoritarian regimes about (a) their ideologies and (b) their understanding of US and/or global politics. This could establish an empirical association between types of ideology and views about US politics, while controlling for confounding variables.

Alternatively, perhaps migration must have already occurred in order to realistically model the ideological translation process. In this case, I ought to continue my work with immigrants already living in the US. One approach might be to test the degree to which immigrants can shift their political belief systems between ideological categories. For example, with proper priming could a citizen re-articulate their anti-regime beliefs as anti-state beliefs or global beliefs? What differentiates immigrants who have this mental flexibility from those who don't? Such work could have important policy significance as democratic states seek to help immigrants learn how to practice democracy.

One final option is to try and track migrants beliefs longitudinally over time, starting before immigration and continuing for several years after. This approach, though time consuming, might be most ideal. Immigrant resocialization is likely a lifelong process, and impactful political events can always nudge an individual ideologically. Understanding the degree to which this takes place over time could provide insight into how political learning and adaptation takes place for non-immigrant populations as well.

9 Conclusion

This paper has articulated a new theory of immigrant ideological translation. In doing so it contributes to existing work on immigrant political incorporation, focusing on internal mental models rather than observable political behaviors. These mental models are important to understand, because they are influential long before a immigrant can participate politically in their new society. They also likely help determine what political positions an immigrant will eventually support. Using interviews with a subset of Turkish immigrants living in the US, I identify three types of ideologies held by ex-authoritarian immigrants: anti-regime ideologies, anti-state ideologies, and global ideologies. I further theorize that the latter group will most easily translate their beliefs onto their new political context, while anti-regime ideologues will struggle the most to translate their beliefs. This prediction is reflected in the answers provided by immigrants to questions about US politics in their interviews.

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Appendices

A Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire

A.1 English Version

1. Tell me the story of how you got here. Describe the process you went through to come to the US.
 - 1a. Where are you currently living?
 - 1b. Where did you live in Turkey before immigrating?
 - 1c. Did you work on learning a second language before relocating?
 - 1d. Did you need to apply for a Visa?
 - 1e. Were you able to leave your country the first time you tried, or did it take multiple attempts?
 - 1f. Were you concerned about being prohibited from leaving your country by the government?
2. What do you do for work? Is your job permanent?
3. What things are easy and difficult about living in this country?
 - 3a. What was something you were surprised by when you first moved here (either positive or negative)?
 - 3b. What is something you regularly complain about?
 - 3c. What is something you are grateful for that relates to living here?
4. Has living in the US improved your socio-economic status (quality of life)? If so, how?
5. Do you think Turks living in the US are similar to other immigrant groups in the US, or are Turks distinct somehow? Explain.
6. Do you think Turks living in the US are similar to Turks living abroad in countries other than the US, or are American-Turks distinct somehow? Explain.
7. Let's talk more about the reasons you decided to leave your country and come to the US. What are some of the "push factors" and "pull factors" that you experienced?
 - 7a. At what age did you learn English?
 - 7b. Were there job opportunities that you researched?
 - 7c. Did you have friends or family already living in certain countries abroad?
 - 7d. Are you a member of any minority group in Turkey?
8. What are the top three challenges your home country is facing right now? Do any of these affect you personally?
9. You mentioned ISSUE. Do you continue to engage with this issue for your home country? Does this issue still affect your friends and family?
10. With regard to ISSUE, do you see any similarities between the US and your home country?
11. How does the political system in the US compare to the political system in Turkey?

12. Have your political beliefs changed at all after moving abroad?
13. Are there any US political figures who you admire? Why?
14. Is there a political movement or cause here in the US that you support?
15. Do you consider yourself or your family to be politically active? Why or why not?
16. How active are you in US politics? Do you...
 - 16a. read articles or watch shows from American news outlets?
 - 16b. sign petitions?
 - 16c. post or share political content on social media?
 - 16d. talk about politics with family, friends, or neighbors?
 - 16e. attend protests or demonstrations? (For example, have you attended any protests related to the war in Gaza?)
 - 16f. [if citizen] vote?
 - 16g. Anything else?
17. What are the top three challenges the US is facing right now? Do any of these affect you personally?
18. Have you ever faced any negative consequences for being politically active?
 - 18a. Have you ever had an interaction with the police related to your political activity?
 - 18b. Has an individual or group who disagreed with you ever attacked you, either verbally or physically?
19. In what ways do you stay connected with your home country?
 - 19a. Do you speak your native language with others in your community?
 - 19b. Does your work relate to your home country?
 - 19c. Do you maintain relationships with people in your home country?
 - 19d. Do you participate politically in your home country's politics? In what ways?
20. Do you plan to return to Turkey in the future? Why or why not?
 - 20a. What would need to change for you to return to Turkey?
21. What factors do you think allowed you to immigrate successfully? Comparing yourself to others you know who have been unable to immigrate, what made a difference in your case?
22. Referrals: Do you know anyone else who might be interested in talking with me about these topics?

A.2 Turkish Version

1. ABD'ye nasıl taşındığınızı anlatın. Taşınma sürecinden bahsedin.
 - 1a. ABD'de nerede yaşıyorsunuz?
 - 1b. Türkiye'deyken nerede yaşıyordunuz?
 - 1c. Taşınmadan önce ikinci bir dil öğrendiniz mi?

- 1d. Vize başvurusu yaptınız mı?
- 1e. İlk denemenizde taşınabildiniz mi?
- 1f. Taşınmanızın hükümet tarafından engellenmesinden korktunuz mu?
2. İş için ne yapıyorsunuz? Kalıcı bir işiniz var mı?
3. Bu ülkede yaşamının kolay ve zor yanları neler?
- 3a. Buraya ilk taşındığınızda sizi şaşırtan şeyler nelerdi (olumlu veya olumsuz)?
- 3b. Hakkında düzenli olarak şikayet ettiğiniz bir şey nedir?
- 3c. Burada yaşamaktan memnun olduğunuz bir şey nedir?
4. ABD’de yaşamak sosyoekonomik statünüzü yükseltti mi (yaşam kalitesi)? Eğer evetse, nasıl?
5. ABD’de yaşayan Türkler ve ABD’de yaşayan diğer göçmen gruplar arasındaki benzerlikler ve farklılıklar neler? Açıklayınız.
6. ABD’de yaşayan Türkler ve başka ülkelerde yaşayan Türkler arasındaki benzerlikler ve farklılıklar neler? Açıklayınız.
7. ABD’ye taşınmak istemenizin sebeplerinden bahsedin. Buna sebep olan “itici faktörler” ve “çekici faktörler” nelerdi?
- 7a. İngilizce öğrendiğinizde kaç yaşındaydınız?
- 7b. Araştırdığınız iş fırsatları var mıydı?
- 7c. Yurt dışında belli ülkelerde yaşayan aileniz veya arkadaşlarınız var mıydı?
- 7d. Türkiye’de herhangi bir azınlık gruba mensup musunuz?
8. Şu anda ülkenizdeki en önemli sorunlar sizce neler? Bu sorunlar sizi etkiliyor mu?
9. SORUN’dan bahsettiniz. Bu sorunla ilgili yaptığınız bir şey var mı? Bu sorun ailenizi ve arkadaşlarınızı etkiliyor mu?
10. ABD ve ülkeniz arasında SORUNUN konusunda benzerlikler var mı?
11. ABD’deki ve Türkiye’deki siyasi sistemler arasındaki benzerlikler ve farklılıklar neler?
12. Yurtdışına taşındıktan sonra siyasi görüşleriniz değişti mi?
13. ABD’de beğendiğiniz herhangi bir siyasi figür var mı? Neden?
14. ABD’de desteklediğiniz siyasi bir hareket var mı?
15. Kendinizi veya ailenizi siyasette aktif olarak tanımlar mıydınız? Neden?
16. ABD siyasetinde ne kadar aktifsiniz? Örnek olarak...
- 16a. Haber okumak
- 16b. İmza kampanyalarına katılmak
- 16c. Sosyal medyada siyasi içerik paylaşmak
- 16d. Çevrenizdeki insanlarla siyaset hakkında konuşmak
- 16e. Protestolara katılmak (Örnek olarak, Gazze’yle ilgili protestolara katıldınız mı?)
- 16f. [Eğer vatandaşsanız] Oy vermek
- 16g. Diğer?

17. Şu anda ABD'deki en önemli sorunlar sizce neler? Bu sorunlar sizi etkiliyor mu?
18. Siyasi olarak aktif olduğunuz için sorun yaşadınız mı?
- 18a. Hiç polisle siyasi konularda sorun yaşadınız mı?
- 18b. Bir kişi veya grup tarafından sözel veya fiziksel saldırıya uğradınız mı?
19. Ülkenizle olan bağlantınızı nasıl sürdürüyorsunuz?
- 19a. Çevrenizdeki kişilerle anadilinizi konuşuyor musunuz?
- 19b. Yaptığınız iş ülkenizle bağlantılı mı?
- 19c. Ülkenizdeki insanlarla olan ilişkilerinizi sürdürüyor musunuz?
- 19d. Ülkenizin siyasetine katılıyor musunuz?
20. Gelecekte Türkiye'ye dönmeyi planlıyor musunuz? Neden?
- 20a. Türkiye'ye dönmeniz için neyin değişmesi gerekir?
21. Göç etmekte başarılı olmanızı sağlayan faktörler neler? Kendinizi göç edemeyen tanıdıklarınızla karşılaştırın. Aradaki farklar neler?
22. Bu konular hakkında benimle konuşmak isteyebilecek başka birini tanıyor musunuz?

B Coding Scheme for Semi-Structured Interviews

- Overarching Category: Demographics
 - Code: Assimilation = discussions of incorporation into US society, the degree to which they stay connected to Turkey, citizenship status
 - Code: Ethnicity = discussions of ethnic identity or background
 - Code: Family = discussions of family, especially spouses, children, parents, and siblings
 - Code: Locations = discussions of locations lived and worked, both in Turkey and in the US, as well as characterizations and descriptions of those locations
 - Code: Religion = discussions of religious identity or practice, discussions of religious proselytizing
 - Code: Work / Education / SES = discussions of work, education, and socioeconomic status, both before and after migration
- Overarching Category: Political Beliefs
 - Code: Turkey = beliefs and opinions regarding Turkey's political system and governance
 - Code: US = beliefs and opinions regarding the US' political system and governance
 - Code: Universal Democratic Principles = statements about democratic norms that transcend country borders, i.e. "This is how democracy should be"
- Overarching Category: Repression
 - Code: Personal = repression directly experienced by the participant
 - Code: Hearsay = repression that the participant heard about from family, friends, or the news

- Overarching Category: Ideologies
 - Code: Anti-Regime = see Sections 3 and 6
 - Code: Anti-State = see Sections 3 and 6
 - Code: Global = see Sections 3 and 6