

# Funerals and Elections: The Effects of Terrorism on Voting Behavior in Turkey

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## Abstract

This article empirically analyzes the effects of terrorism on the electoral choices of the Turkish voters in the 1991 and 1995 general elections. It relies on a unique data set that includes the date and the place of burial of Turkish soldiers and police officers who died in the fight against the terrorist organization PKK. These young men are very highly regarded in the Turkish culture, and are known as "terror martyrs". Moreover, for the most part of the Turkish people, they constitute the most tangible and important loss to terrorism. I employ the number of these security force terror casualties at the district level as a measure of the level of terrorism that the people of that district have been exposed to, and analyze whether and how exposure to terrorism affects people's electoral choices. The results indicate that Turkish voters are highly sensitive to terrorism, and that they blame the government for their losses. Moreover, exposure to terrorism leads to an increase in the vote share of the right-wing parties who are less concessionist towards the terrorist organization's cause compared to their left-wing counterparts.

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